# George Weeks: The Con Artist Who Launched Women's Literary Magazines

John Benedict Buescher

*If I know what you want, I can take everything you have.*

—R. Paul Wilson, *The Art of the Con*

# Contents

**Introduction**

Phineas Taylor Barnum released the first version of his autobiography, *The Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself*, in 1855 in America and England.[1] In the preface to the English printing, his publisher wrote that in the book Barnum was "adopting as his motto, 'nothing extenuate,'" thereby making it an *authentic* account, a *true history* of his "many adventures" and "numerous enterprises."[2]

But who—or what—was he? In a curious phrase, Barnum tells his readers that he dedicates his book to "The Universal Yankee Nation, of which I am proud to be one." One what? A citizen? Or a Universal Yankee Nation unto himself? He was an entirely "self-made" man whose fortune came from exchanging his customers' dreams of wonder for hard cash. His memoir was his pitch to step into his tent and see the Great Humbug unveiled.

On April Fool's Day, 1857, Herman Melville published *The Confidence-Man; His Masquerade*, a novel set aboard a river steamboat whose complement of passengers change at each stop along the shore.[3] The characters in this floating world are detached shapeshifting transients who probe one another's unfounded dreams and confidences, looking for opportunities to profit. The steamboat, writ large, was Melville's dystopian America.

In both literary pieces, the country was a turbulent cloud of speculation and dubious confidences. Being free to follow one's dreams, to construct one's life, or to exploit others'

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[1] Phineas Taylor Barnum, *Life of P. T. Barnum; Written by Himself* (New York: Redfield, 1855) and (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Company).

[2] "I pray you, in your letters, When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, Speak of me as I am, nothing extenuate," *Othello*, 5.2.

[3] Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857). The first use of the phrase "confidence man" was in "Arrest of the Confidence Man," *New-York Herald*, 8 July 1849: "For the last few months a man has been traveling about the city, known as the 'Confidence Man,' that is, he would go up to a perfect stranger in the street, and being a man of genteel appearance, would easily command an interview. Upon this interview he would say after some little conversation, 'have you confidence in me to trust me with your watch until to-morrow;' the stranger at this novel request, supposing him to be some old acquaintance not at that moment recollected, allows him to take the watch, thus placing 'confidence' in the honesty of the stranger, who walks off laughing and the other supposing it to be a joke allows him so to do."

dreams for the future required self-reliance, for it was unclear whom one could trust and upon what signs of solidarity one could rely. Some were pleased to throw off tradition and custom, to hitch their wagons to stars, to lose their grounding, and to skip across the surfaces of things. To them, the phrase "it's too good to be true" seemed a dull guide to living. They preferred "it's too crazy not to be true."

By the early1850s, the Gold Rush had proved this national characteristic. In the hope of striking it rich, hundreds of thousands of people had followed their dreams of California riverine sand bars made of gold dust. Most failed, but afterwards they could console themselves with the recognition that at least they'd "seen the elephant."[4] The phrase had a Barnumesque feel: They'd been humbugged and were now sadder but wiser for having been disenchanted. Their gain was a lesson in the ways of the world, for they'd been the victims of a very *practical* joke.

Modern historians of American literature have mulled over the literary fascination in antebellum America with the shifty character of the "confidence man."[5] But writers and editors of the time also played with their own readers' confidence in what they read in newspapers by publishing fictions as news. The *New-York Sun* in 1835 famously ran a series of articles by Richard Adams Locke purporting to describe the discoveries of Royal Astronomer Sir John Herschel, through a giant telescope, of sentient beings living on the Moon, and, in 1844, ran

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[4] The origin of the phrase "seeing the elephant," which probably gained currency shortly before 1840, is obscure, but it referred to experiencing some humiliation or disappointment during a grandly hopeful adventure to accomplish or see some wonderful thing, such as an elephant at a circus. Bartlett's 1848 *Dictionary of Americanisms* makes it nearly synonymous with the older phrase "going out for wool and coming back shorn." "When a man is disappointed in anything he undertakes, when he has seen enough, when he gets sick and tired of any job he may have set himself about, he has *'seen the elephant,'*" wrote George Wilkins Kendall in "The Texan Santa Fé Expedition," *Times-Picayune*, 26 June 1842. In some quarters, the phrase also allegedly acquired another connotation, being used by or of girls to refer to their losing their virginity, especially, one might imagine, if the experience or the result had been disappointing. Its potential to suggest sexual overtones is illustrated in an implausible story, "Rather Free on a Short Acquaintance," *Weekly Picayune*, 8 August 1842: "The Cincinnati Microscope says that the elephant one day last week, while the performance was going on, reached his trunk into a young lady's bosom, and took an apple out, much to the affright of the young lady and the amusement of the crowd! No matter; the young lady has seen the elephant!"

[5] For example, Gary Lindberg, *The Confidence Man in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Helen P. Trimpi, *Melville's Confidence Men and American Politics in the 1850s* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1987); and Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: a study of middle-class culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

Edgar Allan Poe's spurious account of a balloon crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.[6] In the following decades, Mark Twain and his fellow newspaper writers would occasionally dabble in the creation of fake news about wonderful novelties. Such literary frauds were designed to be read as humorous play, but deliberate lies designed to influence or inflame the public were published in American journals as far back, for example, as Benjamin Franklin's fictitious account in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of British officers paying bounties to Indians for American scalps in bulk.[7]

In the mid-nineteenth century, the business of publishing newspapers and starting journals and newspapers was only a little less speculative than prospecting for gold. Many initial issues were really experiments to test how many potential readers would align themselves with an editorial voice that mirrored their own convictions and interests.

These interests formed shifting communities into which a confidence man representing himself as a veritable Professor of Letters could issue a flaming prospectus for a newspaper or journal that would capture a local enthusiasm, produce an issue or two "on spec," gather up prepaid subscriptions, and then disappear with the cash.

That literary "Professor" existed. His exploits have escaped modern notice, and even his contemporaries grasped them only in a piecemeal way in bursts of semi lucid outrage by newspaper editors who had unwittingly been scammed themselves and tricked into acting as his promoters. His name was George Wentworth Weeks. He is the subject of this essay. Had there had been a journal for confidence men working as journalists, Weeks would have been its proprietor, editor, and correspondent. "The history and adventures of Weeks would fill a volume," wrote a reporter for *The New-York Times* in 1858, "Pass him around."[8]

**Inauspicious Beginnings**

In October 1855, the journalist Richard J. Hinton wrote an article for the *New-York Dispatch* entitled "The Career of a Confidence Man" in which he pulled together details of the

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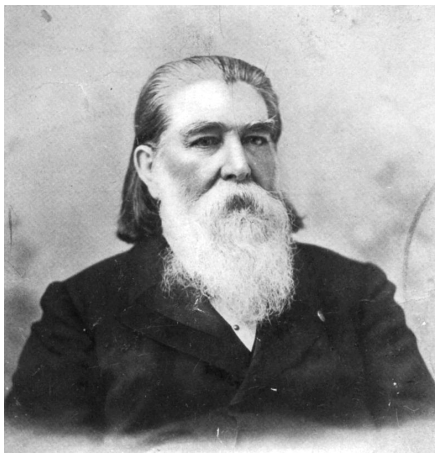
[6] Poe not only hoaxed, but evidently had himself been hoaxed; see his essay, "Diddling Considered as One of the Exact Sciences," *Saturday Courier*, 14 October 1843.
[7] James Parton, "Falsehood in the Daily Press," *Harper's Monthly* 49.290 (July 1874): 270.
[8] "California News and Gossip," *The New-York Times*, 14 May 1858.

early life of George W. Weeks. Hinton had formed a chance acquaintance with him a few years before, which had lasted several months.[9]



Richard Josiah Hinton

Hinton writes that Weeks was born in 1829 in the town of Pound Ridge, in Westchester County, New York.[10] According to Weeks, says Hinton, his father was a respectable farmer, a church deacon and preacher, who kicked his son George out of the house in 1845 at the age of sixteen when he caught George trying to seduce the young man's cousin. After that, George was on his own. Hinton says, "Sometime in the course of his peregrination, he got employment in a printing office, and learned to set type; he is a very quick compositor, and he has often, when nothing else presented itself, turned to the 'case' as a resource that never left him." Hinton also describes Weeks, as a young man of medium height and size, with light brown hair and hazel eyes. His phrenological characteristics included "small social organs, with the exception of amativeness," which was large, as was "self-esteem" and "destructiveness." He had attractive manners and "poetic" looks. "Altogether," wrote Hinton, "he is remarkably well calculated for success in the peculiar department of the 'confidence game' he has followed."[11]

Other writers supplemented this physical description of Weeks with a few words, and hinted at an indeterminate, even bisexual, epicene appearance: dandyish clothes, a slight lisp, a touch of "poetic" effeminacy, a "milksop," an inclination to seek the shade, and a glance that would suggest a sneaky forger rather than a violent thief.[12]

His physical appearance was not all that would contribute to his success in the "game." He was an outcast from his family and home, a wanderer, constantly moving, without permanent

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[9] R. J. Hinton, "The Career of a Confidence Man," *New-York Dispatch*, 7 Oct 1855. Richard Josiah Hinton (1830-1901) was a California Gold Rush forty-niner, a correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, and a coadjutor of John Brown in Kansas. For his biography, see *Richard Realf's Free-State Poems* (Topeka: Crane & Company, 1900), 7-21.

[10] So far uncorroborated from public records, as is his birth name.

[11] "George Wentworth, Again," *Richmond Whig*, 26 June 1855 (reprinting an article from the *Philadelphia Times*), added that he was "what young ladies could call a good looking man."

[12] The hint of bisexuality is in no way at odds with being a womanizer, as Weeks clearly was.

friends or employment, indulging in seductions and other forbidden and risky gratifications. A few people described him as unusually "charming." He had a knack for flattery. And he was highly skilled at improvising tales about his life, constantly shifting, always dissembling, spinning out stories that mirrored back to his victims what he sensed they wanted and admired.

By 1848, the itinerant nineteen-year-old Weeks had gained a wife whose name remains unknown. Later reporters would sometimes dub her "Wife No. 1."[13] He had also gained enough experience in newspaper offices to try his hand at editing and publishing. That was occasioned by an association with Offin G. Wilson, an ex-Wall Street stockbroker, accountant, and collector who moved to New Haven and started many newspapers in the area. At the time, Connecticut was known elsewhere for having many newspapers, and, within the state, New Haven took the lead. As one newspaper editor remarked, when noticing the initial issue of one of Wilson's publications, "New Haven *is* the seat of newspapers."[14]

Among early Connecticut papers had been the young P.T. Barnum's *Herald of Freedom*, which he published in his hometown of Bethel from 1831 to 1834 as an adjunct to his small mercantile store and lottery business. Apart from its many newspapers, Connecticut was also known, especially in the South, as the natural domain of "Yankee peddlers," "sharp" or "cute" itinerant merchandisers of shoddy metalware. They were satirized as offering "wooden nutmegs, Spanish cigars made of oak leaves, and worn-out pairs of shoes as having belonged to Saint Paul, as well as "Peruvian bark, Irish linen, indigo, …, &c. all of them the pure growth of the happy soil of Connecticut"—in other words, fake.[15] Also available from the traveling Yankee peddlers' carts were "Clocks that would keep no time; tin-ware that would hold no water; broadclothes, casimeres and domestic goods, which would do no service; ginghams and calicoes whose colors would stand no washing—all of Yankee manufacture, and all worthless, were scattered broadcast

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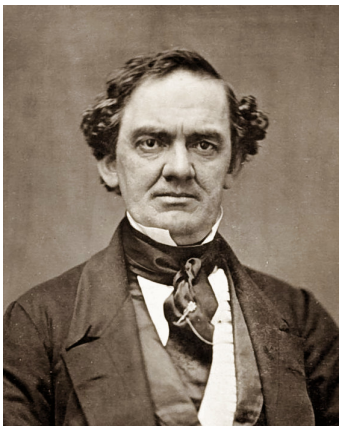
[13] Perhaps New Haven born Eliza E. Walkley (1826-1892), who married a George W. Weeks in New Haven on January 12, 1848 (marriage notice in the *Hartford Times*, 22 January 1848). If that was so, Weeks listed himself as "from Montrose, Pennsylvania." George Wentworth Weeks, Eliza's son, would be born in New Haven the following year.

[14] *Derby (Connecticut) Journal*, 18 March 1848. By 1850, Connecticut had ten daily newspapers and over forty weeklies.

[15] These examples are from South Carolina writer Thomas Cooper's satirical *Memoirs of a Nullifier; Written by Himself* (Columbia, S. C.: 1832), 7, 42-43.

through the land. The name of Yankee peddler became, at once, and has never ceased to be, a term of opprobrium, of scorn, and of contempt."[16]

Peddling worthless news and peddling worthless merchandise are similar. In the three years in which Barnum published the *Herald of Freedom*, he was successfully prosecuted three times for libel. Two decades later, he still smarted from one conviction, which had led to a large fine and two months of jail time. In his *Life of P. T. Barnum*, he admits he was technically guilty of the libel against a local church deacon, and that it was his youthful overenthusiasm that had led him to his intemperate claim.[17] The time in jail, he insisted, however, passed pleasantly, with continual visits from friends and supporters. When he was released, they formed a rollicking procession to celebrate and to escort him home, and a clergyman gave an oration on the "Freedom of the Press." It was, Barnum wrote, "a vindication, because of approval, of my course, and a condemnation both of the 'common law of libel,' and of all who had been engaged in my prosecution.'"[18]


Phineas T. Barnum, 1851

Some of Offin Wilson's papers, such as the *Fair Haven Express* and the *Saybrook Mirror* took root; others did not and died after a mere announcement of Wilson's intent to begin them, or after his publication of a few issues. The first newspaper published in the town of Meriden, beginning in March 1847, was Wilson's, the *Northern Literary Messenger*.[19] It advertised itself as "A Weekly Journal, devoted to Literature and the Arts, under the Editorial supervision of an

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[16] A South Carolinian, *The Confederate, No. 7* (Mobile, AL: 1863), 47.
[17] "Phineas T. Barnum was indicted for a libel on *Seth Seeley*, Esq. of Bethel. The libel charged Mr. S. with being a 'canting hypocrite'—with having been guilty of oppression and usury, in cheating a poor orphan boy in the purchase of a note, and of various dishonest practices in other instances," Hartford *Connecticut Observer*, 15 October 1832. A year later, Barnum was successfully sued by Alfred R. Knapp of Danbury for libel. "No attempt … was made by the editor to substantiate his accusations against Mr. K.," but in court Barnum gave evidence "that he had mortgaged all his estate and was consequently unable to pay heavy damages." The jury, however, fined him $215, "amply sufficient to show their detestation of the character of the libeller," *Litchfield Enquirer*, 4 October 1833.
[18] Barnum, *op. cit.*, 140.
[19] *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, 27 March 1847.

Association of Literary Gentlemen."[20] The prospectus for the paper was phrased in a semi-substantial combination of present and future tense. It *did* exist, but it *would* contain various features. "How far, and to what extent our intentions will be carried," the prospectus read, "will depend much upon the good feeling and liberality of the public." It strongly hinted that it was already filled with *original* contributions (italics in the original). It was to carry "Tales, Poetry, Sketches of Travel and Adventure, Criticism, Moral and Humorous Essays, Natural Science, Anecdotes, &c." as well as "an epitome of News, abridged in such a manner as to give the leading and important occurrences of the day."[21] Its prospectus noted that "The want of a high toned Literary paper in this state has long been felt." Subscriptions were payable in advance, and employment would be offered to "several active, intelligent, and honest persons, as canvassers for the above paper."

At the beginning, the paper consisted of an eight-page weekly of literary squibs written by pseudonymous amateurs.[22] Bits of news reporting eventually appeared in it. Evidence that its reporting was not as accurate and careful as it might have been lies in its article about an incident in Berlin, Connecticut that, if true, would have been widely reported, but had not been. Even if the article had some factual basis, it jumped to unwarrantable conclusions. That suggests the article was a deliberate frame-up to manipulate public opinion. It claimed that certain named rum sellers had placed a powder keg under a building where a court was hearing a case about an alleged infringement of the local licensing law. And that a fuse leading to it had been lit but had burned out before the powder had exploded.[23]

Wilson had first announced the paper from New Haven but moved it almost immediately to the nearby town of Meriden. The assumption that Weeks was involved in producing the paper there is justified by the fact that when the *Northern Literary Messenger* folded in February 1849, Wilson almost immediately announced that he would continue it under the title of the *Meriden*

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[20] "The Northern Literary Messenger," *Bridgeport Republican Farmer*, 4 May 1847.
[21] "The Northern Literary Messenger," Worcester, Massachusetts *Palladium*, 19 January 1848.
[22] On the evidence of the issue of 1 January 1848, at the Connecticut Historical Society. That issue says—perhaps disingenuously—that Ned Buntline (Edward Zane Carroll Judson) was considered one of the "association of literary gentlemen" who guided the paper. Buntline had already been tangentially involved with the *Western Literary Messenger*, published in Buffalo.
[23] "Rum Villainy," *Litchfield Republican*, 26 October 1848, reprinted from the *Northern Literary Messenger* of October 14.

*Weekly Mercury*, and that George W. Weeks would be its editor.[24] The *Mercury* began in March 1849, but six weeks afterwards, its office burned down. It was moved to another building but lasted only briefly before it closed. Several features of the *Northern Literary Messenger* would be taken up by George Weeks's later publications—It was a literary weekly, for example, and it was "under the editorial supervision of an association of literary gentlemen."

When Weeks's Connecticut newspaper came to a sudden end, he and his wife went to Clyde, New York to stay with his distant relatives. While there, early in 1850, he visited the office of the newly established *Clyde Times* and proposed to the publisher, Joseph A. Payne, that they form a partnership. But the "ideas of the contents" of the paper envisioned by this "young man of prepossessing appearance" going by the name of G. W. Weeks did not agree with Payne's "and the bargain was not made."[25]

A short time later, Weeks realized his "ideas" of a newspaper when he surfaced not far away, in Rochester, under the pseudonym of George W. Wentworth. He had been inspired by a series of novels written and published by Rochester lawyer John Chamberlin Chumasero. These were moralistic tales of criminal "mysteries"—*The Mysteries of Rochester* 1845), *The Landlord and Tenant* (1845), and *Life in Rochester, or Sketches from Life* (1848). Though these were acknowledged to be fiction, readers likely thought that Chumasero, an active lawyer, must have drawn on his inside knowledge of real criminal cases. A later historian wrote that Chumasero's villains "tarried so long over the awful crimes in the saloons and brothels and over the sharp practices of fraudulent merchants and greedy landlords that the final triumph of virtue and justice appeared frequently as an afterthought."[26]

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[24] *Derby Journal*, 15 November 1849; also, C. Bancroft Gillespie, *Description of the Town of Meriden, Connecticut and Men Who Have Made It* (Meriden: Journal Publishing Co., 1906), 391.

[25] "A Turk," *New York Tribune*, 22 June 1858; see also, Lockwood R. Doty, ed., *History of the Genesee Country*, vol 2 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1925), 1338.

[26] Blake McKelvey, *Rochester the Water-Power City, 1812-1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 315. These backscene criminal tales—"Mysteries of …" and "Life in …"—joined a large class of similar sensationalistic pamphlets and books about the poor and the criminal in urban centers, such as New York and Philadelphia.

Weeks's vision for his newspaper was one in which sensationalism and fiction mixed freely. In Rochester, he began publishing a weekly scandal sheet, *The Investigator*, which he penned under the admitted *nom de plume* of "Nel Wix."[27] The paper's motto:

> Laugh at danger far or near,
> Spurn at baseness, spurn at fear,
> Still with persevering might,
> Speak the Truth and do the right.[28]

The *Investigator*, however, according to Richard Hinton, was "a paper of the *Life in Boston* stamp, but that paper is disgraced by a comparison with the scurrilous, dirty sheet above mentioned." He added, "I believe that [Weeks] was horse-whipped by a gentleman he libelled, in the streets of Rochester."[29]

No copy of the *Investigator* appears to have survived, but if Weeks really did follow the practices of *Life in Boston,* that would have included *Life in Boston's* editor Samuel K. Head's extorting the wealthy or influential with threats to run scurrilous articles accusing them of real or imagined misdeeds. "Wentworth's" personal affairs were notorious around the city. "He was a fancy man among the ladies," wrote one editor a few years later, "and several claimed his attentions as a husband—some, we believe, with legal pretensions."[30]

Not only was Weeks/Wix/Wentworth a serial libeler, but he also plagiarized material, for which Alexander Mann, the editor of the *Rochester American*, often called him out.[31] The paper

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[27] His prospectus: *City and Country: Your Attention Is Hereby Respectfully Requested to a New and Interesting Novel, Entitled City and Country, or Vice and Virtue in Rochester. Written by Geo. Wentworth, Alias "Nel Wix." : ... This Thrilling Novel Will Form the Chief Attraction of That Large and Beautiful Paper, Nel Wix's Investigator, Published Weekly, at No. 9, Works St. Rochester, N.Y.* The only surviving copy is in the University of Virginia Library's collection of Chumasero's papers, which makes his actual connection with Weeks more likely. Some contemporary sources referred to Weeks' paper as *Nell Weeks' Investigator*. In any event, "Wix" was a refashioning of "Weeks."

