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***Marion Harland***

*The Dean Of The Fraternity*

The dean of women's journalism in America, as everyone knows, is Marion Harland. Not that the craft is without other and, perhaps, even brighter stars! Far from it, indeed! The poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox for example are always incomparable and sometimes downright unearthly. And who shall match the physiological exhortations of Edward Bok, that Valiant crusader? Yet again, where is the like of Dorothy Dix's humor, or Beatrice Fairfax's knowledge of the technique of courtship, or Hamilton Wright Mable's acute understanding of bad fiction, or Mrs. Rorer's culinary subtlety? These virtuosi, indeed, are altogether unrivaled. The world has capacity for assimilating but one Homer at a time.

But the talents of Marion Harland, if not so blinding as those of the eminent persons named, are at least a great deal more comprehensive. She is no narrow specialist, no plucker of one string. In her time she has tackled every subject known to the woman's pages and the woman's magazines, from the care of the criminal young to the basting of a fowl, from the cash value of agreeable table manners to the darning of socks, from psychotherapy to the etiquette of Christian burial; and to the consideration of each and all she has brought a sober common sense, a kindly heart, a facile pen, a healthy optimism, a sane patriotism, a noble womanliness.

When Marion Harland began writing the woman's magazine was a joke. But today it is no joke. She has lifted it from puerility to usefulness; she has helped to make it the journalistic Croesus of the time.

*Her Father And Mother*

Marion Harland was born in Amelia County, Virginia, on December 21, 1831, the daughter of well-to-do and educated parents. Her father, Samuel Pierce Hawes, was a merchant from the North, and the Virginians among whom he came seem to have regarded him with suspicion, as if he were some dubious commercial carpet-bagger. When he fell in love with the daughter of Squire Pierce, a *magnifico* of those parts, the squire raged and swore, but in 1825 the marriage duly came to pass, and a year later a son was born. Another child followed soon after, and then, in 1831, came Mary Virginia—the Marion Harland of today.

In her autobiography, just published, Marion Harland tells us a great deal about her early years. Her folk seem to have moved in good society; she was on intimate terms with the daughters of the old Virginia aristocracy; she grew up in a cultured and pleasant home. Fully a half of her book, in truth, is devoted to her youth, and there are many interesting glimpses of the political and social turmoils of the time.

Mr. Hawes was a politician, a leader in his church, an earnest patron of letters. He helped to support the *Southern Literary Messenger*, of which Poe was editor; he was one of the first subscribers to *Harper's Magazine*; the ladies of his family—or “females,” as he no doubt called them, in the fashion of the day—devoured *Godey's Lady's Book*.

At the age of 16 Mary Hawes began to write, her first effort being a moral tale with the somewhat depressing title of “Marriage Through Prudential Motives.” For two years it lay upon her desk undergoing an arduous polishing. Then it was sent to *Godey's* bearing the *nom de plume* of Mary Vale—and the editor promptly lost the manuscript.

That was a disappointment, but it did not turn the young fictioneer aside for long. In 1853, when the *Southern Era*, a literary weekly operated by the then powerful Sons of Temperance, offered a modest prize of \$50 for “the best temperance serial” Mary Vale changed her name to Marion Harland and sent in a manuscript. It was called “Kate Harper,” and it won the prize.

### *The Origin of “Marion Harland”*

“Marion Harland,” it appears, was a sort of idealization of Mary Hawes, the real name of the young author. It was still considered rather scandalous in those days for a Virginia lady to devote her leisure to the art of letters. The members of the family circle knew and understood, but there were friends, remoter relatives and the public opinion of the community to be thought of. So Mary Hawes was changed into Mary Vale, and later into Marion Harland.

For 57 years, it thus appears, the name of Marion Harland has been familiar to women readers—aye, and to men readers too!—for “Kate Harper” made a great success, and before long its author was a regular contributor to *Godey's*. The editor of the latter, incidentally, found one day the manuscript of the forbidding “Marriage Through Prudential Motives,” lost in 1849. The name changed, it was quickly printed, and it had the honor later on of being stolen by an English magazine, translated into French, clawed back into English and then pirated by the *Albion*, a New York rival to *Godey's*.

Before the end of the fifties Marion Harland was famous from one end of the country to the other. Grace Greenwood, George D. Prentice, Mrs. Sigourney, Henry W. Longfellow and James Ridpath were among the literary giants—some of them, alas! now forgotten—who encouraged her with applause. She visited Boston and was admitted to the learned society of the Back Bay; she met Bayard Taylor, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Maria Cummins, N. P. Willis, Mrs. A.D.T. Whitney and Augusta J. Evans. It was a time of hearty geniality and small discrimination. The author of “St. Elmo” and the author of “English Traits” were held in almost equal honor.

### *A Narrow Escape From Death*

In 1856 Marion Harland became the wife of Edward Payson Terhune, a young Presbyterian preacher, and thereafter, for more than 50 years, they lived together in completed harmony. It was, indeed, a truly ideal marriage, and the engagements of the novelist and journalist were never permitted to interfere with her duties as wife and mother. The advent of each new youngster meant a long interruption in her literary work, but that interruption, it appears plainly, was not begrudged. Later on, when the children of the house began to grow up, there was more time for writing. But even then, the hard work of a pastor's wife often interfered, for Dr. Terhune moved from city to city, and even held charges in Paris and Rome.

Meanwhile sickness and death invaded the home. The eldest son and a daughter died, and in 1870 or thereabout (the autobiography is not quite clear as to the date) the mother herself fell ill. At the start it seemed as if a few months rest would restore her to health. She had been sadly overworked for five or six years, and grief had helped to break down her strength. But it quickly appeared that she was really close to death. Eminent specialists, called in consultation, found that one of her lungs was seriously affected; hemorrhages began to follow one another: her husband was informed that she had but a few months to live.

But a sojourn in the Adirondacks restored her strength, at least in part, and a long trip abroad, following soon after, brought her back to complete health. During the 35 or more years since then there has been no further sign of diseased lungs. Marion Harland, in a word, is one of that great army of victims of tuberculosis who has been cured, and permanently cured, by rest and fresh air. At 45 she was apparently near to the grave. At 50 she is in perfect health.

### *Her Varied Activity*

During the eighties Marion Harland reached the height of her fame. The woman's magazines of today were then getting their start—the *Ladies Home Journal*, the *Delineator* and the rest of them. She was the mainstay of more than one; she wrote incessantly upon all subjects interesting to women, and every woman in the United States came to know her. Meanwhile she wrote books too—a famous cookbook, a dozen or more novels, a couple of volumes upon the old homes of Virginia and other states, a treatise upon etiquette and a score of minor tracts.

Today in her old age, she conducts a syndicate woman's page for 50 papers, answering the questions of the women of 25 states. She receives more than 1,000 letters a week; she requires a whole staff of assistants to help her set through her day's work. "I write about everything" she says humorously, "from marmalade to matrimony." A busy and a happy old woman—one who has done a useful work in the world and will leave it a bit better than she found it.

*(Source: Iowa State University, Parks Library Media Center, Microfilm Collection)*