

## Chapter Four

### Writing for Christ

I would enter into a long train of events which have tried me sadly; – some connected with the failure of Publishers..., others with domestic transactions I would willingly forget were it possible. In addition to these, I could explain to you how, for months and months, I have received no order of any great importance from any publisher – how my days have been spent in restless anxiety, and my nights in mental agony.

William Martin, 1853<sup>1</sup>

The condition of writers was much debated in the 1840s and 1850s, for thanks to the growth of the periodicals, ‘writers were never so numerous as at the present time’, yet relations between writers and publishers were strained, with both groups citing examples of the lack of respect with which they were treated by the other.<sup>2</sup> Despite the great success of a few, there were still large numbers of poverty-stricken writers. Some commentators celebrated the fact that, ‘Literature has become a profession. It is a means of subsistence, almost as certain as the bar or the church.’<sup>3</sup> But others countered that, ‘It is much worse than nonsense for Mr. Thackeray to stand up at a Literary-Fund club dinner, and tell us that all authors might be comfortable and independent if they pleased.’<sup>4</sup> Between the poles of the wealthy and the impoverished was the growing number of writers who were just making a respectable living. Most of those who wrote for the RTS came from this group. They could get by, but it was difficult, and commentators disagreed whether the blame lay with the publishers, the book-buying public, the government, or the writers themselves.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> RLF 1315.3 Martin to RLF, 11/04/1853.

<sup>2</sup> *Advice to Authors, Inexperienced Writers, and Possessors of Manuscripts, on the Publication of Books intended for General Circulation or Private Distribution, with Select Specimens of Printing* (London, c1853), [i].

<sup>3</sup> [Lewes, G.H.], ‘The condition of authors in England, Germany and France’ *Fraser’s Magazine* **35** (1847): 285-95, at 285.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Authors and publishers [1],’ *New Quarterly Review* **3** (1854): 9-17, at 10.

<sup>5</sup> Authors and publishers [1] blamed the publishers; ‘Condition of authors’ implicated the government; ‘Pendennis: the literary profession’ *North British Review* **13** (1850): 335-72, blamed the authors’ moral habits, but gave some responsibility to the public for the poor remuneration of unknown authors, 355.

Although authorship was often referred to as a profession, this status was still problematic.<sup>6</sup> Unlike other professions, there were no entrance requirements for literary work, ‘no articles to be subscribed – no probationary dinners to be eaten – no examinations to be undergone – no qualifications to be tested – no degrees to be taken – no diplomas to be granted’.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of gate-keeping qualifications, the membership of the nascent ‘profession’ could not be tightly defined. As well as those writers who hoped to make their living from literature, authorship was open to ‘barristers with scarce briefs, and physicians with few patients, clergymen on small livings, idle women, rich men, and a large crop of aspiring noodles’.<sup>8</sup> This meant that there was little group identity among writers, and that unlike the lawyer or the physician, ‘the professional author is surrounded with rivals, not only as hungry as himself, but willing and able to work for lower wages, because they are not, as he is, solely dependent upon literature’.<sup>9</sup> Those arguing for the professionalisation of science also wished to exclude part-time practitioners of the sciences, and to insist on expertise, to be demonstrated by new university courses in the sciences, as an entry requirement.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, there was no obvious way to exclude literate people from authorship.

For the RTS, however, the range of people involved in authorship was a benefit. It needed not just competent writers, but competent Christian writers. Henry Curwen argued in his *History of the Booksellers* (1873) that ‘talent certainly, if not genius, is only the product of the requirements of the time and place’, and that as soon as writers for cheap books were in demand, ‘men thoroughly competent and thoroughly earnest, came forward to supply the want’. These men were ‘acted upon invisibly, insensibly, and inevitably, by the true, if word-worn, laws of supply and demand’.<sup>11</sup> But the relatively small demand from publishers for Christian writers, compared with the growth areas of secular, infidel and immoral publishing, meant that there were relatively few professional Christian writers. Without clergymen, physicians, and

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<sup>6</sup> Bonham-Carter, V., *Authors by Profession* (London, 1978), Chs.3 and 4.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 369-70.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Condition of authors’, 285.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Condition of authors’, 294-5.

<sup>10</sup> Turner, F.M., ‘The Victorian conflict between science and religion: a professional dimension’ *Isis* **69** (1978): 356-76; Cardwell, D.S.L., *The Organisation of Science in England* (1957; London, 1972).