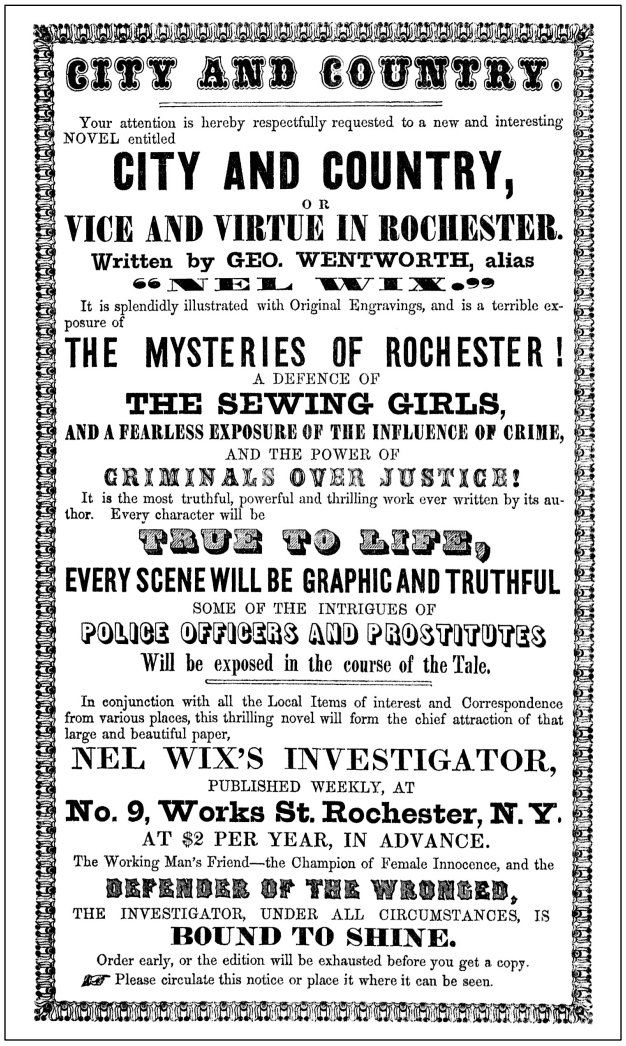
[28] Quoted in an ad for a feisty merchandiser, *Rochester Daily American*, 23 May 1850.

[29] Hinton, *op. cit*. *Life in Boston* was a Boston-based scandal and titillating gossip sheet started by William Berry in September 1848.

[30] "Nell Wix Again," Rochester *Union and Advertiser*, 15 May 1858.

[31] "Something More About Weekes," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 22 April 1858.

lasted a little less than eight months. By that time, "Wentworth" was deep in debt to creditors, but the coup de grace came when he was prosecuted for publishing a libel against Addy Van Slyck, a Rochester police constable. "Wentworth" had charged Van Slyck with gambling, but in court admitted that he had no evidence for it. He was fined $500 and given jail time. That was the end of the *Investigator*.[32]



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A DEFENCE OF

THE SEWING GIRLS,

AND A FEARLESS EXPOSURE OF THE INFLUENCE OF CRIME,

AND THE POWER OF

CRIMINALS OVER JUSTICE!

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EVERY SCENE WILL BE GRAPHIC AND TRUTHFUL

SOME OF THE INTRIGUES OF

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☞ Please circulate this notice or place it where it can be seen.

Weeks appeared next in Buffalo the following March, still under the name of George Wentworth, where he attempted to duplicate the kind of paper he had issued in Rochester. In Buffalo, he "immediately issued a flaming prospectus, employed able canvassers, and soon after commenced the publication of the *Sunday Herald*, a paper of the Ned Buntline order." There Wentworth added to the faults he displayed in his Rochester paper—plagiarism and libel—the invention of articles about his own heroic adventures about town, such as a story about his coming across a woman and her two ragged children, frightened and freezing to death, huddled in a ramshackle house beside their drunken and senseless husband and father, and rescuing them.[33] George procured about 1,500 subscribers, most of whom paid six months in advance, borrowed a considerable amount from many different persons in the city, and finally left, just in time to avoid prosecution triggered by a complaint by William H. Sanford, the local business partner who George had found to invest in the paper three months before, but whose line of credit George had used to enrich himself.[34]

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[32] Hinton, *op. cit.*; "Libel," *Rochester Daily American*, 2 July 1850; "Something More About Weekes," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 22 April 1858.

[33] See the Washington, DC *Southern Press*, 26 March 1851.

[34] The paper listed its publishers as "Wentworth and Thomson." "More about Wentworth the Bigamist," *Troy Daily Times*, 21 July 1855.

When he fled Buffalo, he abandoned his wife there without funds. A letter from a young woman in Paterson, New Jersey came to his address a few days later, which indicated that he had promised to marry her, and the compositors of the *Sunday Herald* took up a collection and gave his abandoned wife money to pursue him. Unfortunately, the outcome of that pursuit is lost to the historical record because the sources for Weeks's activities from late spring of 1851 to the spring of 1852 are exceedingly thin, consisting in the narrative that Hinton later pieced together from hearsay.

Hinton reports that Weeks surfaced during this time in New York City, where he swindled several persons and was forced to leave the city, but before he did, he briefly appeared on stage at the St. Charles Theatre playing the part of Claude Melnotte, the lead character in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's melodrama, *The Lady of Lyons*. Hinton is emphatic about this, perhaps because he saw a connection between Weeks and the character of Melnotte, who misrepresents his identity to a woman to trick her into marrying him, but then is brought low by his fraud.

By this time Weeks had married bigamously or, more likely, polygamously. In May 1852, one of his wives tracked him down and had him arrested and imprisoned in Moyamensing Prison in Philadelphia, while he awaited trial for bigamy.[35] He was saved from conviction when another of his wives, named in the indictment, appeared in a closed session of court and perjured herself. She later explained in a letter that "she had shown her devotion to him by acknowledging herself his *mistress*, thereby disgracing herself in order to save him from the Penitentiary," forcing the authorities to drop the bigamy charge and allow him to walk out into the world a free man. In her later letter, she explained "how they again came together, and swore eternal fidelity to each other; and how he had again shown himself to be a villain by deserting her."[36]

In August 1852, "Geo. Wentworth, Esq.," initiated the *Albany Herald* in New York State's capital city.[37] Wentworth advertised it as a weekly literary journal published by "the poet and novelist" (which was to say, himself). He had authored bits of open-ended serialized novels in his previous journals and had begun contributing articles and poems to other journals, such as the *Boston Literary Museum*, published by Ossian Euclid Dodge. Chester Tuttle, the editor of the

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[35] "The Bigamy Case," *Philadelphia Daily Pennsylvanian*, 21 May 1852.
[36] "A Great Scamp," *Louisville Daily Courier*, 16 August 1855.
[37] The title had been used by a newspaper in the 1840s and would be revived for another paper in the 1870s.

*Luzerne Democrat* in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, who had seen the first (and only?) issue, wrote that "The *Albany Herald* is devoted to the Ladies, Wit, Humor, Romance, Biography, History, News, &c." He went on to comment, "The 'Herald' is neatly printed, and is filled with gems from the pen of its able and talented editor. We commend it to our lady friends with pleasure. Mr. Wentworth is a young man, possessed of brilliant talents and has won an eminent position in literature. We wish him success."[38]

No copy of the *Albany Herald* appears to have survived, but that is not surprising because its main purpose was to con potential investors and subscribers out of their money. That conclusion is supported by a note printed by Ossian Dodge in his *Boston Literary Museum* in December warning other editors against Wentworth. It is unclear what monetary dealings Dodge had with Wentworth, but Dodge called him a "Jeremy Diddler," a common name at the time for a petty swindler, derived from the name of the eponymous lead character in the 1803 play *Raising the Wind* by English writer James Kenney. Promising to follow up with an article disclosing the nature of Wentworth's misrepresentations to him, Dodge did not do so in the following issue, citing only "personal reasons," but probably because it would have cast an unbecoming light on his own previous actions or judgment, or on those of others he wished to protect.

Hinton also recounts another extended episode in Weeks's career, which he places during this period, claiming that Weeks went to Philadelphia, found work there as a compositor on the *City Press* and seduced a physician's daughter, with whom he eloped to Lowell, Massachusetts. When there, he sometimes forged notes under the name of Robert Whitmore, and she worked for a time in the factory mills, until she gave birth to a sickly infant son, who soon died. Weeks then abandoned her.[39] This is supported by a short article in the Lowell, Massachusetts newspaper *Vox Populi* in October 1852, in which the paper's editor noticed that a new paper, entitled *Wentworth's Waverly*, had begun in the city, edited by George Wentworth.[40] Almost certainly, Wentworth deliberately chose the title so as to be confused with the popular *Waverly Magazine*, published by Moses Dow, which had begun in Boston in 1850. At the beginning of November,

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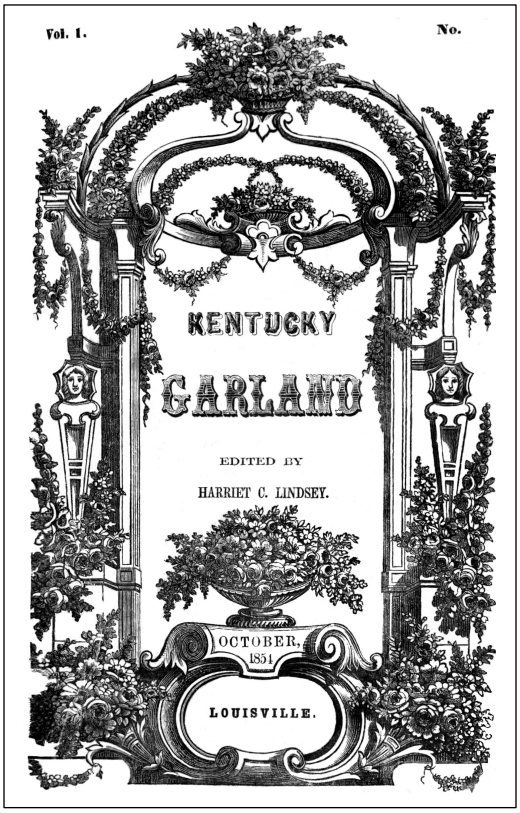
[38] "The *Albany Herald*," *Luzerne Democrat*, 25 August 1852.
[39] Hinton, *op. cit.*
[40] "Another Paper in Lowell," *Vox Populi*, 22 October 1852.

an infant named George Wentworth, Jr. died at two months of age, and was buried in the Lowell city cemetery.[41]

**From Mere Rogue to Con Artist**

The spring of the following year, 1853, found Wentworth in Louisville, Kentucky, working in a newspaper office's composing room. That year was a notable one for women's journalism in Kentucky, for it was in May that the first issue of the *Kentucky Garland* was published. Its proprietor and editor was Harriet Clairbourne Lindsey from Covington. Her husband, Robert R. Lindsey, had been the editor of the Mount Sterling, Kentucky *Whig*, but had died the previous year, leaving Harriet with eight children to raise but also with a practical knowledge of newspaper editing, so she started a literary journal to support herself and her children, and began canvassing around the country in person to sign up subscribers. She was especially attentive in sending sample copies to newspaper editors for their notice and recommendation, and she laid out her canvassing tours with an eye to presenting herself to local Odd Fellows lodges (her husband had been a member, and she was a member of Rebekah), asking them to support her journal.[42] These were long tours, as far north as Pittsburg and as far east as Washington, D.C.




By November Mrs. Lindsey had moved from Covington to Louisville and was struggling with the finances of the journal. She had taken on a partner (his name is unknown) who, it now became apparent, had been diddling with the receipts and expenditures for the journal, and who

[41] "Died," *Vox Populi*, 12 November 1852. Date of death was November 4. The child's mother is listed in the Massachusetts death records as Amanda Wentworth.
[42] See, for example, "Generous Conduct," *The Ark, and Odd Fellows Western Magazine*, 10.12 (December 1853): 371.

came close to bankrupting it. He tried to foist the consequences of his malfeasance onto Mrs. Lindsey by slandering her. Although she had to suspend publication of the *Garland* sometime in mid-1854, she was able to start it again in October as a new series. Shortly before she did so, she sent out a card to other editors. In it, she announced the resumption of publishing, and she wrote, "We are fully justified in stating to our friends that the causes which led us to cease our publication at the time we did, were entirely beyond our control, and brought upon us by the neglect and incompetency of a partner, if not by the *basest fraud and dishonesty.*"[43]

Who was this miscreant of a partner? No direct evidence remains, but George showed up in Louisville just as she began the journal's printing and publication there, and when she had to move there from Covington to pull things together as they were falling apart, George was no longer there. It is difficult to believe that he was not directly involved, for he would soon replicate Mrs. Lindsey's novel ideas of publishing a literary journal aimed especially at women, with a woman as its editor and its main traveling canvasser, looking to enlist the support of other editors around the country and depending on the good will of men who felt an obligation to support her.

After George first appeared in Louisville in the spring of 1853, the young woman who had married him and then perjured herself in Philadelphia to keep him out of jail followed him there and moved in with him. Wentworth, however, left Louisville alone "on business," perhaps late in 1853 or early 1854, skipping out on her and on several bills after forging a check to buy fancy new clothes.

He next appeared in Lexington, where he worked as a printer in the office of the *Lexington Observer and Reporter*. Its editor, Daniel Wickliffe, would later remember that Wentworth often bragged about his many conquests with both single and married women, that he wrote and published verses, and that he "sought the acquaintance of every young girl whose personal appearance pleased him. … Don Juan, he boasted, was his model."[44] That comparison

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[43] "To the old Patrons and Friends of the 'Kentucky Garland.'" Indianapolis *Free Democrat*, 20 July 1854. See also her editorial comments in the first issue of the "new series" of the *Kentucky Garland* 1.1. (October 1854): 62-4. In 1856, she joined with her eldest son in Chicago to issue the journal's continuation, *The Western Garland*, but that lasted for only three issues. Still living in Chicago in 1860, she briefly attempted a weekly newspaper entitled *The Chicago Weekly Visitor*.

[44] Reprinted from the Lexington paper as "A Scoundrel," *Natchez Bulletin*, 11 December 1857.

was deeply telling, but con artists have always been ready fabulists, lying without hesitation, on the spot, to fill in false but semi-plausible details in their backstories when questioned. Those backstories often make them out to be the victims of ancestry and circumstance. "He gives a very romantic account himself," writes Hinton of Weeks, "of his having been the victim of a conspiracy, by his uncle, who wished to defraud him out of a farm left him by his grandmother, which, however, I do not hesitate to pronounce false."[45]

In Lexington, Wentworth cast his designs upon Eliza Ella Hunter, the twenty-year-old single daughter of her widowed mother Margaret Hunter.[46] He courted Ella, but her mother was suspicious of him, though her daughter was smitten and pressed her mother for permission to marry him. A few years later, the *Louisville Daily Courier*, summing up what happened next, reported that Wentworth had confided his past marriages and present conquests to a couple of Lexington acquaintances. One of them wrote an anonymous letter to Mrs. Hunter, warning her that her daughter's suitor was a bigamist. She showed the letter to Wentworth, but he said it was a lie. To assuage her, he sent a telegraph, allegedly to his mother in Boston. A dispatch in return, "purporting to be from her," denied that Wentworth had been married. "Thereupon, Mrs. Hunter, apparently convinced of his honor, sanctioned the union, and the two left Lexington soon after, for Cincinnati, to be joined in marriage."[47]

In fact, they were married as soon as they left Lexington, in the town of Paris, Kentucky, on August 31, 1853. George reported his residence then as Concord, New Hampshire. Several days later, Mrs. Hunter received a frantic letter from George's previous wife, who was still in Louisville. She detailed the record of her own marriage to Wentworth, as well as the travails she had suffered in perjuring herself on his behalf and having been abandoned again. Soon after the letter arrived, she attempted suicide by taking an overdose of laudanum, but was discovered in time by friends who saved her. Wentworth, then on route to Cincinnati with his new wife Ella, paused their journey. As Richard Hinton describes the incident, "Wentworth heard of the attempt, and making some excuse to his [new] wife, hastened to Louisville. He quieted the girl's

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[45] Hinton, *op. cit.*
[46] Elisha (or Eliza) Ella Hunter, born 3 June 1833, Kentucky.
[47] "A Great Scamp," *Louisville Daily Courier*, 16 August 1855.

alarm by denying his [new] marriage, and after staying a short time, pleading business, left her and never went near her or heard of her afterward."[48]

In the fall and early winter of 1853, the nationwide Typographical Union led a series of strikes of compositors whose main demand was a higher rate of pay per line set. When a strike hit Pittsburg, Jane Grey Swisshelm, the women's rights advocate and publisher of the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter*, declared her frustration and announced that she intended to circumvent the strike and bring in cheaper labor—scabs, essentially—in the persons of women, who were not unionized: "It may be that the price set upon their labor by [unionized] printers is all right; but we cannot afford to pay it," she wrote. "Next week, we may have to set our own type, for aught we know; or, maybe, let it go without setting. We intend to have the *Visiter* office … prepared for employing women."[49]

In Cincinnati, some of the newspaper proprietors agreed to pay the Union's new rate, but others held out, including the *Gazette*, *Atlas*, *Commercial*, and *Columbian*. They, too, like Swisshelm, declared their determination to hire female compositors.[50]

When George Wentworth and his new wife Ella arrived in Cincinnati in the fall of 1853, George initially set in motion the same type of short-term literary journal scheme he had often conducted. It was to be called the *Sunday Waverly*. Wentworth sent copies of the journal to many newspapers so that they would notice it in their periodicals. But one of the issues landed at the office of the Lowell *Daily Journal and Courier*. Its editor immediately noted in his paper that "*Wentworth's Waverley*" was the familiar title of a paper of the same name that "was started in this city by a fellow named Wentworth about a year ago, which soon slumped through' and the editor absconded, leaving behind numerous unpaid bills and the woman whom he called his wife homeless and pennyless. It would be well for the people of the Queen City to know this Wentworth."[51]

Whether or not this warning reached Cincinnati or was much heeded there, it would surely have signaled Wentworth that he had become too notorious to succeed if he functioned as the public face of his journals. It was at this point, apparently, that he hit on the tactic of backing

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[48] Hinton, *op. cit.*
[49] Quoted in the Dubuque, Iowa *Weekly Miner's Express*, 5 October 1853.
[50] "Printer's Strike," Pomeroy, Ohio *Weekly Telegraph*, 29 November 1853.
[51] "*Wentworth's Waverley*," Lowell *Daily Journal and Courier*, 5 October 1853.

out of the limelight and operating henceforth with someone else as the ostensible editor and proprietor of his journals, and, inspired by Mrs. Lindsay's *Kentucky Garland*, that the supposed editor and publisher should be a woman, that is, his new wife. That fit into the ongoing strike in Cincinnati, and the idea that some editors had of using women to set type.

Weeks/Wentworth had begun as a mere rogue and irresponsible diddler who lied and cheated to establish what, with better or more honest management, or different content, might have become real or long-lasting newspapers or journals. Many people, fit or unfit, tried the publishing business. Some succeeded, some failed; some were honest, some were not; some tried to publish what was true or uplifting; some pandered to the lowest human inclinations. Some of those who failed may have found that when the operation folded, they had a balance sheet far into the red, but momentarily in the black in the form of ready cash, which, if they could avoid giving it up to settle their debts (avoid it, for example, by absconding with it) made them come out ahead. Several times Weeks had tried to start a paper, several times he had failed, but when he had failed, he took the money in the cash drawer, as it were, and ran, putting it out of the reach of creditors, and then tried again somewhere else. He had no commitment to those who had trusted him with their money.

His relationships to his investors, creditors, and subscribers mirrored his relationships to the women he romanced. He exploited both groups. Up to this point, however, he had not organized his career around a way to play one group against the other to his advantage. Shortly after his and Ella's move to Cincinnati, he changed that, turning himself into a professional confidence man with a plan designed to attract a maximum of cash before his publications exploded under the weight of debt. The periodic collapse of his newspapers and journals became a feature, not a flaw, in his design. As was the periodic abandonment of his female partners. Consequently, Weeks had to be in constant motion, a virtually anonymous traveler in search of new territory.

In Cincinnati, the periodical for which he issued a prospectus was entitled the *Literary Journal*. Shortly after he announced it, it came to be referred to informally as *Ella Wentworth's Journal.* It was not presented as a scandal sheet, but a high-toned periodical keyed to women's interest. George's prospectus portrayed the journal as being produced entirely by women and for women. He fronted Ella as the "editress," and advertised that most of the articles were and would be composed by women. Contributors were alleged to include such well-known writers as Lydia

Sigourney, Lydia Jane Pierson, Alice Carey, and Mattie Griffith. Females, exclusively, he claimed, would be employed to set the type and print the paper. Young women, who had previously earned only a pittance by sewing piecework, would be employed at a good dollar a day, either in the composing room or. as traveling canvassers, who also earned commissions, spreading out across the region to sign up subscribers.

The idea of a paper produced entirely from start to finish by women was brilliantly aimed to elicit a sympathetic response from women as well as from newspaper proprietors and editors struggling with the printers' strike. Ella Wentworth, the pretty young "editress," became not only its purported chief innovator and visionary, but also its most prominent canvasser, paying visits to the owners and editors of other newspapers, as well as to prominent businessmen, charming them into supporting the *Literary Journal*.

George stepped back out of sight, ostensibly acting only as the periodical's financial manager. The journal was said to be under the editorial control of "an association of ladies," a phrase that hearkened back of that used in the description of George's earliest journal, the *Northern Literary Messenger*, which was advertised as under the editorial supervision of an association of gentlemen. In truth, George masterminded the whole Cincinnati operation. Under a bouquet of female pseudonyms, he probably wrote almost all the content in the first issues, which he had had privately printed by a commercial job printer employing only men.

George also very carefully crafted the journal's editorial voice on the question of women's rights to appeal to the largest possible audience, avoiding what many perceived as a radical demand for women to "become" men. Instead, "Ella" simply asked that women be given equal pay for equal work, and that they be given the opportunity to make a living at work in which they could excel.

A newspaper produced entirely by women was something that had nowhere existed. Even journals and newspapers edited and written by women advocating their cause, such as Amelia Bloomer's *The Lily* and Mary Gove Nichols' *The Water-Cure Journal*, were handed over to men who laid out the pages, set the type, and printed the copies. The copy for issues of Paulina Wright Davis' women's rights paper, *The Una*, for example, was sent to the ex-Universalist minister, Spiritualist, radical social reformer and labor organizer Simon Crosby Hewitt, who laid it out, composed it, set it in type, and printed it in an office in Hopedale, Massachusetts, alongside the issues of the Spiritualist *New Era* that he edited and published. With the announced

novelty of employing women all along the line, therefore, "Ella Wentworth" jumped ahead of what her militant sisters of the press had been able to achieve.

George also wrote letter after letter, under an assumed name, to political and civic leaders around the region, asking them to support "Ella's" efforts. He received enthusiastic responses. He also really did employ a dozen young women as canvassers for subscriptions and as trainees in compositing, and, at least at first, paid them well. He gauged everything to present a pleasing front to the public.[52]

It was no wonder, then, that John Crafts Wright, the editor of the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*—a paper that was refusing to meet the strikers' demand for increased pay and that was threatening to bring in women to work as typesetters—effusively praised nearly every aspect of the "Ella Wentworth" project. It was equal to any other journal in the country in its typographical beauty, he wrote, but its main point of recommendation was that it was "the champion of a new system, and the exponent of a new principle" because it was "to be under the exclusive control of females." All the women, all along the line, from editress to typesetters, and so on, would work eight hours daily for what was at the time the good pay for a woman.

Editor Wright then compared Ella Wentworth's approach to women's rights to that of activist Lucy Stone, who, as he described her, set aside "all those delicate sensibilities which form the chief attraction of her sex," haranguing the curiosity-seeking public, speaking against marriage, and demanding the right to vote.

Ella Wentworth, however, according to Wright, "comes forth with all the diffidence of extreme youth, modestly shrinking from the public gaze, but still heroic in devotion to the oppressed of her sex, and pleads for them and their cause." She was a philanthropist who sought for women only the opportunity to work. "What nobler mission than this?" he asked. Then he copied approvingly "My Mission," a poem "by Ella Wentworth" (but probably by George) from the first issue of the *Literary Journal*, which began with these verses:

My mission! not to startle men
With thoughts that burn and thrill,
Nor by anathemas to stem

[52] See "A Ladies Paper," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, (New York), 24 December 1853; and "Something Practical for Women's Rights," *The Liberator* (Boston), 6 January 1854.

The tide of human ill!
Not mine to bask in suns of fame,
Nor revel on a deathless name,
By mighty wonders won:—
A holier work is near my heart,—
To heal a pang, to soothe a smart—
To raise a fallen one!

My mission! it is not to dream
Of flattery or power,
Nor feast and banquet as a queen
The mistress of the hour;
Not mine to revel with the throng
That wing the jest or swell the song,
And scorn the chastening rod—
Ah, no! with the eye of faith, I trust,
To lift a sister from the dust,
And point her up to GOD![53]

George Wentworth's newly refined scheme worked spectacularly well, at least at the beginning. By the second issue, the editress reported to her readers that 4,500 copies of the first issue had been sold or sent out. The journal's work rooms, it was said, were carpeted; there was a library and piano at hand, with a music teacher. Twelve young women were employed in the office and in the two weeks previous, seven hundred applications had been received from all over the country "wishing to engage with us … desirous to avail themselves of the present opportunity for a knowledge of type-setting."[54] Hinton claims that "in a few months his subscription list amounted to about fifteen thousand." The high times did not last. "With prosperity," writes Hinton, "came a recurrence to his old habits of licentiousness and debauchery, and he soon became involved in intrigues and scenes, which made Cincinnati too

[53] "Ella Wentworth and Lucy Stone," *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, 28 November 1853.
[54] See "Female Editors and Printers," Columbus *Ohio Cultivator*, 10 (15 January 1854): 28-9.

hot to hold him."[55] One of those intrigues resulted in his having to give $1500 to a woman with whom he had become involved. As a result, he suddenly departed, undoubtedly leaving a long list of creditors behind him. Before he left, George managed to negotiate a sale of the journal to a wealthy "literary lady," Mrs. Emily K. Bangs.[56] Ella stayed behind in Cincinnati to complete the sale before following her husband.

While she was still there running the operation, Ella fired one of the young women, a "Miss Foote," whom, it was said, her "brother" (George, of course) had hired to train as a compositor. Whatever the actual reason that Ella had discharged this young woman (had Ella discovered that George had been giving her private lessons?) the reason that leaked out in public was that Miss Foote wore a bloomer outfit at work. The grapevine among women's periodicals was strong, for Amelia Bloomer responded in the February 1854 issue of *The Lily*, the paper she edited, that Ella "didn't want her paper or her office to give any countenance to such an innovation. We have a young lady in our office who wears 'draggle skirts' but it never occurred to us that our reputation or that of our office would suffer in consequence."[57] A strong supporter of Bloomer, the social and political radical Sherman Booth of Milwaukee, seconded her criticism of Ella. "Poor, narrow-souled Miss Wentworth!" he wrote in his own newspaper, the *Daily Free Democrat*. Miss Foote, he added, "was the best type-setter in the office."[58]

Whether George took a copy of their subscriber list with him to Philadelphia was unreported, but it does seem that he thought of his flight as little more than changing the locale of *Ella Wentworth's Literary Journal* to Philadelphia, where he intended to carry on unimpeded,

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[55] Hinton, *op. cit.*

[56] Emily was the wife of physician James Sylvester Bangs. Mrs. Bangs, with difficulty, succeeded in publishing a version of the *Literary Journal* for a while. Her explanation of "George Weeks's" operation of the paper was reprinted in the Lawrenceburg, Indiana *Independent Press*, 24 May 1854, under the title, "The Wentworth Swindle."

[57] "Wouldn't Give Up the Bloomers," *Lily*, 1 February 1854, where Bloomer was commenting on the original reporting in the Cincinnati *Type of the Times.* Bloomer is quoted in Lorle Ann Porter, "Amelia Bloomer: An Early Feminist's Sojourn on the Way West," *Annals of Iowa*, 41.8 (1973): 1248-49. Bloomer had an exchange of comments with "Ella" printed in *The Lily*, on March 1 ("Literary Journal") in which Bloomer notes an article in the *Literary Journal* that seemed to dare Bloomer into engaging in an editorial back-and-forth, which Bloomer purposefully ignored.

[58] "Miss Ella Wentworth …" Milwaukee *Daily Free Democrat*, 7 February 1854.

with a new and enlarged cast of twenty pretty canvassers, each one of whom George carefully handpicked.

The first issue from Philadelphia was sent out in February 1854. Editors across the East to whom issues of the journal were sent praised it. It inspired an article in the Staunton, Virginia *Republican Vindicator*, probably written by its editor, Solomon Koiner, entitled "Female Editors." "How few of them!" he exclaimed, "Yet when you do find one how smoothly her pen glides along; how prettily her periods are turned and how natural her beautiful perorations! Why is it we have not more of them? We cannot tell, unless, here in the South, that false delicacy and modesty, which smother the flowers of genius, is too much observed."[59]

The earliest issue from Philadelphia described an imaginary tour of the offices the paper would soon occupy. George dreamed up a semi-plausible setting. To other Philadelphia newspapermen, the envisioned place was impossibly spacious and luxurious, the work schedule laughably languid, the workers' benefits ridiculous (a library, an hour a day of free music lessons on a grand piano, red velvet carpets, settees and cushions, ornate mirrors, an hour a day for lunch, another hour for "reading," etc.), the whole thing utterly utopian. One male editor in the city who commented on the extravagance of some of the details of the layout appears to have sensed some similarity in this "*bueno retiro*" to that of a high-class brothel. He predicted that many male editors would "certainly be all 'loafing' from morning to night" in its various rooms, for "the sisters certainly dare not refuse these privileges to their brethren" who visited from the "cold, cramped quarters" of their own offices.[60]

In fact, the journal's offices never amounted to anything more than a barely furnished couple of rented rooms where George wrote copy and received visitors, many of whom were young women applying for work, either as staff writers or as subscription canvassers. All of them, as Hinton remarks, were carefully screened by Wentworth in his office and were hired based on their looks and, presumably, what might today be delicately referred to as their ready "sociability." George's wife Ella was still in Cincinnati, completing the sale of the paper there to Mrs. Bangs.

Because only a few women were needed to front the main and branch offices of the *Literary Journal* to train in typesetting or to contribute a few articles to the paper, most of those

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[59] "Female Editors," Staunton, Virginia *Republican Vindicator*, 20 March 1854.
[60] *Bizarre* (Philadelphia), vol. 4 (February 1854): 285, clipping "Ella's" full description.

he hired worked as canvassers. George sent them out across Pennsylvania and into other states and he instructed each of them to present themselves as the veritable "Ella Wentworth" herself. Reporters later estimated that he had recruited twenty young women as canvassers, had married six of them and had gained "complete ascendency" over the rest.

George made many of them believe, one by one, that the *Literary Journal* was a real, going concern, that it was pioneering new fields of labor for women, that its generically named editress, "Ella Wentworth," would be received with public sympathy and praise, and that they might step into that role. They could also earn some fair money for themselves. By sending each of them into separate territories to canvass or even to open a "branch office," George aimed to groom them separately and keep each from running into other "Ella Wentworths" to whom he had promised the same thing. To each young woman, he could explain away any disturbing information she may have received about him, perhaps reframing his troubles as caused by unscrupulous partners and investors, or by lies spread by male editors who wanted no women in the business, or by other females who were envious of their successful efforts to raise women's status and give them a voice, or were jealous of anyone else's being "chosen." In a con game, this is known as "playing the marks."

All these women were George's victims. It is impossible to judge, at this distance, however, whether they were all equally innocent. Con artists rely on getting their victims to implicate themselves in a shady course of action. They offer them some benefit, such as money or honor, that they do not deserve, or some implausible, easy opportunity for a windfall. Many of the women who worked for Wentworth as canvassers agreed to misrepresent themselves as Ella Wentworth. Others allowed their names to be published as members of the "Ladies Publishing Association" which was said to be producing the journal. Each one who did, implicated herself in the fraud. Each had a stake in the game.

Wentworth's *Literary Journal* operation might not have been well pictured as a brothel, but perhaps one might better consider it as a seraglio, as his dispersed harem. When the press later uncovered the fraudulent nature of his journal and the details of his fleet of canvassers and his abundance of "wives," it was, by far, Wentworth's relentless libertinism, rather than his journalistic fraud, that truly shocked the public and made him notorious.

Not *all* the young women were passive, inexperienced, virginal victims whom he "deflowered" and "ruined," as the press suggested. Evidence for that comes in an article by

Joseph Medill, who, at the beginning of his illustrious career, was the editor of the *Cleveland Weekly Leader*. A young "Ella Wentworth" and her surprisingly young "mother" appeared in Cleveland and set about soliciting subscriptions for the Cincinnati *Literary Journal* after Wentworth had sold the journal to Mrs. Bangs. This pseudo-Ella Wentworth canvasser, however, continued to collect money and forward most of it to Wentworth. Medill sensed a swindle and penned an accusation against the "Ella Wentworth" who had pocketed what she had collected in the city rather than send it to Mrs. Bangs. He wrote, "We remember the tribe well, and well remember that they were ejected from the Weddell House, as they did not seem to be better than they should be, and what a fuss they kicked up in consequence, and what indignation they expressed! Many of our best citizens were roped in by these itinerant mendicant swindlers."[61] Clearly, these women were not simply gathering subscriptions by batting their eye lashes at charmed men. They were also earning extra from "many of our best citizens"—undoubtedly male—whom they "roped in" to their hotel room.

Weeks charmed young women and offered them jobs that would ostensibly free them from financial insecurity and fulfill any literary ambitions they might have. That was the bait. To get them securely on the hook, however, Weeks had to convince each of them separately that her success was inextricably bound up with his own, that she could entrust her destiny to him, could place her *confidence* in him, and could believe his explanation of how he and she would overcome difficulties and grab the golden ring of fame and fortune from an obdurate world.

He used various expedients to show each one that she could trust him—marrying her, as an extreme example, or promising to do so. If she was initially reluctant, he could intimate that if she were not willing, he could easily choose someone else among the women working for him. Once she was hooked, Weeks could progressively reframe her understanding of what was required, then use her to carry out the next part of his game, by sending her out to charm editors as the very able "editress" herself. She (and the other "Ella Wentworths"), not Weeks, carried out the con at ground level. When the whole operation collapsed, and the public discovered that they had been swindled, would-be subscribers would look first to the local newspaper editors who had recommend the journal and to the canvassers, and only then to Weeks, the prime mover. By that time, he was nowhere to be found.

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[61] "A Female Named Ella Wentworth …" *Cleveland Weekly Leader*, 15 March 1854.

Some of the young women may have been kept completely in the dark until everything crashed, and they were left without Weeks, without employment, estranged from their family, burdened with a soiled reputation, and facing a blank future. But a few others evidently saw more deeply into Weeks and his operation and made a calculated risk to pursue the game anyway.

When Ella finally concluded all the details of the sale of the Cincinnati journal, she traveled to Philadelphia to join her husband. She checked into her hotel as "Ella Wentworth," but discovered from the hotel restaurant's staff that three other "Ella Wentworths" had already registered there from different cities in Pennsylvania. One of them had sent one of them to Harrisburg to canvass members of the state legislature.[62] They had each come to Philadelphia to discover what had happened to *their* Mr. Wentworth. The result? "Exposure could not be avoided. [Wentworth] took the Cincinnati wife, late Miss Hunter, pocketed the grand cash [mostly from the sale of the Cincinnati journal], received from the other twenty [canvassers], suddenly decamped, and left a scene of heartrending misery behind him, which pen cannot tell. … The poor girls found themselves destitute and betrayed."[63]

George and Ella had another reason to disappear from Philadelphia. The *Philadelphia Register* had investigated the operation of the *Literary Journal* and published a sensational report on its swindles. When the sheriff came to the journal office to attach the furniture, George and Ella had already departed, but the sheriff found there a man who identified himself as "Charles Weeks," who was (on a bet perhaps) George's kin. The sheriff arrested and questioned him, but then released him. Soon thereafter, another person of interest appeared and was questioned. This was allegedly "Mrs. Weeks, wife of George Weeks, [who] testified that she had been married between five and six years, and that she had been sent on to Washington to obtain subscribers from members of Congress for the Ladies' Journal. She also visited Baltimore on her tour to obtain subscriptions and support. She said that George and Ella had fled to New York."[64]

The multiplication of persons operating under the same name and the use of aliases make it very difficult to say who this wife was—for example, whether she was in fact *the* wife—"No.

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[62] The *Philadelphia Register* reported that the Harrisburg "Ella Wentworth" was "a young lady of Camden, N. J., newly enlisted for the purpose, and whose past life of respectability had not led the community to expect she could be inveigled into such a fraud."
[63] "Weekes and His Twenty-Five Wives," *San Francisco Daily Globe*, 19 April 1858.
[64] "Charge of Conspiracy to Defraud the Public," *Baltimore Sun*, 21 April 1854.

1"—George had married in New Haven in 1848, or *any* actual wife of his at all. The expedition she mentioned, to Baltimore and Washington, *had* indeed occurred in March, and consisted of four people, two men (whom she named as George and Charles Wentworth) and two young ladies, at least one of whom identified herself as Ella Wentworth. They had hinted at that time that they were going to set up regional offices in both Baltimore and Washington.[65]

After the *Philadelphia Register* revealed the *Literary Journal* to be a humbug, women who were working elsewhere as writers, journalists, and editors responded to it in ways that were typified by Paulina Wright Davis' comments in *The Una*. She admitted that she had been "a little envious" of Ella Wentworth's success, but that, even so, she was sorry that it had been revealed to have been a hoax. "It seems that George Wentworth has been practicing upon the public sympathies," she wrote, "using the little ripple that has, with infinite care and effect, been made in favor of enlarging the business avocations of women, for his own selfish purposes. The baseness of the act is unpardonable, for he has not only imposed upon the public, and tarnished a good cause, but has induced a number of young girls to leave good employments and become his tools, and thus permanently injured them."[66]

The success of George Wentworth Weeks's continuing confidence game depended on his careful management of opposing necessities. On the one hand, to attract funds, a fraudulent literary project needed to be publicized as widely as possible to convey the impression to the potential subscribers, creditors, and investors that it was a solid and noble endeavor.

On the other hand, Weeks himself had to stay out of the limelight, invisible behind the scenes, unconnected to the project. This was required to claim a periodical's complete supervision by women, a decided selling point among its target audience. As Weeks's frauds and scandals multiplied and were reported and copied in newspapers around the country, it became

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[65] See the Washington, DC *Evening Star*, 22 April 1854, which quotes the *Baltimore Patriot*. The article claims the *Literary Journal* had eighteen thousand subscribers.

[66] "Ella Wentworth's Swindle," *The Una*, 1 May 1854. He had "tarnished a good cause," of course, by making it far less likely that canvassers for honest women's papers would find subscribers willing to trust them with subscription fees. But perhaps there was another reason for Davis to feel some relief that the scheme had been exploded. In the previous issue of *The Una*, under "Editor's Notes," she had taken Ella to task for disputing with a statement by Lucy Stone that marriage was slavery, assuming, of course, that Ella, a sister-in-the-cause, so to speak, had broken ranks. By May, the Wentworth swindle had been unearthed, and "Ella's" opinion no longer had to be dealt with.

increasingly important for success that he should not be recognized as the hidden hand when he launched a new journal. The need for anonymity was reinforced by the fact that he had to avoid arrest for the many charges of bigamy and of obtaining money under false pretenses that had been lodged against him. It was those charges he had to outrun, not any single disappointed subscriber to his fake journals who had been imposed upon for a dollar or two. Hoodwinked editors had their credibility and reputation as critical truth-tellers at stake, but they generally responded to the late revelation of the fraud by admitting to their readers how they too had been taken in and then dispatching their stories to other newspapers around the country as a warning against him.

Someone other than Weeks might simply have drawn back, found a job in some rural newspaper office as an obscure compositor under another name and settled down. Weeks, however, played a high-risk game that he had no intention of quitting. He was running his operation, fueled on promises that were impossible to fulfill, for the thrill of the adventure.

One might wonder whether one goal as a con man—scoring as much money as possible—might have been compromised by his enormous libido. Hinton writes, "This system of women's papers he carries on as much to gratify his unholy passions as to make money. Those whom he employs are mostly young and inexperienced girls, and the light in which he stands as a defender of their rights and the rights of their sex generally, sheds around him a halo of false light and nobleness, under which cloak it is easy to accomplish his purposes."[67] Building up a stable of women who would collect money for him may, at first thought, have seemed to him like a fine way to increase his profits while also meeting his desire for sexual conquests, but multiplying the number of women who were under the impression that they were each his all-in-all inevitably made the crash of his each of his operations unpredictable and unmanageable. By any reasonable measure, it was thoroughly reckless.

The very structure of his game, however, shows that he was not driven by a desire to accumulate women or money *per se*, but that they were tokens ultimately signifying that he had scored wins against long odds. Playing the game itself was paramount. He created its rules to maximize his thrill.

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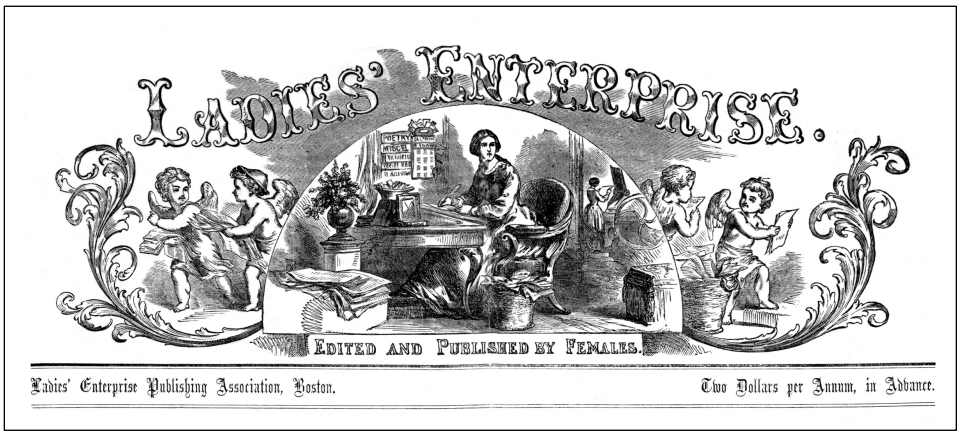
[67] Hinton, *op. cit.*

**Hitting His Stride**

After hurriedly closing the Philadelphia journal, George and Ella made their way to Montreal, where George considered setting up a new journal, but he quickly discarded that plan after Ella had canvassed the city, perhaps realizing that it would be too complicated in a French-speaking city. He left Ella in Montreal briefly and scouted out possibilities in Maine, at first settling in Augusta. He found work as a compositor at the Augusta *Age* and Ella joined him there as he began preparations for starting a monthly paper. Some canvassing by Ella, however, convinced him that Augusta had little potential, so he and Ella moved to Portland, where, again, he found work as a compositor, this time in the office of the *Eastern Argus*.