<sup>11</sup> Curwen, H., *A History of Booksellers, the Old and the New* (London, 1873), 235.

women working part-time, the RTS would have had trouble recruiting enough writers to put its secular publishing programme into action.

Nigel Cross estimated that there were around 20,000 persistent writers during the nineteenth century, where that term describes ‘book writers who attempted to sustain their literary activity over a number of years’, either full-time or part-time.<sup>12</sup> Of these, he suggested that fewer than 1,000 have received any serious study, since most existing studies of authorship focus on the English literary canon, sometimes extended to include a few ‘great’ non-fiction writers.<sup>13</sup> Attempts to uncover the body of writers as a whole have tended to be institutionally rather than individually focused, examining in particular the development of professional bodies, such as the Society of Authors.<sup>14</sup> Cross used the files of the Royal Literary Fund (1788), a benevolent organisation for the relief of authors in distress, to seek out the individual ‘common writer’. However, since he selected as his subjects those who ‘were relatively well known at the time and whose work is above the run of the mill’, the relatively unknown writers of textbooks, encyclopaedias, popular science, and popular non-fiction in general, remain neglected.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter investigates the realities of writing for a living, with particular emphasis on the combination of writing and evangelism needed for the RTS. This involves bringing studies of authorship to bear on the lives of a group of non-fiction writers whose works influenced thousands of readers without receiving literary praise. Writers are often presented as the driving force behind published works, but by leaving my discussion of them until now, I hope to have emphasised the power of the publisher and the commercial marketplace over what any individual writer wrote. An analysis of the way in which the Society perceived and represented its writers, will provide a revealing foil to the subsequent discussion of why writers chose to work for the RTS, how writing was fitted around other demands on their time and pens.

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<sup>12</sup> Cross, N., *The Common Writer: life in nineteenth-century Grub Street* (Cambridge, 1985), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cross, *Common writer*, 3. For examples, see Sutherland, J., *Victorian Novelists and Publishers* (London, 1976); Sutherland, J., *Victorian Fiction: writers, publishers, readers* (Basingstoke, 1995); Dooley, A.C., *Author and Printer in Victorian England* (Charlottesville and London, 1992); Rose, M., *Authors and Owners: the invention of copyright* (London, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Bonham-Carter, *Authors*.

<sup>15</sup> Cross, *Common writer*, 4-5.

In 1850, the *North British Review* presented writing as a moral and spiritual occupation, saying, ‘It is no small thing to influence public opinion – to guide men to light from darkness, to truth from error – to inform the ignorant, to solace the unhappy, to afford high intellectual enjoyment to the few, or healthy recreation to the many. Of all professions, worthily pursued, it is the least selfish.’<sup>16</sup> The reviewer’s vision of the writer leading his readers ‘to light from darkness, to truth from error’ could be taken as a description of enlightenment through education in profane knowledge, but it was also meant to apply to sacred knowledge. Direct benefits to the writer themselves were dismissed as ‘mere worldly gains’, of far less eternal importance.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the ideal Christian writer was like the minister in having a vocation for spreading the gospel, albeit through the medium of print rather than the pulpit or the personal visit. Writing was a ‘ministry of the press’ or a ‘literary labour in the cause of Christian truth’.<sup>18</sup> John Kennedy’s son expressed this in his account of his father’s writing:

Few, if any, of his books, as he clearly saw and said, are likely to be remembered long after he is forgotten; but they have served their purpose, – they have been useful in their own day; they have strengthened many in weakness, enlightened many in darkness, comforted many in grief. With this he was content, as well he might be.<sup>19</sup>

Biographies and obituaries emphasised the Christian vocation of their subjects. The *Visitor* editor, Esther Copley was ‘early in life... brought to a knowledge of Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour; and was constrained by love to him, to devote her talents to his service’.<sup>20</sup> As a woman, she was unable to consider being ordained, so she played her part through her writing, and through her role as a minister’s wife. Her contemporary, George Mogridge, known to RTS readers as ‘Old Humphrey’, was also

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 371.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 371.

<sup>18</sup> Davidoff, L., and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987), 67 (re children’s writer Jane Taylor); ‘The late Mrs. Esther Copley’ *Christian Spectator* (1851): 667.

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy, J., *Old Highland Days: the reminiscences of Dr John Kennedy, with a sketch of his later life by his son, Howard Angus Kennedy, with twenty-two portraits and illustrations* (London, 1901), 246.