By this time, he had adopted a new alias, "William Winter" (or "Winters"). That was likely carefully chosen as echoing that of the young poet and literary essayist, William Winter, who had already published well-regarded poetry in the Boston press.[68] Ella, now acknowledging herself as "Mrs. Winter," also adopted a literary pseudonym, "Kate Carroll," for the purpose of fronting, as editress, a new literary journal, to be called the *Ladies' Enterprise*.[69] The public allowed, and even expected, women to use pseudonyms, like "Fanny Fern" and "Grace Greenwood" when they left the domestic sphere and ventured out into the literary world. This gave Weeks the opportunity to manipulate aliases of his

[68] Weeks's intention is almost assured by the fact that many people in Boston did confuse the two William Winters; see "Another Individual," *Cambridge Chronicle*, 3 November 1855.
[69] A "Kate Carroll" had been publishing sentimental fiction in women's journals at least as early as 1851—see, for example, "Stray Leaves of the Diary of a Physician," *Godey's Lady's Book*, 43 (November 1851): 285-88—and would continue doing so for several years, especially in the Boston *True Flag* in 1853-54 and in the *Perrysburg (Ohio) Journal* and the Cleveland *Ohio Farmer* in 1857-59. There is reason to believe that this "Kate Carroll" was Josephine Penfield Cushman Bateham from Columbus, who, during this time, was the co-editor, with her husband, of the *Ohio Cultivator*; see "Our Columbus Letter," *Ohio Farmer*, 13 May 1858.

female associates, confusing the public about their identities when conducting his scams and borrowing some of the fame of established writers.

The first issue of the *Ladies' Journal* appeared around June 1853. One of the good-looking canvassers he had hired to drum up subscriptions in Portland was the nineteen-year-old Priscilla Merrill, who had just graduated from the Yarmouth Institute nearby. By the time the first numbers of the *Ladies' Enterprise* were issued, Weeks had promoted her to become its assistant editress, and the receipt books of the paper reportedly showed a subscription income of a thousand dollars per month.

Another young woman, whom Weeks hired to learn typesetting, was eighteen-year-old Jennie Lydia Deshon from the nearby village of Buxton. Richard Hinton's article describes her as "of medium height, her form well developed and shaped; rich, brunette complexion; large black eyes, fascinating and beautiful in the extreme, lending a charm to an otherwise plain face; her hair was of a glossy blackness, and very abundant, parted in heavy waves over a broad forehead."[70]

A few months after George began recruiting the staff of the journal, his wife Ella became pregnant. (She would give birth to a daughter, Cora Hunter Wentworth, in Portland on August 14, 1854.) During her pregnancy, Weeks approached Jennie Deshon and told her he had decided to start a branch office of the journal in Manchester, New Hampshire. He told Jennie that he had decided to make her the manageress of that office, which gave him an opportunity of taking her away from her friends, thereby isolating her from their influences, and gave him a good excuse for being absent from his wife on the plea of business.

After the first issue of the *Ladies' Enterprise*, George established more "local offices," in Providence, Rhode Island—with Jennie Deshon's twenty-two-year-old sister Julia and Julia's husband Granville Akers—and in Worcester, Massachusetts, which George and Ella ran. These increased the journal's appeal in each of these cities and allowed canvassers to portray it as a local project deserving support. At the end of 1854, Hinton claims, they had collected about twelve thousand subscribers altogether.

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[70] Hinton, *op. cit.* Jennie and her siblings' last name varies in different sources—Deshon, De Shon, Dushon, or Du Shon. According to Hinton, moving Jennie to Manchester allowed George to separate her especially from a young suitor and co-worker in Portland.

In November 1854, the "editors" of the "*Ladies' Enterprise* Publishing Association" issued a pamphlet, "A New Year's Offering," to publicize the transfer of the main office to Boston and the beginning of a new "series" of the journal. The "association" consisted of six women, four of whom were "Kate Carroll" (Ella), Jennie Deshon, Julia Akers (Jennie's sister), and Priscilla Merrill (who would soon move to Boston to manage that office). The pamphlet described the progress of the journal in fanciful terms, bragging that circulation had grown from one thousand to thirty thousand, that the number of its offices had increased to five (Portland, Manchester, Boston, Worcester, and Providence), and that each of those offices employed twenty women, with the result that the *Ladies' Enterprise* was "now one of the most extensively circulated publications in the United States, *and affords employment to a larger number of persons than any other weekly paper in the world!*"[71]

Exactly who was writing the content of the issues is difficult to say. Certainly Weeks, without any byline, was responsible for much of it, but there were also contributions signed by "Kate Carroll" and others among the "Ladies Publishing Association." The name of Jennie Deshon appeared over articles that were presented as if they had been written by the editor, but she also began appearing simultaneously as "Lille Linden," or sometimes "Lille Liberne," a contributor of poems and literary pieces.[72] Mrs. Maria Buckley, a real writer who had published the novella *Edith Moreton; or, Temperance versus intemperance* in 1852 canvassed some for the *Ladies' Enterprise*, but it is unclear whether she ever contributed articles to it.[73]


Jennie Deshon

The tone of the *Ladies' Enterprise* was that of other journals published primarily for women. Like *Ella Wentworth's Literary Journal*, it occupied an editorial position distinct from that of more radical women's rights newspapers. Like Weeks' previous *Literary Journal*, it was

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[71] "Enterprising," *Portland Weekly Advertiser*, 21 November 1854.
[72] "Liele Linden" was the pseudonym of an author who published a light, but rambling, novel, *Chestnut Wood*, in 1854 about a girl who comes under the protection of her wastrel father and his associates. An advertisement by the novel's publisher, D. Appleton and Company, says, "They succeed in carrying her off, and concealing her in New York, where they employ her as an unconscious agent in the circulation of counterfeit money."
[73] "Communication," Burlington, Vermont *Free Press*, 2 September 1854.

said to be entirely produced from start to finish by women. Unlike that journal, however, it sometimes displayed an undercurrent of feisty playfulness. For example, a brief article, about an editor who published his deliberately ambiguous request for an "exchange" with the *Ladies' Enterprise* was cut and pasted over and over around the country:

> The "Ladies' Enterprise," published at Portland and Manchester, is set up entirely by females. We should like to set up with them.—*Albany Transcript*.
>
> The editor of the Transcript shall have our permission to "set up" with any of us, provided he will give satisfactory references as to his own good character.—*Ladies' Enterprise*."[74]

By the time the "Ladies' Enterprise Publishing Association" dispatched its "New Year's Offering" to the public in November 1854, Weeks seems to have sensed that the paper would shortly collapse, overburdened with debt, and that he would quickly have to gather up all the money he could extract from the operation. First, he convinced Jennie Deshon's brother-in-law, Granville Akers, to form a partnership with him, the Winter & Akers Company. Next, Weeks left his wife and their infant child in their hotel in Boston, telling Ella that he was going to Albany to manage the canvassing activities there for the *Ladies' Enterprise*, which were being conducted by twenty-four-year-old Miss Martha A. Carlisle from Worcester. Ella had already seen deeply (though perhaps not quite fully) into the fraud's big picture, as evidenced by her behavior at their Boston boarding house, where she never referred to him in the presence of others by a personal name, but only as "my husband." She was also obviously depressed, said the owner of the boarding house.

When Weeks departed for Albany, he took Granville Akers and Jennie Deshon with him. Jennie traveled under the name of "Miss Winter" as George's sister. Weeks left Priscilla Merrill in Boston to manage the *Ladies' Enterprise*. When he, Akers, and Jennie arrived in Albany, he met with Miss Carlisle and told her that he and Akers had decided to start a new paper, to be

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[74] "The 'Ladies' Enterprise' …" *Bangor Daily Journal*, 12 September 1854.

published in Albany, to be called the *Ladies' Repository*, and proposed that Miss Carlisle be the editress.[75]

Carlisle agreed, later saying she had not suspected that it would be a fraud, although she was at first nonplussed at being presented a copy of an issue of the *Repository* that had already been printed, listing her as editress as well as the assistant editress of the *Ladies' Enterprise*. She set out immediately to solicit and gather prepaid subscriptions for this new paper, not just in Albany but in Utica as well.[76]

George and Jennie then left for Rochester, Poughkeepsie, and other towns along the Hudson to canvass for prepaid subscriptions, with the charming Jennie, "of prepossessing appearance and fluent speech … and representing herself as being from Albany," taking the lead.[77] In some places, she introduced herself as "Miss Winter" and in others as Jennie Deshon.

When they arrived in Poughkeepsie, Jennie introduced herself to Albert Pease, the twenty-five-year-old, married editor of the Poughkeepsie *Daily Press*, and worked her magic on him. In retrospect he remembered that "Jennie was an object beautiful to look upon. There she seems to stand in symmetry of form, and grace of attitude, that shames the sculptured marble of the Grecian Venus. How beaming with the ecstasy of love, those soft, dark eyes, fringed with their long silken lashes, and arched with brows so beautifully penciled … how delicate! how thrillingly beautiful!"[78]

Jennie had a similar effect on men, young and old, "everywhere she wended her footsteps" in Poughkeepsie, filling up her subscription list and dollars. When Pease subsequently learned the truth about the "non est" *Ladies' Repository* and about Jennie, who had reverted to calling herself "Miss Winter," he wrote an article in his newspaper laying it all out. "Jennie" (but

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[75] From 1834 to 1843, the Universalist minister Abel Tompkins (who also edited and published the *Lowell Offering*) had published a *Ladies' Repository* in Boston. Also, a nationally popular and well-respected journal, the *Ladies' Repository*, with ties to, and funding from, the Methodists had been published in Cincinnati since 1849.

[76] "Miss Carlisle, Editress of the Albany *Ladies Repository* …" *Utica Daily Gazette*, 13 February 1855.

[77] Details of the Albany scam, including the full letter from Martha Carlisle explaining how she had been duped, were printed in "The Ladies' Repository," *Hudson Daily Star*, 27 March 1855; see also, "That 'Handsome Girl,'" *Hudson Daily Star*, 30 March 1855.

[78] John Guiled, Esq. [pseud. of Albert Pease], "Jennie L. Deshoe; or The Power of a Pretty Face," reprinted by Alexander N. Webb, editor of the *Hudson Daily Star* (who had also probably been stung), 23 July 1855.

almost certainly George under her name) wrote him, then, affecting the tone of a betrayed yet victorious flirt, sticking her cute thumb directly in his eye and in the eyes of all the men in Poughkeepsie whom she had bamboozled and could now subtly threaten to publicly embarrass:

> You meant me no good by the notice you gave me some time since in your paper, and yet you deserve my warmest thanks for the wide spread publicity you gave me for my "beauty," and also to the "Ladies Repository," of which I am the *sole agent and proprietress*, as many of your citizens very well *know*. The few hours I paused in your lovely city, I shall ever remember with a *smile* of gratification. I have "travelled" considerable for a "lone woman" of my age, and I have not met a more *generous and gallant* set of men than I found in Poughkeepsie! Your professional men in particular, seemed to take great interest in me and my enterprise. *One* especially, an elderly man, who keeps your office on your main street, not only subscribed, but promised if I would return in the evening, he would have five or six others for me. My time was limited, or I should have been there *with pleasure*. But not only your lawyers, but Doctors, seemed to take a great liking to *me* and *I seemed* to like them also, because *one* of them took the "Ladies' Repository," and *urged me to call* again. *Circumstances*, and my duties in getting out the first edition of my work, will prevent my accepting the invitation just now but if any of them will come to Boston, I [will] show them every *attention* in my power or *refund the money*. My press work now occupies most of my time but I thought I must rest a little just to let you know how much I value your notice of me, and to assure you that when the "Repository" appears, The Press will be considered one of its first exchanges.
>
> From *your obliged friend in funds,*
>
> "MISS WINTERS."
>
> P. S.—My "Ladies' Repository" is *no humbug*, if I have changed the place of business to *Boston*. Don't let the folks fret over their money. I have lost valuables in my time, but never found crying helped me—besides sight of *my face, my curls, and my winning manner*, are worth a dollar any time.
>
> Yours, *affectionately*, MISS W.[79]

[79] John Guiled, Esq. *Ibid.*

When George and Jennie stopped back in Albany, Miss Carlisle handed over more than six hundred dollars to Weeks, who said he was going back to Boston with his "sister" to arrange the long-term production of the paper. The next news about him, however, was published in many newspapers around the country. It was that he, William Winter, "while standing on Broadway, New York, … watching a military company, had the breast pocket of his coat, in which was a purse containing over six hundred dollars in gold coin and bank bills, cut entirely out by some light-fingered operator, who escaped with his booty without detection. The money was in a buckskin bag, more than half of it gold coin."[80]

Hinton does not hesitate to state that the robbery was a fake, that Winter had "robbed himself."[81] It is likely that George and Jennie had gone to Manhattan to rendezvous with Granville Akers and Jennie's sister Julia.

Immediately after the alleged theft, "Winter & Akers" ordered Priscilla Merrill to offer to sale a controlling interest in the *Ladies' Enterprise*, included its offices in various New England cities.[82] The offer was accepted by Erasmus Addison Norris of Boston, who had very recently taken over the Boston *Olive Branch* from his father Thomas Folsom Norris. The *Olive Branch* had already turned to using women as compositors, and Mrs. Mary Andrews Denison, was one of its editors.[83] Soon after the sale of the *Ladies' Enterprise*, Priscilla Merrill returned home to Maine. Norris then placed Denison in charge of it, as editor, and she and Norris soon had to pick up the pieces to keep it running.[84]

Meanwhile, according to Hinton, Miss Carlisle "waited in Albany some weeks in expectation of hearing from Winter and Akers, and during this time suffered every indignity from the exasperated subscribers, who were constantly calling in the office. At last [she] returned

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[80] "Robbed of $635," Manchester, New Hampshire *Mirror and Farmer*, 23 December 1854.
[81] Hinton, *op. cit.*; see also "An Interesting Chapter in the Career of a Scoundrel," *Louisville Daily Courier*, 17 July 1855, reprinted from the *Boston Times.*
[82] "Rare Chance for Business," *Boston Herald*, 25 December 1854.
[83] Mary Ann (Andrews) Denison (1826-1911). She was also a popular and prolific novelist. Before she had been given the job of rescuing the *Ladies' Enterprise*, she had been planning to finish her engagement with the *Olive Branch* and move to Washington, D.C. to take charge of the ladies' and youth's department of a literary journal that her husband intended to publish; "Mr. Denison," Washington *Evening Star*, 18 January 1853.
[84] Priscilla Merrill was married the following year in Yarmouth.

to Boston, where some arrangement was made with Mr. Norris, by which the subscribers of the Albany paper were supplied with the *Enterprise.*"[85]

In March, Carlisle, back at home in Worcester, was still receiving letters from disgruntled subscribers she had canvassed. One of her replies was reprinted in the *Hudson Daily Star*. She wrote, in part, that she wished the complainers who sent her letters "could all know without my writing, that they have been most *shamefully imposed upon* by two villains in the shape of men, instead of ladies, as many suppose,—although *you* was by a girl,—*I cannot call her lady.* … Mr. Winter left in company with Miss Jennie L. Deshon, a girl from Buxton, Me., *and she* I suppose is the one that obtained subscribers in your place. … I waited awhile in Albany for them to return; did not believe they could be so mean, but they did not, so returned to my home in Worcester, and have learned a lesson I shall not soon forget."[86]

Back in Boston all this time was George's wife Ella, now penniless and still waiting with her infant daughter for her husband to return from his "business trip." He never arrived. She was still there when the Boston press discovered that "William Winter" was in fact the notorious George Wentworth, who was also the infamous George Wentworth Weeks. Much editorial ink in newspapers far and wide was spilled in trying to piece together his backstory, with varying success.[87] Mary Denison, as the new editor of the *Ladies' Enterprise*, would publish in its pages details of its sordid past alongside her promise to carry it on henceforth in an honorable fashion.[88]

Some of the women of the original *Ladies' Enterprise* back in Boston could not bear to believe or admit the full embarrassing truth that George had flimflammed them. Hinton writes that many of the women that George had involved in canvassing for the journal had given their names to the public as part of the "Ladies Publishing Association," which now branded them as part of a fraud, but, even so, some of them continued to "shield him from getting the full measure of scorn he deserves."[89]

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[85] Hinton, *op. cit.*
[86] "The Ladies' Repository," *Hudson Daily Star*, 27 March 1855.
[87] Reporters uncovered, however, two more aliases that Weeks had used at times—"James D. Wilbertine" and "Maurice," whose adventures I have not found.
[88] M. A. Denison, "A Scoundrel at Work Again," *Ladies' Enterprise*, 17 May 1856.
[89] Hinton, *op. cit.*

**Editors Please Copy**

Advancing not far in front of the expanding wave of bad publicity, the two couples that constituted "Winter & Akers" made their way south. They were "William Winter," Jennie Deshon, her sister Julia Akers, and Julia's husband Granville. For Jennie, it was an expedition to relocate the erstwhile *Ladies' Repository* of Albany in a more hospitable clime, with her, under the name "Lille Linden," as editress, and the other three as what she would later disingenuously refer to as her "employees."[90]

In March 1856, about a month after they abandoned the *Ladies' Enterprise*, they stopped in Richmond, Virginia and set up the operation there for the *Ladies' Repository*. They had already assembled a first issue and had it printed up. By the beginning of April, they had begun mailing out copies to editors and local luminaries, seeking their support. Lille most likely made personal appeals to state legislators there during their annual session. They also convinced at least one Virginia literary celebrity to agree to be added to the paper's roster as an editor. She was Martha Haines Butt, whose essays had appeared in several journals, and whose novel, *Antifanaticism: A Tale of the South*, written as a rejoinder to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, had been published in 1853.

The two couples made a rapid trip south from Richmond, stopping in Norfolk and then in Charleston, where the charming "Lille Linden" visited newspaper editors along the way. For them, she maintained the fiction that she was being accompanied only by her sister and brother-in-law, but she was registering at hotels as "Winter's" wife.

When they arrived in Charleston, Lille Linden again stepped into the sole spotlight. In her public description of her newspaper, she suggested that it would be published, or perhaps partially run, in Charleston, and that it would be "under the editorial management of several Ladies of literary reputation." A Charleston newspaper ad for "Lille Linden's New Paper," said its plan and policy would be "to present, in an elegant and graceful form, such thoughts and sentiments as will tend to elevate the heart, and to cultivate a taste for the useful and the beautiful. … It will aim to prove a faithful mirror of the fashionable world, and at the same time

[90] "A Card from Lille Linden," *Charleston Daily Courier*, 16 April 1855.

to offer such wholesome thoughts as will prove acceptable and beneficial to all classes of society.[91]

Given the choice of "wholesome thoughts" and those that faithfully mirror "the fashionable world," however, most newspaper editors would readily recognize which would more likely attract readers. The single most quoted or reprinted piece of writing that ever appeared in any of George Wentworth Weeks's many periodicals was published in the first issue of the *Ladies' Repository*, under the byline of Lille Linden. It would be passed around, mostly unattributed, in one form or another in newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic for the next thirty years:

> Kisses are an acknowledged institution. It is as natural for 'folks' to like them as it is for water to run down hill, except when it is so cold that it freezes and can't run at all. Kisses, like faces of philosophers, vary. Some are hot as coal-fire, some sweet as honey, some mild as milk, some tasteless as long-drawn soda. Stolen kisses are said to have more nutmeg and cream than other sorts. As to promised kisses, they are not liked at all. We have made it our business to inquire among our friends, and they agree with us, that a stolen kiss is the most agreeable—that is, if the theft is made by the right person. Talk of shyness and struggling, no wonder! when some bipeds approach, it is miraculous that ladies do not go into convulsions. We do not speak altogether from experience, but from what we have heard others say. We have been kissed a few times, and as we are not very old, we hope to receive many more.[92]

After reprinting this, the editor of the Charleston *Daily Courier*, the seventy-four-year-old Aaron Smith Willington, commented on the "spicy pen of Miss Lille Linden": "If after this declaration, we may say this *gallant* sortie upon the absurd prejudices of her prudish sex, the chivalry of Richmond and the Old Dominion don't rally to her support, we shall be very much disappointed in their native spunk and heroism."

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[91] "Lille Linden's New Paper, The Ladies Repository, A First Class Literary Paper; Edited and Conducted by Ladies," *Charleston Daily Courier*, 2 April 1855.

[92] "The Ladies' Repository," *Charleston Daily Courier*, 2 April 1855; "Something About Kisses by a Judge," *Petersburgh Daily Express*, 14 May 1855. This had also appeared the year before in the *Ladies' Enterprise*; see "All About Kisses," *Portland Weekly Advertiser*, 5 September 1854.

He would not be disappointed; the chivalrous spirit of Virginia's newspaper editors—and of the male population in general—did indeed rally to her. Robert Ridgeway, the editor of the *Richmond Whig* wrote of her that "by the report of all who have had the felicity to catch a glimpse of her, she is the sweetest creature that soft breezes ever fanned."[93] Not only was she attractive and charming, which, of course, aroused one kind of male response, but she was also modestly but fashionably dressed—by appearance an indisputably respectable woman. That did arouse the spunk of male chivalry: The unusual spectacle of a *respectable* woman publicly *soliciting* for anything—and for the noble cause of justice for her sex—triggered a perception that she was willing to sacrifice herself and her reputation, and thereby stirred the chivalrous male *gallant's* desire to protect her from any slings cast against her honor. It was with the men, young and old, in the cities in which she canvassed—Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk, Fredericksburg—that she was reported to receive the greatest support. James Cowardin, the editor of the *Richmond Dispatch* would later recall her "exquisite genius for solicitation, the whole combined with the utmost propriety of manner, achieved success for her applications wherever they were made. … The old bachelors especially came down to Lille with unanimity and enthusiasm. The sternest of their fraternity yielded to her fascinations as readily as icicles surrender to the sunbeams."[94]

Despite that, not every Virginia newspaperman was enchanted. James Moore, the editor of the *Norfolk Courier*, became convinced that the Lille Linden and her traveling companions who were passing through the city in April were really the Yankee swindlers pointedly described in the February issue of the *Ladies' Enterprise* in Boston, which had been published by the new editor, Mary Denison, to clear the air. Moore ventured his conviction in his paper, in an article entitled "Rather Suspicious," and thereby began a three-month controversy aimed at solving the "mystery" of Lille Linden. In this contretemps, the Richmond press largely played the role of interested spectator. Cowardin of the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* wrote that Miss Lille had "complimented us in May with a bowl of very fine strawberries … The bowl is still in our counting room; it is cracked! Is it a type? When we saw the scandal about Lille and received the

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[93] "The Lille Linden Mystery!" *Petersburg Daily Express*, 30 July 1855, reprinting the *Richmond Whig.*
[94] "Ladies Repository," *Richmond Dispatch*, 3 July 1855.

budget of reports about her, we looked at the bowl and pitied it. It may be mended. Can Lille mend her reputation?"[95]

Lille (but probably George) hit back against Moore by threatening a libel suit. In letters to the Richmond papers, she "explained" that some editors were envious of her success in gathering subscribers so quickly and had reacted by publishing attacks against her. Her letter to the *Richmond Whig* ended with a challenge: "I now appeal to the citizens of Norfolk, and ask you if you will permit a ruthless Editor to attack and ruin the character of a defenceless girl, who has nothing on earth which she values except her good name."[96]

While Lille was busy playing an aggrieved innocent, another volley was lobbed at her from the ladies of the Northern press. This came from Anne Elizabeth McDowell, the editor of the *Woman's Advocate* in Philadelphia, and her assistant editor, Lydia Jane Pierson. They had just begun the *Woman's Advocate* the previous January, when the *Ladies' Enterprise* in Boston was imploding, but a full four years after "Wentworth's" *Literary Journal* in Cincinnati first advertised itself as being produced entirely by women. The *Woman's Advocate's* masthead resembled that of the *Ladies' Enterprise* in that they both pictured two women working at different tasks in a printing office, and McDowell and Pierson advertised the *Woman's Advocate* as "*the only Newspaper in the World,* owned, edited, published, and printed by Women!" It also actively advertised for women to work as canvassing agents across the country and promised to pay them "as high as men would be for the same labor."[97] On the face of it, McDowell and Pierson's paper looked as though its special

Detail from the masthead of the *Woman's Advocate*

[95] "The Ladies' Repository," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 3 July 1855.
[96] "The Ladies' Repository," *Richmond Whig*, 4 May 1855.
[97] Prospectus for the *Woman's Advocate* for 1857.

virtues had been both inspired by the *Literary Journal* and the *Ladies' Enterprise* as well as tainted when they turned out to be frauds.[98]

When the editors of the *Woman's Advocate* discovered that a "Lille Linden" was issuing a *Ladies' Repository* in Richmond and figured out who was involved, they began making an issue of it in their own paper, copies of which they sent to Richmond editors. When their revelations began to arrive, Martha Haines Butt immediately notified the papers that she had withdrawn from any connection with the *Ladies' Dispatch*, and that the connection had, in any event, been merely nominal.[99]

Jennie's initial response to the attacks from Philadelphia was strong but did not deny the charge that she was the Lille Linden of Boston notoriety. "It has been stated that the Repository was gotten up by a swindling man," she wrote, "and that my name, has been used to further dishonorable aims. I would here state, that I, Lille Linden, am the sole proprietor of the paper, and have been since its commencement," resting her claim on a technicality. "I can only say that I have used honorable means to accomplish so much, and that with God's help, I will push on steadily and unflinchingly. I hereby invite our citizens, one and all, to call on me at my office, to inspect my business minutely, to look over my accounts, my receipted bill, &c., and then judge for themselves whether I am entitled to their confidence."[100]

McDowell and Pierson, pressing their attack, responded to this with an article entitled "Who is Lille Linden?" They wrote, "Did you not go to Richmond, or to the South somewhere with George Wentworth, *alias* Winters, *alias* Weeks, *alias* Wilbertine, and any quantity of other names? Did he not manage and arrange the whole affair of starting the 'Ladies Repository' as well as other swindling concerns, pretending to be edited, published and printed by women?"[101]

At that point, George made himself scarce and left Jennie to fend for herself. She wrote a letter to the *Woman's Advocate* in which, to exonerate herself, she admitted her connection to "Winter," but blamed him for everything. She wrote that she had never known her silent partner

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[98] The timing of the appearance of the *Woman's Advocate* and its specific claims about itself raises the question of whether McDowell had been connected with the Philadelphia version of the *Literary Journal.*

[99] "Ladies Repository," *Richmond Dispatch*, 3 July 1855.

[100] "Lille Linden Again," *Lynchburg Virginian*, 6 July 1855.

[101] "The Lille Linden Mystery!" *Petersburg Daily Express*, 30 July 1855, reprinting the *Richmond Whig.*

by any other name than "Winters." And she revealed that "Winters acted as agent for her, closing his agency by running off with the funds and leaving her penniless," and that he had not been in Richmond since June, but had left for Europe.[102] It was soon revealed that George had taken ship to England, followed shortly thereafter by one of the young women from the Boston office of the *Ladies' Enterprise*, whose name was not revealed in the papers, presumably because it would be indelicate to do so.[103]

Ella Wentworth, perhaps known to Jennie only under Ella's *nom de plume* of "Kate Carroll," had come to Richmond with her infant daughter and was boarding with Jennie, perhaps even helping her keep the *Ladies' Repository* afloat. Perhaps Jennie's sister Julia and Julia's husband Granville were still in Richmond, but in any event "Lille Linden" had been working for more than a month on her own "spunk" and whatever she could get from new subscriptions to keep the *Ladies' Repository* going. She managed to publish issues until about May of the following year.[104] Some members of the Richmond press, which had so readily been charmed by her when she first appeared there and had taken up her cause, continued to declare their allegiance to her, although they may well have recognized that she had been defeated. When the *Woman's Advocate* continued to go on about Lille—gratuitously and meanly, the Richmond editors seemed to think—Robert Ridgeway of the *Richmond Whig* shot back that "Those two horribly ugly women in Philadelphia" were "down again upon Lille." He attributed it to envy, "the besetting infirmity of the sex," which had been inflamed by "a rival sister's superior charms."[105]


Jennie Deshon (Wood)

A year later, after the *Ladies'* Repository was no more and Lille Linden was fading in Richmond's memory, editor Ridgeway noted a public auction at which a random lot of

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[102] "Lille Linden Again," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, 31 July 1855.
[103] Mary A. Denison, "A Scoundrel at Work Again," *Ladies' Enterprise*, 17 May 1856.
[104] See "Cabbaging," *Greensboro Times*, 15 May 1856, in which the editor accused the editress of the *Ladies' Repository* of plagiarizing a poem from their paper.
[105] "Lille Linden," *Richmond Whig*, 3 August 1856.

miscellaneous printed handbills had been sold "at the miserable sum of fifty cents." The lot included a batch of lithographic likenesses of "Lillie Linden," and that was a shame, he wrote, for "one likeness of Lillie—'Sweet Lily,' if like the beautiful original, was alone worth it."[106] That may have been so, but Jennie Deshon's path appears never again to have led her back to Richmond—or to George Weeks.[107]

**Pressing Ahead**

When Weeks arrived in Britain in June 1855, he travelled to Edinburgh, presumably to be in the penumbra of the renowned *Blackwood's Magazine*, which was published there. Perhaps, according to his usual routine, he worked as a typesetter. He also announced and published initial issues of what he entitled the *Waverley Journal*.[108] Like his previous journals, it was said to be written and published by women. The woman he found to be its "editress" was Eleanor Duckworth Skillicorn, born in Liverpool in 1832. She listed herself in the journal merely as "Eleanor Duckworth." Its business manager and publisher was "William Winter" (Weeks had kept his most recent alias). He married Eleanor in Edinburgh in June 1856.

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[106] "At a Discount," *Richmond Whig,* 21 July 1857.

[107] After the *Ladies' Repository* experience, Jennie had resources—in skills and knowledge of printing—that shaped the rest of her life. Moving to Chicago in 1857, she met a newspaperman, Philyer Louis Wells, who worked for Jonathan Wentworth's *Daily Democratic Review* and then the *Chicago Post*. She and Wells married in 1859. He specialized in commercial reporting and eventually started a successful paper, the *Daily Commercial Letter*. When he died from the effects of alcoholism in 1862, at the early age of 38, Jennie took over the paper and became the proprietor of the company, which did job printing as well. In 1870, while still only thirty-four, but with plenty of printing experience, she attracted the affections of the Chicago-based Rev. Glen Wood, a widowed Presbyterian minister and the general representative of the American Tract Society, which printed and distributed religious tracts and pamphlets across the United States and internationally. He was twenty years older than Jennie. After becoming his wife, Jennie took on leadership roles in philanthropic and church work, becoming a vice-president of a Chicago chapter of the WCTU, for example, and an officer of various ladies' commissions for religious outreach. When Rev. Wood stepped down from his position with the American Tract Society a few years before his death in 1893, he founded the Children's Aid Society, which aimed to raise funds for nurseries for the children of poor working mothers, and Jennie took a leading role in its activities, succeeding him as its director after he died. Her brief obituary notice in 1926 observed that she was one of Chicago's oldest residents.

[108] The few remaining sources sometimes referred to it as the *Waverly Journal.* No copy of an issue has survived.

A letter from Edinburgh in April said of Eleanor, "She has organized a staff of lady canvassers, I am told; and when one of the girls calls upon you the appeal to 'try it for a quarter' is of course irresistible. … No single copies are sold; it is supplied only to those who subscribe for a period."[109] The writer also detected what he thought was Miss Duckworth's decided Yankee tone in her phraseology and her knowledge of American matters. That was no doubt because "William Winter" was the real author of her articles. Nevertheless, the reviewer liked it. "Miss Eleanor is unquestionably a brick," he wrote.

To give the canvassers something else to offer potential subscribers, "William Winters" also published a collected volume of about a hundred pages of "Eleanor Duckworth's" *Poems and Sketches*.[110] It is impossible to say who wrote all of it, but George certainly is a leading candidate: One of the poems, for example, "My Mission," was simply "Ella Wentworth's" from his earlier Cincinnati *Literary Journal* ("My Mission! not to startle men, / With thoughts that burn and thrill"). The frontispiece was an engraving of Eleanor dressed rather as if she had stepped out of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*.

Eleanor Duckworth, frontispiece to *Poems and Sketches*, 1856

Three British women who contributed articles and poems to the journal were Isa Craig, Barbara Leigh Smith, and Bessie Rayner Parkes. Smith and Parkes soon wished to become more than contributors (and presumably canvassers), and to set up a branch office in London, so Weeks, agreeably, negotiated with them to sell a half interest in the journal.[111] Afterwards, Smith and Parkes decided they wished to change the direction of the periodical but found themselves frustrated by

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[109] "Metropolitan Gossip," *Falkirk Herald*, 10 April 1856. *Hogg's Instructor* (Edinburgh) was also pleased with the journal; see "Straightforward Poetry.—A Love Story" (1856): 465-69.
[110] *Poems and Sketches by Eleanor Duckworth, Editress of the 'Waverley Journal'* (Edinburgh: William Winter, 1856) https://books.google.com/books?id=k7Bknf6urJgC&source=gbs_navlinks_s
[111] "A Bibliography of Edinburgh Periodical Literature," *Scottish Notes and Queries* 4.12 (June 1903): 182.

what seemed to be an unreasonable price Weeks asked for full ownership.[112] As with his earlier papers, Weeks had tried to establish "branch offices"—in Glasgow and Belfast—but it never did well enough to leave a solid mark on the British press.[113] "Winter" folded the *Waverly Journal* by selling its name to someone else. After abandoning the *Waverly Journal*, he and "Miss Duckworth" started another journal, from London, in March 1857 titled *The Englishwoman's Review, and Drawing Room Journal of Social Progress, Literature, and Art*, which was offered, like other periodicals, by booksellers, and found some favorable reviews.[114] Although Eleanor Duckworth was still the titular editor through at least December, "Winter" may have quickly abandoned it as well as the then-pregnant Eleanor Duckworth Winter and left Britain to sail back to the United States.[115] He carried with him a trunkful of British literary journals filled with articles he intended to cut and paste into his next journal.

After Smith and Parkes dropped negotiations with him, they and Craig started a new journal altogether, the *English Woman's Journal*, published from London, reckoned as the first British feminist journal, the initial issue of which appeared in March 1858.[116]

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[112] Correspondence exists between Parkes and George Eliot concerning Parkes' frustration and about what direction the journal might take if she and Smith could gain ownership. See Pauline A. Nestor, "A New Departure in Women's Publishing: 'The English Woman's Journal' and 'The Victoria Magazine,'" *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 15.3 (Fall 1982): 93-106.

[113] See Mary A. Denison, "A Scoundrel at Work Again," *Ladies' Enterprise*, 17 May 1856; "New Literary Paper in Belfast," *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 September 1856; and "The Waverly Journal," *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, 18 April 1857.

[114] For an advertisement for *The Englishwoman's Review*, see *The Athenaeum* (London), 28 March 1857, page 393, in which payment is directed to Elizabeth Bennet Skellicorn. "The Englishwoman's Review," *Newcastle Journal*, 18 July 1857; "Literary Notices," *Durham County Advertiser*, 11 December 1857. George's bemused spirit, however, seems to have lingered on even into July 1857, in a widely copied notice: "The *Englishwoman's Review*, a new London newspaper, 'edited by Eleanor Duckworth,' brings to our knowledge the *Woman's Advocate*, a Philadelphia journal, edited and printed by women. The fair compositors receive the standard wages of the Printers' Union; and yet the associated printers in small-clothes ungallantly forbid any of their number working in the same office with a woman!" (*Isle of Wight Mercury*, 25 July 1857).

[115] Eleanor Elizabeth Winter was born in mid-June and was baptized in Liverpool. Eleanor Duckworth Winter and her young daughter was living there in the 1861 Census. She married again in 1864 and had three more children. She died in 1874.

[116] "English Woman's Journal," NCSE Nineteenth-Century Serials Edition, at https://ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/ewj.html

His wife Ella had returned to Kentucky with her infant daughter Cora and was living with her mother Margaret, who had moved to Louisville. They were working as dressmakers. In May 1857, Weeks, now having reverted to the name "W. Wentworth," showed up in Louisville and worked his way back into Ella's affections, and she gave birth to a son, named Julian Clifford Wentworth, ten months later.[117]

During the summer in Louisville, George Wentworth returned to form. This time, the journal that he promoted was to be called the *Titan*. He found women in Louisville whom he convinced to canvass for and contribute to the publication and he got a sample issue printed up in June, which he flogged about the city and sold in its bookstores. Part of its content presumably had been cut from the British journals he had brought back. Its prospectus was printed in the *Louisville Daily Courier*, whose editor, Walter Haldeman, commented, "The gentleman who has undertaken this work has already secured a large cooperation of contributors, and we hope that his plans and enterprise will commend themselves largely to public favor."[118]

The prospectus promised much: "The want of a high-class Magazine of Literature in the South and South-West has long been experienced, and the establishment of such a publication, on a basis calculated alike to secure the confidence, and command the respect of the refined and educated classes, would be a desideratum to those who, in the absence of such a work, are compelled to look to the North and East for the gratification of their tastes."

The *Titan* would fill that desire for a Southern-based journal. It would be a monthly, each issue being sixty-four pages long. "Special arrangements" had been made—with a pair of scissors and a paste-pot, one presumes—by means of which the *Titan*, it was said, would be enabled to furnish articles from such Scottish and English poets and essayists as William Edmonston Aytoun (assistant editor at *Blackwood's*), John Stuart Blackie, Alexander Smith, Gerald Massey, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. "With this array of talent," said the prospectus, "the Proprietors confidently believe that as a high-class publication, TITAN will be in no manner

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[117] Julian Wentworth (1858-1915) did not know much about his father; nevertheless, as soon as he was old enough, he began working in the printing office of a newspaper and continued there his whole career, gaining the nickname "Spider" because of his skilled movements over the type case.

[118] "New Periodical," *Louisville Daily Courier*, 5 June 1857. See also, "New Books at A. Davidson's," *Louisville Daily Journal*, 18 July 1857, and "The National Anniversary," *Louisville Daily Journal*, 7 July 1857, which notes that Mr. Wentworth, the editor of the *Titan*, gave a July Fourth oration to a large gathering of citizens.

inferior to Blackwood of Edinburgh, or Putnam of New York." Perhaps it was, too, for the single issue that seems to have been published with the help of other people's money.[119]

After that issue of the *Titan*, W. Wentworth left Louisville. Who went with him and what he did just then and in what order is somewhat confused simply because he was up to so much that the newspaper reporting—often done inexactly and months afterwards from hearsay—tended to conflate what he did in more than one place at more than one time. At this point, for example, he appears to have shuttled quickly from St. Louis, Missouri to Nashville, Tennessee. In one of these cities he presented himself as a Hard Shell Baptist preacher, who, "but for want of a flock, engaged as proof-reader in one of the newspaper offices."[120] Perhaps he looked around to gauge the opportunity to run his swindle, for he borrowed a large sum of money from at least one Methodist preacher under false pretenses.

He needed to obtain money to move on to new horizons. He had never had any problem getting it from or through women he romanced, and so he found a widowed lady, a "Mrs. Stewart," in St. Louis and quickly proposed marriage to her, which she accepted. She was to serve as his source of cash.

He also set his sights on another woman, Mrs. Anna Broadbridge, who was married to a wealthy jeweler in Nashville, William Broadbridge. Anna (neé Isles) had been born in 1833 in Portsea, Portsmouth, England and had married William Richard ("Dick") Broadbridge, a watchmaker and jeweler, in Brighton. They had immigrated to the U.S. in 1853, with their eight-year-old daughter Elizabeth. The newspapers would later report that she had had four children, but almost certainly all of them except Elizabeth had died, either as miscarriages or soon after birth.[121] Dick Broadbridge was often away from home on purchasing trips. Anna's current life, it

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[119] The unusual length of the *Titan*—64 pages—might be explained as Weeks's calculated appeal to those who had subscribed to *The Kentucky Garland*, which had been of similar length.
[120] The narrative here is a game attempt to sort out the sequence of events described variously in "Another Chapter in the History of a Scoundrel," *Daily Nashville Patriot*, 2 December 1857; "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," *Louisville Daily Journal*, 25 November 1857; "An Accomplished Scoundrel," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 December 1857; "The Memorable, The Progressive and The Beautiful," *Daily Missouri Republican*, 17 January 1858; and "The Career of the Weekes," *Houston Weekly Telegraph*, 14 July 1858, as reprinted from the *St. Louis Dispatch.*
[121] "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," *Louisville Evening Bulletin*, 25 November 1857. In July 1857, the Broadbridges had buried an infant son in the Nashville city cemetery.

would seem, held little for her and she agreed to elope with George. To do so, they worked out a plan.

First, they selected a date on which they knew Anna's husband would be away on business; Anna's daughter would be placed with a neighbor or friend, when, on a supposed emergency of some sort, Anna would be called away. Then George went to his fiancée, widow Stewart, and set the same date as the day of their marriage. A reporter, telling the story sometime later, facetiously described what happened next:

> Before the day fixed upon for the marriage to take place … Mr. Weekes [the name George would later assume] made the astounding [!] discovery that the widow was the owner of a female slave. Of course his love for the widow was terrific, but so was his hatred of slavery. His Northern blood rebelled against the idea of marrying a woman who held property in a human chattel. He would not consent that the widow should have any slave but himself. He would willingly wear her chains, but he intimated to her that it was necessary she should dispose of Dinah before he consented to become 'bone of her bone.' The widow didn't wish to part with her servant, but what could she do?—She was desperately in love, and her sweetheart was obdurate. She yielded. She passed the legal documents necessary to a transfer of Dinah, over to Mr. Weekes. Mr. Weekes disposed of Dinah to the highest bidder—Mr. Weekes put the proceeds of the sale in pocket—Mr. Weekes did not stay to fulfill the marriage contract. Perhaps he forgot that he had such a little affair to attend to—perhaps, in a fit of virtuous indignation, he determined to punish the widow for having owned a slave—perhaps he passed the money over to the Anti-Slavery Society—who knows?[122]

On the day that had been set for George's marriage, he was nowhere in view; he had not returned to Nashville but was waiting in a town twenty miles away, loaded now with cash, using the alias of "Mr. Brown." Anna packed her things and proceeded as "Mrs. Brown" to meet

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[122] "The Career of the Weekes," *Houston Weekly Telegraph*, 14 July 1858, as reprinted from the *St. Louis Dispatch.*

George.[123] Whether she succeeded in finding him there is unknown, but perhaps she teamed up with him for a while.

By the fall, George was in St. Louis, working under the name of Charles Wentworth, distributing a prospectus for a literary periodical entitled *The Magnolia*, to be published by "Wentworth & Co." of Cincinnati, under the editorship of "Milly Wentworth" and "Hallie Rice."

Milly Wentworth, frontispiece of *Poems and Sketches*, 1857

Miss "Milly," it was said, was a "young lady with an exceedingly pretty face and an exuberance of glossy curls … a charming face and hyperion ringlets." Also in the offing was a new edition of *Poems and Sketches*, published by Wentworth & Co., and still allegedly authored by Eleanor Duckworth, but with her name overshadowed on the cover by that of "Milly Wentworth of New Orleans" and with "Milly's" picture as the frontispiece. All the poems and literary sketches, however, were exactly the same as the earlier edition.[124] This, like the earlier edition, which was tied to the *Waverley Journal* canvassing, was something the canvassers for *The Magnolia*—"Milly Wentworth" and "Hallie Rice"—could offer potential subscribers. After gleaning the cash for prepaid subscriptions, however, they all three snuck out of the city.

None of them had registered at the Missouri Hotel as man and wife but were discovered by the staff in bed together. Wentworth explained it to the manager "with characteristic adroitness" and they were allowed to stay. A few days later, however, the manager pressed him for payment on their bill, which had accumulated to $75. That evening after dark, the women went out and stood in the alley beneath the window of their rooms and George lowered their bags to them on a cord. Then he "sauntered out" from the hotel "as though nothing had

[123] "Another Chapter in the History of a Scoundrel," *Daily Nashville Patriot*, 2 December 1857.
[124] For Moncure Daniel Conway's copy, which found its way to Harvard, see here: https://books.google.com/books?vid=Harvard:HX5795

happened, called a hack, had his 'plunder' taken on board a steamer and went off down the river."[125]

When the editor of the *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican* ran this story, he warned other newspapers to be on the lookout for Wentworth et al., so the story was spread about the country and appeared in more than one paper. Who were "Milly Wentworth" and "Hallie Rice"? The *St. Louis Dispatch* editor assumed that "Milly Wentworth" was Ella Wentworth. The *Louisville Daily Courier* guessed that "Hallie Rice" was "probably the truant wife of our Nashville victim," that is, Anna Broadbridge, and the editor of the *Richmond Whig*, impressed by familiarity with the *modus operandi,* even ventured, "May the Lord forgive us if we err, but, involuntarily, the suspicion 'creeps over us' that the fascinating *Lilly Linden*, formerly editress of 'The Ladies Repository' in this city, is one of the *figurantee* implicated with the divine Wentworth.[126] At least it is clear that this last guess was not correct; the others may or may not have been.

By late autumn of that year, George was in Galveston, Texas, using the name "George Wentworth Weekes," and allegedly married to another young woman named Cora Anna, who had recently come to New Orleans from England.[127]

The prospectus for a new journal, to be called *The Southern Age*, published "by an association of ladies" and edited by "Mrs. Cora Anna Weekes," appeared in the *Galveston Weekly News* on November 3, 1857.[128] The "motto" of *The Southern Age* was a revamped version of what "Nel Wix" had used for the Rochester *Investigator*:

> If a free thought needs expression,
> Speak it boldly, speak it all;

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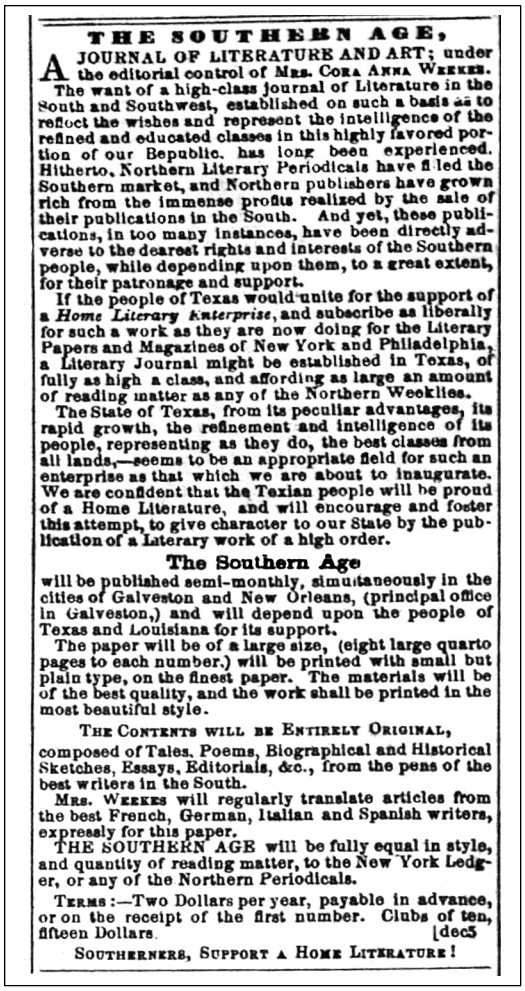
[125] "The Career of the Weekes," *Ibid.*
[126] "A Promiscuous Rascal," *Louisville Daily Courier*, 17 February 1858; "Literary Sharpers," *Richmond Whig*, 2 February 1858.
[127] None of the reporting on George and Cora Anna Weekes over the following years suggested that Cora Anna Weekes, an "English lady" of "no more than twenty-four years of age," was Anna Broadbridge who eloped with George from Nashville. The original reporting about the elopement is confusing because it first surfaced at the end of November 1857 but referred to numbered days of the week that in 1857 only occurred in the months of April and July, which seem more reasonable.
[128] "A New Literary Paper in Texas. The Southern Age," *Galveston Weekly News*, 3 November 1857.

Face thy foes, scorn thine accusers,
    Spurn the threat, the rack, the god,
And if thou hast Truth to utter,
    Speak, and leave the rest to God![129]

The prospectus for *The Southern Age* described a monthly eight-page periodical with an editorial aim almost identical to that of the spurious Louisville *Titan*. The language about the need for a literary journal published specifically for Southerners was enlarged and sharpened. It argued that the nationally distributed magazines, like *Putnam's* and *Harper's* earlier had gained subscribers in the South by avoiding the advocacy of certain political, social, and cultural points of controversy. Increasingly, however, as regional tensions escalated, Southerners began to sense that the popular national magazines published in the North had abandoned their earlier disavowals and were infiltrating Southern homes and hearth sides with material inimical to Southern customs—not just slavery, but fashion and taste, religion, family relations, and industrial organization.



THE SOUTHERN AGE,

A JOURNAL OF LITERATURE AND ART; under the editorial control of Mrs. Cora Anna Weekes.

The want of a high-class journal of Literature in the South and Southwest, established on such a basis as to reflect the wishes and represent the intelligence of the refined and educated classes in this highly favored portion of our Republic, has long been experienced. Hitherto, Northern Literary Periodicals have filled the Southern market, and Northern publishers have grown rich from the immense profits realized by the sale of their publications in the South. And yet, these publications, in too many instances, have been directly adverse to the dearest rights and interests of the Southern people, while depending upon them, to a great extent, for their patronage and support.

If the people of Texas would unite for the support of a *Home Literary Enterprise*, and subscribe as liberally for such a work as they are now doing for the Literary Papers and Magazines of New York and Philadelphia, a Literary Journal might be established in Texas, of fully as high a class, and affording as large an amount of reading matter as any of the Northern Weeklies.

The State of Texas, from its peculiar advantages, its rapid growth, the refinement and intelligence of its people, representing as they do, the best classes from all lands,—seems to be an appropriate field for such an enterprise as that which we are about to inaugurate. We are confident that the Texian people will be proud of a Home Literature, and will encourage and foster this attempt, to give character to our State by the publication of a Literary work of a high order.

**The Southern Age**

will be published semi-monthly, simultaneously in the cities of Galveston and New Orleans, (principal office in Galveston,) and will depend upon the people of Texas and Louisiana for its support.

The paper will be of a large size, (eight large quarto pages to each number,) will be printed with small but plain type, on the finest paper. The materials will be of the best quality, and the work shall be printed in the most beautiful style.

The Contents will be Entirely Original, composed of Tales, Poems, Biographical and Historical Sketches, Essays, Editorials, &c., from the pens of the best writers in the South.

Mrs. Weekes will regularly translate articles from the best French, German, Italian and Spanish writers, expressly for this paper.

THE SOUTHERN AGE will be fully equal in style, and quantity of reading matter, to the New York Ledger, or any of the Northern Periodicals.

Terms:—Two Dollars per year, payable in advance, or on the receipt of the first number. Clubs of ten, fifteen Dollars. [dec5

Southerners, Support a Home Literature!

The Southern resistance to allowing the U.S. Postal Service to distribute explicitly Abolitionist papers, like *The Liberator* and *The Anti-Slavery Standard*, was the most visible manifestation of this sectional feeling, but the prospectus of *The Southern Age*, in which "Weekes" carefully pandered to a target audience, showed that the North and the South were divided over more issues than that of slavery. "Hitherto, Northern Literary Periodicals have filled the Southern market," stated the prospectus, "and Northern publishers have grown rich from the immense

[129] "The Southern Age," *Times-Picayune*, 27 January 1858.

profits realized by the sale of their publication in the South. And yet, these publications, in too many instances, have been directly adverse to the dearest rights and interests of the Southern people."[130] Thus did an Englishwoman of indeterminate background and her Yankee peddler partner appeal to support for their journal.

The first issue was promised on or about the fifteenth of December. By that date, the Weekeses had run up large advertising and printing bills with the *Galveston Civilian Gazette* and the *Galveston News* for advertising and job printing. They were promising the public that the journal's contents would be entirely original, aside from articles translated by Mrs. Weekes "from the best French, German, Italian and Spanish writers." Apart from those, *The Southern Age* was to be filled with "Tales, Poems, Biographical and Historical Sketches, Essays, Editorials, &c., from the pens of the best writers in the South."[131] Cora Anna represented herself as a former editress of the London *Court Journal* and altogether the driving force and genius of this new periodical. To the public, she was the "boss" of *The Southern Age*; George faded into the background so far that he was supposed to have been only her private secretary.

When the initial issue of the journal was published, Cora Anna traveled to Houston and charmed Edward Hopkins Cushing, the editor and publisher of the *Houston Telegraph* into writing, of the sample she gave him, "We regard it as decidedly the best literary paper now published in the South, and, on all accounts, the best anywhere published for a Southern family, and we certainly hope all our citizens will not only provide themselves with a copy, but will lend their aid to the enterprise."[132]

She also canvassed in San Antonio and then in Austin, where her special purpose seems to have been to entice the support of members of the state legislature. "It is said that every member of that dignified body subscribed to her paper," wrote a reporter afterwards, "and that one of the editors of the city was so smitten with her charms as to propose an elopement!"[133] But, as one eyewitness described her impromptu visit to the Texas Hall of Representatives, perhaps some members contributed less than enthusiastically. "When the lady's presence in the hall became pretty generally known," he wrote, "there was an extensive amount of dodging done by

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[130] "A New Literary Paper in Texas," *Galveston Weekly News*, 3 November 1857.
[131] "A Journal of Literature and Art," Galveston *Civilian and Gazette Weekly*, 15 December 1857.
[132] "Mrs. Cora Anna Weekes," *Houston Telegraph*, 16 December 1857.
[133] "The Career of the Weekes," *Houston Weekly Telegraph*, 14 July 1868.

those who felt convinced that they didn't want to subscribe for the *Southern Age*, and also that they'd be sure to do so if they allowed Mrs. W. to get near enough to ask them."[134] The Weekeses later claimed they had even gained the "patronage" of Texas Governor Elisha Marshall Pease and Catholic Bishop Jean-Marie Odin of Galveston.

Having gleaned all the money they could in Texas, the Weekeses abandoned the state and their creditors there, most particularly David Richardson & Co. of the *Galveston News*. They proceeded to Louisiana, where they proposed setting up a branch office of *The Southern Age* in New Orleans. Not only was Cora Anna welcomed there with a multitude of subscribers, but she and George also travelled up to Baton Rouge, the capital, to drain the individual pockets of the legislators by asking them to subscribe. "At the latter place," it was afterwards reported, "the assembled wisdom of Louisiana also bowed before her like lilies in a zephyr and she returned to New Orleans with their autographs to a man."[135]

By February the Weekeses had made a haul in Texas of $1350 and in Louisiana of $400.[136] From New Orleans, they then disappeared—or, as one Texas editor put it, "vamosed the ranch."[137] When editor Cushman of the *Houston Telegraph* belatedly recognized that *The Southern Age* had been an elaborate swindle, he wrote that Texans had not subscribed because of any confidence in the journal but rather because they had been asked to subscribe by a handsome woman, appealing "both to gallantry and patriotism." *Texas* patriotism, that is: "In New Orleans," he wrote, with a little touch of humorous braggadocio, "there are some who are deficient enough in both to do it, but not in Texas, and we venture to say that Mrs. Cora Anna could go over the same ground again in this State with a new enterprise and with just as much success. After all what is two dollars for a clever humbug?"[138]

At the beginning of March, six weeks after leaving New Orleans, the Weekeses disembarked from the ship *Golden Age* at San Francisco and began to work upon the city's unsuspecting citizens. When they arrived, they had already gained a leg up, for on the voyage

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[134] Quoted from "A Jeremy Diddler in Petticoats," from the *San Francisco Herald*, reprinted in "Female Enterprise," Melbourne *Age*, 27 July 1858.
[135] "The Career of the Weekes," *Ibid.*
[136] "The Literary Guest of Last Winter," Austin *State Gazette*, 10 July 1858.
[137] "It appears from the papers…" Columbus, Texas *Colorado Citizen*, 27 March 1858.
[138] "Galveston," *Houston Weekly Telegraph*, 14 April 1858.

they had snared an investor, produce dealer Charles Galacar, who bought a third interest in their next projected journal, for $1200, handing over $550 up front.

Clothed in a modestly styled but fashionably upscale dress, lending her appearance a note of successful integrity, Cora Anna immediately paid a visit to an editor of the *Alta California*. Her general appearance in San Francisco, as James L. L. Warren, the editor of another paper, soon described it, must have provided her a fair enough introduction. "This lady," he wrote, "is very handsome, and apparently some twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. Her features are of the Grecian cast and finely molded, and there is an air of intelligence about them that strikes one very favorably. In her movements she is quick, and in conversation animated. Her dress is simple, but neat and elegant, and everything about her betokens the true lady."[139]

Cora Anna showed the *Alta California* editor the enthusiastic notices about *The Southern Age* clipped from Texas newspapers published at the very beginning of the promotion she had conducted there.[140] She also gave him a scoop, of sorts: She intended to start a literary journal in San Francisco, to be titled *The Athenaeum.*

She then went about the city canvassing for subscriptions. This time the annual subscription rate would be five dollars. She persevered in the city, visiting other editors and influential writers, but also finding well-to-do people in public gatherings. In only a little less than two weeks, the first number of *The Athenaeum* was issued, on March 20.[141] Equipped now with copies of her paper, she ventured to Sacramento to solicit the state legislators, and then went on to Stockton, collecting subscription money everywhere she went.

Meanwhile, George had stayed in San Francisco and was putting together a second issue of *The Athenaeum*, but a problem had arisen. Manuel Mordecai Noah, the editor of the *California Spirit of the Times*, discovered that Cora Anna's "salutatory" essay ("Our National Literature") in the first issue had been plagiarized from "The Conservative Principle in Literature," by Rev. William R. Williams. It had been published in 1851 in New York in Williams' *Miscellanies.* The *Athenaeum's* version replaced just a few words with others of similar meaning.[142] Noah published that fact and ran a comparison of matching selections from

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[139] "The Lady Editor," *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, 2 April 1858.
[140] "New Literary Paper," *Daily Alta California*, 3 March 1858.
[141] The issues of *The Athenaeum* have been preserved by the California State Library and are available via the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/athenaeumcalifor01week
[142] William R. Williams, *Miscellanies*, 2nd edition (New York: Edward H. Fletcher, 1851), 3-77.

Williams and Weekes side by side.[143] His revelation brought a chorus of criticism from the city's literary clan against Cora Anna. George tried to undercut the critics in the second issue of *The Athenaeum* by having "Cora Anna" respond to one of them by accusing him of being envious of a poor little woman's success, reminiscent of Lille Linden's initial reply to the *Norfolk Courier's* article, and by indirectly referring to the plagiarized article in a way that made it seem that she had not deliberately represented it as her own, though it had been labelled "salutatory" and was nowhere attributed to anyone other than the editor.

On the principle that bad publicity is better than no publicity, this response merely ramped up public interest in *The Athenaeum* and its editress, and gave Cora Anna's intentions enough uncertainty to allow some supporters to step into the fracas on her side.[144] The controversy gave Cora Anna a few weeks in which she became "the most talked-about person in California," as one rural newspaper editor put it, and an opportunity to take in an abundance of prepaid subscriptions ($1500 worth) from those whose curiosity had been aroused. That was the case even though on April 6, the editor of the *Galveston News* had written to the *Daily Alta California*, explaining that the Weekes were swindlers. For Weekes, the ongoing controversy was really part of a delaying action, for on April 14th, George had already secretly bought two tickets for "Mrs. and Mrs. Percival" to sail to Australia, aboard the American barque *Glimpse* and so they were simply waiting to depart.[145]

When the time to embark came, Mr. and Mrs. Weekes nonchalantly left their hotel and boarded the *Glimpse*, "leaving behind them liabilities to a very considerable figure, and assets to the amount of two trunks, filled with bricks, a few copies of the brilliant *Athenaeum*, and a string of stereotyped editorials which had served the purposes of the intellectual travelers in getting out initial numbers of their several enterprises till they were tired of them."[146]

Editors and other worthies—especially the state legislators in Sacramento who had supported Cora Anna—were brought up to the public eye for a little humorous humiliation. One of the editors of the *Sacramento Daily Union*, for example, offered his readers a nautically soaked article under the title "Slipped Her Cable." He noted the sudden departure of Cora Anna

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[143] See "Another Literary Pirate Gibbeted," *Daily Alta California*, 3 April 1858.
[144] For example, "A Strange Sail," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 6 April 1858.
[145] "The Literary Hegira," *Daily Alta California*, 18 April 1858.
[146] "The Career of the Weekes," *op. cit.*

"and her masculine convoy, supposed, by some, to be only a sort of tender, in the shape of a husband." The editor recalled that when Cora Anna had "hailed in sight at the State Capital," she had been "straightway taken in tow by escorts from either House, and conducted from desk to desk ... The Assembly convoy was particularly assiduous and gallant, bringing members to, and relieving them of tribute money, in a way worthy of one of our revenue brigs, or some other American national vessel." But the legislative commanders of that convey, he wrote, should have been capable of "distinguishing an honest woman, whom Solomon likens to a merchant ship, from a piratical cruiser."[147]

As the *Glimpse* was sitting at the mouth of San Francisco Bay, about to emerge out into the broad Pacific Ocean, "Cora Anna" (but almost certainly George) sent a letter back to the *Alta California* with the accompanying dispatch boat, which the newspaper printed with a tongue-in-cheek comment that it evinced "a kindly regard on the part of Mrs. Weekes for her numerous friends and subscribers":

> *On Board Barque Glimpse*
> *Off the Heads, April 16th, 1858*
> Editors *Alta*:
>
> We do hope an indulgent public will suspend judgment upon our recent absence from the city until we return, assuring I them that they shall have the worth of their money before another two weeks escapes. We came to Sacramento (God bless Sacramento, and Colonel Warren of the Farmer,) for our health, which was so shattered by the unjust suspicions cast upon cur integrity and uprightness, that we were obliged to consult a physician — (whom we intend to remunerate upon our return).
>
> Feeling too ill to superintend the issue of the next number of our paper, and not receiving from our sister and our friend, Mrs. [Elizabeth Barrett] Browning, an interesting original sketch of Australia, which she promised, we thought best to avail ourselves of a free passage thither, so courteously tendered, and take a Glimpse of the place for the benefit of our numerous subscribers.

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[147] "Slipped Her Cable," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 21 April 1858.

Thank Heaven that we have established *The Athenaeum* upon a firm footing. We are in the receipt of about two thousand dollars, (exclusive of a few debts, which our partner will promptly settle,) and already feel the reward of "well done," as we contemplate the elevated tone we have given to California literature during our *fortnight's* sojourn in the State. We have done our best—we meant to have done better. We have left our paper in the charge of parties whose *competency* we have proved. The money deposited at Wells & Fargo's, to be expended in prizes, we were obliged to withdraw for the present, and have deferred the awarding of them also until our return, which our citizens may confidently expect. Meanwhile, we defy criticism. We think the Californians capable of appreciating our efforts for their improvement. The paper shall live until the same able divine, who so kindly assisted us in our salutatory, gives us his valuable aid in preparing our valedictory. We have been slandered and reviled, but we do not complain, but bear our sufferings with meekness and resignation.

We go with a heavy purse and a light conscience, and, sink or swim, we mean to retain our reputation. A sketch of our present interesting trip we shall reserve 'till we are welcomed again by our numerous subscribers. Having canvassed for the *Athenaeum* ourselves, we feel a personal interest in everyone of them, and we assure those who have paid their five dollars in advance, that they are duly credited on our books, and they shall not C. A. Weekes return without our being with them in spirit, if not in person, ministering to their literary appetites through the columns of our "poor little *Athenaeum*;" and assuring them, also, that "though absent, they are ever dear," we beg to remind them that woman's influence is always indirect but successful.

With an overflowing heart, we are theirs, greatfully and truly,

The Editress of the *Athenaeum.*[148]

In the trunks the Weekes left behind at the Niantic Hotel were copies of the two issues of the *Southern Age.* Manuel Mordecai Noah, the editor of the *California Spirit of the Times* who had exposed the lead article in the first issue of the *Athenaeum* as a plagiarism, acquired them and laid them out in front of him on his desk. He described what he saw before him: "In these

[148] "Letter from Mrs. Cora Anna Weekes," *Daily Alta California*, 19 April 1858.

two sheets we find the self-same *original* articles which have appeared in the Athenaeum, and we have every right to presume they have formed the stock in trade of the parties concerned for years. The same salutatory, reviews of books, tales, etc., which have been the contents of the issues in this city, are to be found in those of the 'Southern Age.'" Of Cora Anna, he added, "Her inability to write has been demonstrated, and all the 'choice bits' of poetry to which her name was appended, were boldly stolen."[149]

In the days immediately following the Weekeses' departure, information flowed into California from the rest of the country, filling out George's past career as "an arrant knave who has followed the business for some years of establishing newspapers having female editors in the large cities of the Union, and after collecting the subscriptions in advance, to leave for other fields of operation. In the course of his dashing career, he has had about one-fourth of a hundred of wives, the present charming Mrs. Ann Cora being the twenty-fifth or sixth."[150]

George Weekes, from *The California Spirit of the Times*, 24 April 1858

When John Marshall, the editor of the Austin, Texas *State Gazette* read the *California Spirit of the Times'* exposé article about Weekes, which revealed the number of wives he had accumulated, Marshall archly voiced his doubt, based on estimating the amount of formalities required by so many nuptials, "We think it hardly possible that in passing through the trying ordeal of such domestic changes, he can have had the time or the inclination to purchase a license, or allow the intrusion of a parson or squire to the altar where in his vows of constancy." It was a revelation, he wrote, that when the Weekeses had worked their way through Texas, it had been the retiring George,

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[149] "Cora Anna Weekes and G. W. Weekes, Alias, 'Wentworth,' 'Nell Wicks,' Etc., of Swindling 'Athenaeum' Notoriety," *California Spirit of the Times* (San Francisco), 24 April 1858.
[150] "Jeremy Diddled," *Placer Herald*, 24 April 1858. The April 24th issue of *The California Spirit of the Times* carried a particularly detailed exposure of George's past career of swindling: "Cora Anna Weekes and G. W. Weekes, alias Westbrook, Nell Wicks, &c., of swindling Athenaeum Notoriety," including cuts representing the faces of the two worthies.

not the glittering Cora Anna, who had been the greater wonder. But the swindled subscribers could at least gain some comfort from the knowledge that they had indeed *seen the elephant*:

Cora Anna Weekes, from *The California Spirit of the Times*, 24 April 1858

"The many duped subscribers to the '*Southern Age*,' whose purses opened at the approach of the charming Mrs. Weekes, when here last winter, will now discover that her paramour is certainly the more astonishing natural curiosity of the two; and that they have had a sight of *him* at least, if not of the '*Southern Age*,' for the money which they so freely expended."[151]

Surely a great part of the public appeal for this wonderful "natural curiosity" was similar to that for Barnum's "What Is It?" hoaxed wonder—What was this twinned Weekes prodigy? The woman acted the brassy, visible part—editing and directing the journal as its "boss," accosting people in saloons, editors' and businessmen's offices, and on the street. The man acted the woman's part—reserved, meek, a "pilot boat" to her ship of the line. It all had the appeal of a gaudy piece of low theater, a humbug. Cora Anna was only the latest woman out of many before her who had starred in the leading role. Many of them before her had not realized that, like the public, they, too, had been played.

The fact that the game pulled in the bulk of its money from small individual subscriptions but from a very large number of them, resulted in George's gathering a huge audience. For Weeks, the bigger, the better. It was not the money he craved, as much as the practical joke, and the enjoyment he got out of thumbing his nose at everyone who had thought they were about to see something wonderful. The money was simply a tribute.

[151] "The Literary Guest of Last Winter," Austin *State Gazette*, 10 July 1858.

THE

# ATHENÆUM

## AND CALIFORNIA CRITIC.

FOR THE CULTIVATION OF THE MEMORABLE AND THE BEAUTIFUL.

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Mrs. CORA ANNA WEEKES, Editress.

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## SALUTATORY.

### Our National Literature.

In assuming the responsibilities connected with an undertaking like that of publishing a Literary Periodical in California, we feel it to be proper to explain, somewhat in detail, the considerations which have prompted us to this step, the motives which have actuated us, and the objects which we aim to accomplish. We feel convinced that the progress of Literature is intimately associated with our growth as a community and a people; for, as we well know, the Literature of any nation must exert a powerful influence on the national destiny. Acting as it does, not merely on the schools, but also on the homes of a land, it must from those fountains send out its waters of healing or of bitterness, of blessing or of strife. We know that it is not mere physical advantages that have gained, or that can retain for this country, its political privileges. We have witnessed how the physical condition of a people may remain unchanged, while their moral condition is deteriorating rapidly and fatally. We remember that the same sun shone on Marathon, when it was the heritage and the battle-ground of freemen; and when, in later and more disastrous days, it re-echoed to the footsteps of the Greek bondsman and his Ottoman oppressor. We look to Literature, and other moral causes, then, as determining, to some extent, the future history of our land. We are aware that Literature is not always of a healthy character, nor does it at all times exercise a conservative influence. It is like the vegetation of the earth, of varied nature; and with the richness of the soil, it springs up too often in noxious weeds. True, much of it is the waving harvest that fills our garners and piles our boards with plenty; but much of it has been, like the rank ivy, hastening the decay it serves to hide, and crumbling into speedier ruin the edifice it seems to adorn.

By the Literature of a land, we mean more than the mere issues from the press of a nation. Language, as soon as it is made the subject of culture, seems to give birth to Literature. And such culture may exist where the use of the press, and even of the pen, are unknown. The old Gælic poetry, on which Macpherson founded his Ossianic forgeries, was a part of the nation's Literature while yet unwritten. Thus, the arguments of the bar, or the appeals of the pulpit, the floating proverbs, or the current legends of the nation, and the ballads, and even the jests, which no antiquary may as yet have secured and written down, are expressions of the popular mind, which may, with some show of reason, be claimed as forming no small and no uninfluential part of the popular Literature.

The errand of all language is to create sympathy; to waft from one human bosom the feelings that stir it, that they may awaken a corresponding response in other hearts. The word that drops from our lips takes its irrevocable flight, and leaves behind its indelible imprint. And if the winged words, heedless and unpremeditated, of our lips are thus influential, it cannot be supposed that those words, when fixed by the art of writing, or scattered by the art of printing, either have less power over society, or are in the eye of heaven clothed with less solemn responsibilities. A written Literature embalms the perishable, arrests the progress of decay, and gives to our words a longer life and a wider scope of influence. Such words, so preserved and so diffused, are the results, too, of more than ordinary deliberation. If malicious, their malice is malice prepense. If foolish, their folly is studied, and obstinate, and shameless. The babbler sins in the ear of a few friends, and in the privacy of home. The frivolous or vicious writer sins, as on a wider theatre, and before the eyes of thousands, while the echoes of the press waft his words to distant lands and later times. And because much of this Literature is hasty and heedless, ludicrous in tone and careless in style, soon to evaporate and disappear, like the froth on some hurried stream, we are not to suppose that it is therefore of no practical influence. The trivial and the ephemeral, as they float by, in glittering bubbles, to the dull waters of oblivion, may yet work irreparable and enduring mischief ere their brief career ends; and the results may continue, vast and permanent, when the fleeting causes which operated have long gone by. In other times, a forged prayer-book aided to restore a dynasty, and the ragged rhymes of a street song helped to overturn it. According to Eastern belief, the plague that wastes a city may be communicated by the gift of a glove or ribbon. The spark struck from the iron heel of a laborer may have disappeared ere the eye could mark its transient lustre, yet ere it expired have fired the train which explodes a magazine, lays a town in ruins, and spreads around a wide circuit alarm and lamentation, bereavement and death.

Into the field of Literature, thus understood, thus wide in its range and various in its products, thus influential even when the most careless, and thus clothed with the most solemn responsibilities, it is our purpose now to enter. We therefore propose, in this article, to mark out our line of action, to point out the difficulties we expect to encounter, and the triumph we hope to gain.

In this country, Literature is subject to certain peculiar influences, perhaps no where else found in the same combination, or operating to the same extent. We are a young community, inhabiting, and called to subdue, a wide territory. Youth is the season of hope, enterprise, and energy—and it is so to a community as well as to an individual. Our Literature is likely, therefore, to be ardent, original, and at times somewhat boastful. These are the excellencies and the foibles of youth. We entered, as by right of inheritance, upon the possession of the rich and ancient Literature of Britain, at the very outset of our national career. As a people we enjoy that freedom which has ever been the indulgent nurse of talent in all times and in all lands. The people are here the kings; and while some of our sovereigns are toiling in the field or delving in the mines, others are speaking through the press. Our authors are all royal by political right, if not by the birthright of genius. In addition to the advantages of our schools, which travel as it were to every man's door, our writers, publishers and instructors are seduously preparing Literature for the use of the masses: while the cheap periodical press is snowing its thick and incessant storm of knowledge over the whole face of our land. But, unfortunately, this knowledge is not all of the most valuable kind. A free Literature, if not guided and guarded by Christianity, soon merges into Licentiousness—just as Liberty, when abused, lapses into Anarchy.

It becomes an important inquiry, then, what moral shape our Literature is assuming, under the plastic influences brought to bear upon it. We ask, as change succeeds change, and as one omen of moral progress follows close upon another, "Watchman, what of the night?" Alas! the answer must be that evils are endangering our rising Literature; evils that threaten to suffuse the bloom of its youth with their fatal virus. There are evils growing up with a giant growth in our field of letters, which it becomes us to seek to eradicate; and hopeless should we be of all our efforts, did we not trust in the Author of all knowledge, and the final Arbiter who will bring into judgment all our employments, whether literary or practical, social or solitary.

Among the evil tendencies that beset our youthful Literature, and are likely to thwart and mar its progress, we would name *the mechanical*

THE

# SPECTATOR

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## OUR COLONIAL LITERATURE.

In assuming the responsibilities connected with an undertaking like that of publishing a Literary Periodical in these colonies, we feel it to be proper to explain, somewhat in detail, the considerations which have prompted us to this step, the motives which actuate us, and the objects which we aim to accomplish. We feel convinced that the progress of Literature is intimately associated with the growth of a community or a people; for, as we well know, the Literature of a nation must exert a powerful influence on the national destiny. Acting as it does, not merely on the schools, but also on the homes of a land, it must from those fountains send out its waters of healing or of bitterness, of blessing or of strife. We know that it is not mere physical advantages that have gained, or that can retain for the British nation, its political privileges. True, armies and fleets are necessary for the national defence, but Britain's best bulwark and shield is found in the virtues of her sons. For we have witnessed how the physical condition of a people may remain unchanged, while their moral condition is deteriorating rapidly and fatally. We remember that the same sun shone on Marathon, when it was the heritage and the battle-ground of freemen; and when, in later and more disastrous days, it re-echoed to the footsteps of the Greek bondsman and his Ottoman oppressor. We look to Literature, and other moral causes, then, as determining, to some extent, the future history of these colonies. We are aware that Literature is not always of a healthy character, nor does it at all times exercise a conservative influence. It is like the vegetation of the earth, of varied nature; and, with the richness of the soil, it springs up too often in noxious weeds. True, much of it is the waving harvest that fills our garners and piles our boards with plenty; but much of it has been, like the rank ivy, hastening the decay it serves to hide, and crumbling into speedier ruin the edifice it seems to adorn.

By the Literature of a land, we mean more than the mere issues from the press. Language, as soon as it is made the subject of culture, seems to give birth to Literature. And such culture may exist where the use of the press, and even of the pen, are unknown. The old Gælic poetry, on which Macpherson founded his Ossianic forgeries, was a part of the nation's Literature while yet unwritten. Thus, the arguments of the bar, or the appeals of the pulpit, the floating proverbs, or the current legends of the nation, and the ballads, and even the jests, which no antiquary may as yet have secured and written down, are expressions of the popular mind, which may, with some show of reason, be claimed as forming no small and no uninfluential part of the popular Literature.

The errand of all language is to create sympathy; to waft from one bosom the feelings that stir it, that they may awaken a corresponding response in other hearts. The word that drops from our lips takes its irrevocable flight, and leaves behind its indelible imprint. And if the winged words, heedless and unpremeditated, of our lips are thus influential, it cannot be supposed that those words, when fixed by the art of writing, or scattered by the art of printing, either have less power over society, or are in the eye of heaven clothed with less solemn responsibilities. A written Literature embalms the perishable, arrests the progress of decay, and gives to our words a longer life and a wider scope of influence. Such words, so preserved and so diffused, are the results, too, of more than ordinary deliberation. If malicious, their malice is malice prepense. If foolish, their folly is studied, and obstinate, and shameless. The babbler sins in the ear of a few friends, and in the privacy of home. The frivolous or vicious writer sins, as on a wider theatre, and before the eyes of thousands, while the echoes of the press waft his words to distant lands and later times. And because much of this Literature is hasty and heedless, ludicrous in tone and careless in style, soon to evaporate and disappear, like the froth on some hurried stream, we are not to suppose that it is of no practical influence. The trivial and the ephemeral, as they float by, in glittering bubbles, to the dull waters of oblivion, may yet work irreparable and enduring mischief ere their brief career ends; and the results may continue, vast and permanent, when the fleeting causes which operated have long gone by. In other times, a forged prayer-book aided to restore a dynasty, and the ragged rhymes of a street song helped to overturn it. According to oriental belief, the plague that wastes a city may be communicated by the gift of a glove or ribbon. The spark struck from the iron heel of a laborer may have disappeared ere the eye could mark its transient lustre, yet ere it expired have fired the train which explodes a magazine, lays a town in ruins, and spreads around a wide circuit alarm and lamentation, bereavement and death.

Into the field of Literature, thus understood, thus wide in its range and various in its products, thus influential even when the most careless, and thus clothed with the most solemn responsibilities, it is our purpose now to enter. We therefore propose, in this article, to mark out our line of action, to point out the difficulties we expect to encounter, and the triumph we hope to gain.

In the Australian colonies, Literature is subject to certain peculiar influences, perhaps no where else found precisely in the same combination, or operating to the same extent. We are comparatively a young community, inhabiting, and called to subdue, a wide territory. Youth is the season of hope, enterprise, and energy—and it is so to a community as well as to an individual. Our Literature, therefore, in its early development, is likely to be ardent, original, and at times somewhat boastful. These are the excellencies and the foibles of youth. We inherit, in our colonial homes, all the rich and ancient Literature of our father-land, while, as a people, we enjoy that freedom which has ever been the indulgent nurse of talent in all times and in all countries. Our writers, publishers and instructors are seduously introducing Literature to the masses of the population; while the periodical press is snowing its thick and incessant storm of knowledge over all the inhabited portions of our land. But, unfortunately, this knowledge is not all of the most valuable kind. A free Literature, if not guided and guarded by Christianity, soon merges into Licentiousness

**Brought Up Short on a Far Shore**

The Weekeses spent time during their passage to Australia onboard the *Glimpse* laying out their next charade. They planned out a literary journal entitled *The Spectator*, produced by "an association of ladies." After they disembarked in Sydney at the beginning of June, they had the first issue printed and published it on July 3. No lady's name was listed as editress, though the editorial voice was that of a woman, who wrote, "we expect to be met at all times, and by all with whom our business duties may bring us in contact, with that chivalrous and delicate respect which ever characterizes the true English gentleman in his deportment to ladies."

Comparing that first issue with the initial issue of the San Francisco *Athenaeum* shows that the twelve-page *Spectator* was simply a lightly adjusted and expanded clone of *The Athenaeum*. The typeface and layout were identical. Under the title, both were "For the Cultivation of the Memorable and the Beautiful." The long fronting editorial article in the first issue of the *Athenaeum*, "Our National Literature," which had been exposed in San Francisco as a plagiarism, was spread over the first three pages of *The Spectator* under the title "Our Colonial Literature" with the few specific references to America changed to Australia. Perhaps remembering the backpedaling that the article had required in San Francisco, the unnamed editor wrote elsewhere in the issue, "In another portion of this paper we print an extended article on the subject of our Colonial Literature, in the preparation of which we have been materially assisted by an admirable essay from the pen of an esteemed friend, a clergyman, not a resident of this colony."

The two-page article that followed the first was entitled "The Philosophy of Kissing." It was introduced and ended as if it had been written in a great blushing haste by "an Elizabeth Street Barrister" in Sydney who had just subscribed to the forthcoming *Spectator.* It was in fact lifted wholly from *The Philosophy of Kissing: anatomically and physiologically explained* written by "The Old Comic," Robert Henry Elton, a New York publisher of almanacs, children's picture books, and pamphlets, and a believer in Free Love, who justified it through Phrenology.

It had first appeared in 1841 in pamphlet form. George would not have had to scavenge back that far to find it, however. A cheaper pirated edition was being sold in America in 1858.[152]

Following that was a slightly re-written review of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, which had first appeared in the second issue of *The Athenaeum*.[153] Also included was a tale, "Reveries of John Jones the Elder," which had been in the first issue of *The Athenaeum*, and which, in turn, seems to have first appeared in George's 1857 Louisville journal, *The Titan*, written by an anonymous contributor.[154] In short, what was new in *The Spectator* was mainly the ads solicited from Sydney merchants.

Carrying her tricked-out publication, Cora Anna introduced herself to newspaper editors and canvassed the public for subscriptions. When she had finished a first pass through Sydney, she moved on to Melbourne, where she and George said they intended to open a branch office.

Everything proceeded well for the couple and their specimen *Spectator* until the third week of July, when the Pacific mail arrived in Sydney, including copies of newspapers from San Francisco. On the 19th, the Sydney *Empire* of editor Henry Parkes published a couple of clips—including one from the *Alta California*—detailing the *Athenaeum* episode. George immediately sprung to the defense of Mrs. Weekes's honor, with a letter to the editor, which the paper printed the following day. George denied the California papers' "calumnies" and "libels" of plagiarism, fraud, and swindling.[155]

Over the next couple of weeks, however, articles from more and more California newspapers arrived upon the shores of Australia—the waves that followed in the wake of the Weekes after they had gone from one place to another. This time the revelations caught up to them before they were prepared to finish their business and leave. If, in his previous scams, newspaper editors' practice of passing warnings about individuals to other editors had been ineffective because no one knew where he would show up next, this time practically the entire

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[152] R. H. Elton, *The Philosophy of Kissing, Anatomically and Physiologically Explained* (New York and London, 1841), 7-11; See George Rex Graham, "The Cabinet of Kisses," *Graham's Illustrated Magazine* (Philadelphia), 52.3 (March 1858): 259-69.

[153] Just guessing with this one, but it would not be surprising if the review had earlier appeared as a contribution to George's little Edinburgh journal.

[154] See the note by editor Samuel Howard Ford on page 235 of "My Estates in Alabama," *Ford's Christian Repository and Family Visitant* (Louisville) 75 (March 1858): 235-39.

[155] "To the Editor of the Empire," Sydney *Empire*, 20 July 1858.

state of California knew exactly where he was going when he left San Francisco. That allowed editorial warnings to target his destination.

One of the articles that arrived was from the *Alta California*, which, in turn, had printed a letter from David Richardson, the co-editor of the *Galveston News*. He had written to the *Alta*'s editors after he had read the paper's account of the Weekeses's career in San Francisco and their departure to Australia. Richardson detailed the Texas and Louisiana affair of *The Southern Age*, identifying the Weekeses as the perpetrators. The *Alta* editors then added: "Regretting that the information contained in this letter and extract did not reach us in time to have enabled us to expose these two birds before they flew away to Australia, we can but express the hope that some artful legal fowler in Australia will receive notice of their little literary and financial foibles in time to spread his net for them and in due time that we may be informed that they are fairly caged behind secure prison bars, in the land which they have selected for their next field of labor."[156]

All these articles from California papers were published in Sydney and Melbourne (the Melbourne papers even procured images of the Weekeses from the San Francisco *California Spirit of the Times* but did not put them into print), with a statement that the editors would await the Weekeses's response. When that response came, however, it was little more than an unfocussed denial of what had been charged against them and a protestation of their innocence and honor. Nevertheless, the bottom fell out of their effort to canvass for subscriptions to the *Spectator*. In the issue of July 31st, Cora Anna tried to answer suspicions about her past by saying that she had left England with her husband for New Orleans in March 1857 on the ship *Baden*.[157] She spun the revelations about her shady operation in Texas with *The Southern Age*, saying the journal "had continued for some time, but had to be abandoned because of the sparse population and she had left Texas penniless."[158]

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[156] "Mrs. Cora Anna Weekes," *Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, 24 July 1858.
[157] The sailing ship *Baden* departed Le Havre on March 8, 1857, arrived in Liverpool, then sailed to New Orleans and arrived there on April 30. There was no Cora or Cora Anna onboard, but among the passengers there was an unaccompanied lady, Anna Mane, age 24. There were also a couple of Frenchmen who shared a 2nd class cabin, who were listed as "Mr. Weeks" (age 25—three years younger than George) and Sardene Weeks (age 23). Whether they had anything to do with this story is unknown.
[158] Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, *op. cit.*, 71.

The Weekeses were saved from prosecution for fraud by Sheridan Moore, a self-esteemed literary light in Sydney who often wrote articles for Australian metropolitan and provincial newspapers, delivered public orations on literature, and published a small literary journal entitled *The Month*. Moore's literary achievements in establishing a native Australian literature were ranked nowhere greater than in his own estimation. When John McEncroe, the editor of the Sydney *Freeman's Journal*, was later goaded by Moore to acknowledge Moore's great contributions to literature, McEncroe responded in part by writing, of Moore, that he was "the parent of various defunct periodicals," and by saying that "Australian literature was indebted for three volumes of The 'Month' and the pastrycook for a liberal supply of wastepaper."[159]

Moore apparently felt a kinship with Cora Anna, as fellow beleaguered innovators of literary journals that did not gain the public favor they deserved. In August, Moore and the Weekeses reached an agreement that would save George and Cora Anna from being charged with prosecution for having sold subscriptions without fulfilling them. On August 12, the Sydney *Morning Herald* printed an adjoining pair of ads in which Moore and Weekes each announced that their journals would henceforth be merged.

Whether Cora Anna ever handed over to Moore any of the prepaid *Spectator* subscription fees along with the subscriber list was not reported. She also became indebted to Moore by having him ghostwrite the script for a sparsely attended public lecture she gave at the end of December at the School of Arts to prop up her credentials as a real authority on women writers of the nineteenth century and on female heroism. That lecture, which was interrupted by a determined heckler, was judged as fair in its content by a reporter the following day, but he noted that Cora Anna read it in a schoolgirl's singsong. The event did little to brighten the Weekeses's prospects in Australia.

In February, after a half-year of the Weekeses's struggles with *The Spectator,* an article entitled "Demise of 'The Spectator,' and Flight of 'Cora'" appeared in *Bell's Life in Sydney*:

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[159] "Moore on Moore," Sydney *Freeman's Journal*, 3 February 1866. See also, "A Literary Swindle," Sydney *Morning Herald*, 18 March 1858, just a few months before the Weekes arrived in Australia.

> The interesting, lovely, and intellectual Cora Anna Weekes editress of the bi-monthly publication called *The Spectator*, has taken to herself wings, having sailed in the *Glen Isla* for Calcutta. Her envied husband has also flitted in the same vessel in the capacity of groom to the horses shipped by Mr. William Burt. Cora has fully borne out the prognostications of the Californian press, and has left behind her a host of sorrowing creditors, amongst whom is the erudite Sheridan Moore, whose claim for writing the lecture on "Female Heroism" recently by her at the School of Arts, entirely escaped her memory.[160]

The Weekeses had taken passage to India, with Cora Anna perhaps in a cabin and George spending his time in the hold with the horses. Why they chose Calcutta is uncertain, but before they left Sydney, they had made acquaintances among the native Indian typesetters that Henry Parkes of *The Empire* had brought to Australia to work on his paper and who had become suddenly unemployed when his paper folded.[161] Perhaps the Weekeses envisioned India as a land of exotic opportunity for a literary couple such as themselves. Or perhaps they simply fled on the *Glen Isla* because they needed to leave, quickly and without notice, regardless of where the ship was headed.

George Weeks was out of the public record for the following five years, but it is almost certain, from what was said about him when he resurfaced, that he spent a considerable time in India, entirely in Calcutta and its environs, apart from a single trip to Allahabad.[162] If one had to guess based on his earlier career, one might well imagine him copy-editing or typesetting on the Serampore-based English-language newspaper *The Friend of India and Statesman*, or might imagine Cora Anna ginning up a ladies' literary journal for the *pukka memsahibs* of the East India Company or enlivening the social gatherings of its officers.

George learned plenty of Hindi vocabulary in a haphazard way and absorbed Indian locales and legends into his imagination. His sojourn in India was long enough for him to fade almost completely out of public remembrance on the other side of the globe as the remarkable literary swindler and libertine whose reputation had followed him across countries and oceans. In

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[160] *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 12 February 1859.
[161] For Parkes's typesetters, see Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits, op. cit.,* 73
[162] See Rev. Denison's brief comments in his review of Weeks's *Indian Idyls* in *The Anglo-American Times*, 19 January 1867.

November 1864, a "Mr. and Mrs. Weeks" departed Calcutta onboard the *SS Simla*, bound for Southampton.[163]

**An Anglo-American**

In 1865, the London firm of Chapman and Hall published a book of poetry entitled *Indian Idyls* containing a couple of long poems—"Putteala" and "The Rané of Cashmere"—tales of romantic, mystical love in eternal India. Its author was G. W. Weeks, who, as it would turn out, was George Wentworth Weeks. No one in England made any connection with the poet's personal history before his time in India—or, at least, no one said so for the record.[164] He dedicated the volume to "Lord Houghton," which was to say, Richard Monckton Milnes, 1st Baron Houghton, the English poet and patron of literature, who presumably funded its publication, for Lord Houghton was "naturally generous" and "always ready to assist any one connected with literature."[165]

Of the London literary critics' reviews of *Indian Idyls*, the *Athenaeum*'s was the least negative: "An ardent and prodigal fancy displays itself in these Indian legends," wrote the reviewer, "which are studded with epithets and metaphors. Of these, some are appropriate and even fine; many extravagant and ambitious. The book abounds in lines … which show poetic fancy, but not that controlling power which makes fancy subservient to an harmonious design."[166]

The reviewer in the London *Spectator* was less positive, writing that, "A stranger example of a force without result, a root without a flower, a life without a body to use its strength upon, we never remember to have seen. … Mr. G. W. Weeks is, we are told, a working man in the real sense of the word, a man who has passed his life in daily labour with his hands, who has gained such education as he has by scrambling for it, who to this day is scarcely master of his

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[163] "Departure of Passengers," *Friend of India and Statesman*, 10 November 1864.
[164] "D. J. Weeks" arranged to have it republished in New York in 1867.
[165] Thomas Baily Saunders, "Richard Monckton Milnes," *Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 38 (1894). Another accomplishment of Weeks's noble patron, unrevealed until after Lord Houghton's death, was his amassing of a gargantuan collection of pornography, which he left to the British Library.
[166] "Indian Idyls," *The Athenaeum*, no. 1960 (20 May 1865): 678.

own tongue, … who uses Indian words by the hundred, and only pronounces one in twenty right."[167]

The *London Review* was even less kind: "Mr. Weeks's 'Indian Idyls' are faint, foolish, and feeble imitations of Tennyson [that is, his "Idylls of the King"]. … the most characteristic feature of Mr. Weeks's verses is the incessant straining after metaphorical language, … gaudy tinsel that overlays, and the metaphorical monotony that pervades, these would-be poems, even *ad nauseam.* … Mr. Weeks must give up the Muses, as the Muses have evidently given up him."[168]

This last critique shone an indirect light into Weeks's character. His poetic method of dazzling the reader with metaphorical spangle is another form of a conman's showing his mark a "flash" of worthless goods as an enticement. But while the first poem, "Putteala," was indeed dreadful and merited the critics' scorn, the second, "The Rané of Cashmere," is worth perusing, for it can be read as Weeks's attempt to justify his many "loves," though it is perfumed, one might say, with an overripe fragrance. The object of the narrator's love and desire is not a real woman but a mystical heavenly spirit-Woman who declines to the world in a chosen "costume" of a beautiful body. The narrator, taken as Weeks himself, rather than evincing gratitude for the enfleshed woman, rails against the transitory nature of God's gift of this beautiful creature.

The critical attention in London given to the "American poet, G. W. Weeks'" was noticed by a few U.S. newspapers in the fall of 1865, though none made any connection between this G. W. Weeks and the notorious bigamist and publishing fraud.[169] That does not mean, however, that no American readers made the connection.

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[167] "Indian Idyls," *The Spectator*, 38 (22 April 1865): 444-45.

[168] "Indian Idyls," *The London Review* (21 October 1865): 442. The London correspondent for the *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune* reported the discussion of *Indian Idyls* in the British press and agreed that "Mr. Weeks seems to have saturated his mind with Tennysonian thoughts, images and words … it gives the reader too constantly the impression of being an almost slavish copy of its great model"; "Letter from London," *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 15 September 1865.

[169] *Ibid.* (*Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*) and "The English critics …" New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, 1 October 1865.

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# THE ANGLO-AMERICAN TIMES

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THE ANGLO-AMERICAN TIMES.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1866.

## SENATOR CHANDLER'S NON-INTERCOURSE RESOLUTION.

On the 15th of last month, the following resolution was introduced into the United States Senate by the Hon. ZACHARIAH CHANDLER, Senator from Michigan :—

"Whereas, by the recent publication of the diplomatic correspondence between this Government and Great Britain, we are fully advised that the last-named Government has refused to repair the damages committed on American commerce through the agency of her subjects during the late rebellion, and has declined to arbitrate, and, finally, not to hear anything further on the subject; therefore,

"Resolved, that the President is hereby requested to withdraw our Minister from the Court of St. James's, and make a proclamation of national non-intercourse, which is hereby declared to take effect after such proclamation shall have been issued."

Senator CHANDLER usually acts with the Administration; but, in this instance, he has misunderstood the policy of the Government and the settled conviction of the American people. It was therefore to be expected that his resolution would be got rid of, as we have seen, by an overwhelming majority.

The American people leave to time the task of righting the great wrong committed upon their commerce in the moment of their agony. There is a NEMESIS in human affairs; and the blunder committed by Great Britain in the question of the Anglo-Confederate privateers will produce its own cure. The late RICHARD COBDEN'S opinion on this question was as follows. We quote his own words :—

"I have marvelled at the short-sightedness of so many of our shipowners and merchants, who ought the moment there was even the hint of privateers being fitted out in our ports, to have risen *en masse* against it, and to have called on the Government to apply for fresh powers, if they had not sufficient, for the purpose. Instead of this too many of them have, I fear, chuckled over the destruction of a rival. For English shipowners and merchants to be found encouraging such a mode of warfare upon and through foreign commerce is on a par with the intelligence which the proprietors of the Crystal Palace would exhibit if they were to invite a game of stone-throwing with their neighbours living in stone and slate houses."

And Mr. COBDEN concludes as follows :—"With such a prospect, I hardly see how we can go to war with even Brazil."

## A GOLDEN FIELD FOR INVESTMENT.

Englishmen are greatly exercised at the colossal proportions of the United States debt. Some are wont to point at it as an element of weakness, and confidently predict eventual repudiation; while others do not go so far as to call in question America's good faith, but confine their doubts to anticipating trouble in the collection of the Federal taxes. According to the former class—which, if not the more numerous, certainly possesses the greater influence—everything connected with the United States rests upon an insecure foundation; and Englishmen are almost daily warned by its organs and representatives to avoid American securities, and to be more cautious than ever in commercial transactions with citizens of the Republic. These misgivings were but seldom heard prior to the rebellion; and it is only fair to credit their existence to the newly-created debt and consequent increase in taxation, combined with the temporary cessation of the Southern cotton supply. Unworthy motives we certainly do not wish to impute, for a man would scarcely be worth reasoning with who dared assert that American misfortune would at all conduce to English prosperity. These critics and censors do not evince any remarkable acquaintance with the history of their own country in thus attempting to prejudice the United States on the score of the national liabilities. England's debt is larger than America's, but it is less than it was twenty years ago. Again, England's annual taxation is considerably greater in gross amount than in 1846; but if we take the value of property in the United Kingdom at the present time and compare it with the official returns at the above-mentioned period, we discover that the rate of taxation, per head, is much more easily borne in 1866 than in 1846, or intermediate years. Two causes have conduced to this result; namely, increase of population, and enormous development of trade and resources; and if these influences have proved so beneficial to Great Britain, surely they will produce a still greater effect in a country whose resources are as yet but little developed, and the population of which increases at a far higher ratio than has hitherto been known in the history of mankind.

In past years the main staple of the United States, so far as European nations were concerned, was cotton; and the South possessed every advantage in tidal streams and numerous harbours for bringing that staple to market. But the Southern States are far from possessing equal advantages in an agricultural point of view with the North-Western States; and the products of the latter section are, to say the least, quite as much required in Europe as the Southern staple. Since the repeal of the Corn-laws in this country, Great Britain has not merely looked to foreign nations for a considerable proportion of her cereals, but she has likewise acted as purveyor, or factor, in grain to other peoples. A few years ago Russia was the chief source of supply to Great Britain, whether for home consumption or for exportation; but the United States eventually took precedence of her, and would have retained that position but for the late rebellion. No country can possibly compete with the United States in production of the necessaries of life—grain and provisions; for the Republic possesses greater area and a better climate; all things taken into consideration, it is nearer the English markets; and Englishmen assuredly will not gainsay (now that the Union is re-established on surer foundations than heretofore) that American institutions and laws guarantee a greater commercial security than those of Russia or any other nation in Continental Europe. America possesses, in fine, all that will enable her to become the granary of the world; and yet she is not sending at the present time more than from two to three per cent. of her produce to foreign markets, and scarcely one per cent. of it to England. Let us instance the State of Illinois as a sample of the agricultural capabilities of the North-West. The present population of Illinois is, in round numbers, 2,250,000; and although its capacity for production is not yet one quarter developed, the inhabitants of New York city, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh could not consume its excess of produce in grain, cattle, and hogs. Illinois can abundantly feed fifteen millions of people; yet Illinois is only a small area in the Mississippi Valley, and will probably be surpassed in productiveness by the State of Iowa within the next ten years. We need not, however, talk of what *may be*, while an irrefragable argument can be based upon that which already exists. The population of the agricultural section of the Union is sparse, exceedingly sparse, and the means of getting produce to market are very limited; yet the supply of the necessaries of life so greatly exceeds the consumption that Western farmers are burning wheat in their houses and maize on their locomotives, *as the cheapest obtainable fuel*, while thousands of men, women, and children in Europe are absolutely starving.

The question of transportation,—of bringing the immense produce of the great Mississippi Valley to the markets of the world,—is THE QUESTION of the day in the Western States. All issues give prece-

In February 1866, an American correspondent to the *Chicago Tribune* based in London, wrote that a newspaper, *The Anglo-American Times*, had recently started there, beginning on October 27, 1865. "The editor," he informed his readers, "is Mr. George W. Weeks, of Connecticut, a gentleman formerly connected with the press of Richmond, Va., and New York."[170] It was indeed George, the author of *Indian Idyls*, now going by his real name and undeniably residing in London. There was also a "Mrs. Weeks" with him. The *New-York Tribune's* London correspondent, naming the celebrated Americans in London who attended a posh July 4th gathering in 1866—artists, writers, lecturers, diplomats, and social gadflies—mentioned "Weekes, editor of *The Anglo-American*, author of 'Indian Idyls,' etc." as well as "his charming wife, who has also dabbled in printer's ink," which appears to point to her identity as Cora Anna.[171]

*The Anglo-American Times*, which he had started, was a real and commercially important newspaper. Its focus was the promotion of trade between England and the post-Civil War United States as Reconstruction took hold there. Though the bulk of its content was commercial information, its editorial articles eventually leaned heavily toward reporting on the South's past foolishness and present resistance to accepting Negro suffrage. This emphasis was probably due to Week's co-editor, the erratic Charles Wheeler Denison, American Baptist clergyman, writer and poet, and controversial abolitionist ("the Rev. and holy humbug," William Lloyd Garrison called him, and an example of "sacerdotal dandyism"). He was a Nativist, a Temperance activist, and the past editor of a dozen or so short-lived newspapers and journals devoted to specific reformist causes, as well as some rather more influential and long-lived ones, such as the *Emancipator* and the *Washington Star*.

The *Anglo-American Times* issue of February 17, 1866, contained a note from Denison as he took up his duties as co-editor, eight months after the newspaper had begun. Writing of himself in the third person, he informed the paper's readers that "He has come from the United States for the express purpose of performing this service for his native land." That might suggest that Weeks, looking for an investor in the paper he had recently started, had convinced Denison,

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[170] "From Europe. Our London Correspondent," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 February 1866.
[171] "How the Fourth of July Was Kept in Liverpool and London," *New-York Tribune*, 21 July 1866.

presumably via transatlantic correspondence, to buy a significant interest in it and to come to London to help edit it.[172]

Oddly (for our story), Denison was the husband of Mary Andrews Denison, the previous editor at the *Olive Branch* in Boston, who had been promoted to the editor's chair of the *Ladies' Enterprise* after George Wentworth had left it a shambles a dozen years before. When Mrs. Denison's husband sailed to England to become the co-editor of the *Anglo-American Times*, she went with him and began contributing stories to British magazines. Is it possible that the Denisons never realized who Weeks really was? George was reckless, but is it likely that he would have willfully invited Rev. Denison into a partnership? Or did Rev. Denison know who George was and went to England with the purpose of taking the important new newspaper away from him?


Mary Andrews Denison

George stayed with the *Anglo-American Times* for a year and three months. In its issue of January 19, 1867, editor Denison reported that Weeks had "retired from all connection with this newspaper." In explanation, Denison wrote that Weeks's "health for some time has been failing, and, after two severe attacks, he has found himself unfit to meet the demands on his time. He has been connected with this Newspaper from its foundation, although for many months he has ceased to write for it."[173] That left the question open of how long after the first number of the

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[172] Rev. Denison had been in England before. In April 1863, after going AWOL from his duties as an Army chaplain in Washington, D.C., Denison had arrived in Liverpool as the self-appointed chaplain of the American ship *Charles Griswold*, which delivered relief supplies meant to ameliorate the distress caused by widespread unemployment of cotton mill operatives as the result of the cut-off of cotton imports from the U.S. during the Civil War. Denison spent some time then in England lecturing. He was dishonorably discharged from the Army for this unauthorized trip but had the temerity to petition the government later for reimbursement for the expenses he had incurred for his "alleged important services to the government, performed in England" (which petition was summarily rejected); "The *George Griswold* at Liverpool," London *Illustrated Times,* 2.423 (25 April 1863): 300; "'Rev.' Charles W. Denison, Once More," *Boston Globe*, 15 February 1873; "The 'Rev.' Charles W. Denison," Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*, 25 February 1873.

[173] "Mr. George W. Weeks," *Anglo-American Times*, 19 January 1867. Denison's tenure at the newspaper was also short-lived, having ended by March 1867, when he was briefly engaged as a

*Anglo-American Times* Weeks had actually been writing and editing it, rather than merely fronting it.[174] Whether or not he was writing for it during 1866 and 1867, he still acted as its proprietor, organizing and attending celebrations in London and elsewhere underscoring the newly warming commercial and diplomatic ties between England and the United States.[175] Whatever had actually occurred, Weeks had definitely faded out of the public eye in England by the spring of 1867. When American humorist Artemus Ward died in March while on tour in England, for example, Rev. Denison was prominent in the funeral cortege, but Weeks was nowhere to be seen.[176]

George Wentworth Weeks was not yet forty years old, but Denison's reference to Weeks's severance of association with the *Anglo-American Times* is the last known sighting of him. As noted, Denison mentioned that Weeks had been suffering some significant health problems. That may have simply been one of Weeks's dodges to bow out of the paper, but perhaps his illness was real and serious, and brought his two decades-long swindling career to a close around the time he disappeared from the public record.[177]

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preacher at the Grove Road Chapel and attempted unsuccessfully to establish the "International Memorial Church." He and his wife Mary returned to Washington, D.C. a few months later and moved to Milwaukee by the beginning of 1868.

[174] *The Anglo-American Times* would have a long life without Weeks (or Denison), issuing its last number in November 1896.

[175] "Washington's Birthday," London *Sun*, 19 February 1866; "Anniversary of Washington's Birthday," London *Morning Post*, 23 February 1866; and "The Atlantic Cable," London *Sun*, 2 July 1866, which reported Weeks's presence in a delegation (including Cyrus Field as well as British and American officials) traveling to inspect the loading of new cable onto the *Great Eastern* with the aim of completing the Atlantic Cable.

[176] "Funeral of Artemus Ward (Mr. Charles F. Browne)," London *Observer*, 10 March 1867.

[177] The two modern historians who have, with knowledge of Weeks's frauds, taken notice of him and his female partners are Patricia Clarke, in *Pen Portraits: Women writers and journalists in nineteenth century Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 65-74, and Catherine Bishop, in *Minding Her Own Business: Colonial Businesswomen in Sydney* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2015), 251-255.

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