<sup>20</sup> ‘The late Mrs. Esther Copley’ *Christian Spectator* (1851): 667.

brought to a literary career ‘under the evident leadings of Divine Providence’. He had been apprenticed, but gave up prospects of a business career for Christian writing, ‘for which the qualities of his heart and peculiar talents so eminently qualified him’.<sup>21</sup>

For evangelical lay people, serving Christ through their life was a serious issue. It could be done by giving money to the big evangelical organisations, by joining the committee of a local society for domestic mission work, by teaching in a Sunday School, or by visiting the poor and the sick. Such activities usually had to be combined with another occupation which earned money to support the Christian and his family during their earthly life. Married women could devote significant proportions of their time to Christian works without worrying about remuneration, but ministers and writers were among the very few who could combine Christian works with earning potential. The financial dimension of Christian writing was rarely mentioned in accounts which emphasised devotion to faith and to serving others. The ambivalent nature of Christian writing made it widely attractive, and only a small proportion of all Christian writers were solely dependent on it. Starving curates could write for money while remaining true to their vocation and increasing their reputation as men of godly learning. Evangelicals in other professions, with little money to spare, could write for the cause. Wealthy men could find in writing a worthy way to spend their hours, and might even waive the payment as it was ‘all for a good cause’. The RTS ‘stable’ of writers included all these groups, whose common characteristics were commitment to evangelical faith and the ability to express themselves well in writing.

Faith alone was not enough to make a successful Christian writer, as the committee was well aware, due to the vast number of unsolicited manuscripts received which were not up to the Society’s standard. This standard required works to be well written, not just in their use of English, but in the manner in which they introduced non-denominational Christianity. They had to be ‘put together in a comprehensive and orderly manner’. Each topic should have ‘its proper place, and... [be] fully and satisfactorily discussed, nothing material... being omitted’. The examples and facts introduced should be ‘beautiful and striking’, yet ‘backed with sound reasoning’. But

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<sup>21</sup> ‘The last hours of Old Humphrey’ *Christian Spectator* (1854): 82.

in addition, the arguments should be made ‘on the sound basis of Christian principles’, and the works had to be entirely ‘free from anything that could be deemed objectionable by any class of the Society’s friends’.<sup>22</sup> When the Society advertised a prize essay on the state of the working classes, it received 176 submissions.<sup>23</sup> Of these, forty were deemed worth reading in detail, and only ten were considered for the prizes.<sup>24</sup> No doubt a prize essay competition attracted a wider range of potential writers than the Society would normally deal with, but the numbers give some idea of how few writers could meet the Society’s standard.

The Christian writer was also required to produce good copy, i.e. clear handwriting, on regular sheets of paper. Legible copy was always a wise move for an aspiring writer who needed to catch the attention of an over-burdened editor, but it was presented to the Christian as a duty to the compositor. An article in the *Leisure Hour* urged potential contributors to remember that the compositor was paid by piece work, and thus needed to be able to work rapidly. ‘He has, therefore, a *right* to legible copy, and those who set before him a scrawl of puzzling hieroglyphics, whatever they may intend, do virtually pick his pocket by diminishing his wages.’<sup>25</sup> This also entailed the use of only one side of fresh paper, as those writers who tried to save money by using ‘torn and angular fragments of letters and notes, of covers of periodicals, grey, drab or green, written in thick round hand over the small print’ were just as guilty of starving the compositor as those with poor handwriting.<sup>26</sup>

Underlying these requirements was an assumption of ability in writing *per se*. Whereas the Christian writing for vocation was supposed to be above questions of money, the portrayal of the secular writer as a professional, essentially similar to other members of the learned professions, meant that he or she was assumed to be making an income from writing.<sup>27</sup> But ideally, the professional writer also had an ‘unmistakable vocation’ to enlighten and provide recreation, which helped to make

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<sup>22</sup> RTS ECM, 11/03/1851.

<sup>23</sup> RTS Report (1851): 90.

<sup>24</sup> RTS ECM, 14/01, 04/03, and 13/05/1851.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Hints to our contributors’ *Leisure Hour* 4 (1854): 317.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Hints to our contributors’ *Leisure Hour* 4 (1854): 318, 317.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, [Lewes], ‘Condition of authors’, and ‘Pendennis’, where the predominant, although not only, image for authorship is as a profession.

his work a *profession*, in contradistinction to a *trade*.<sup>28</sup> Publishing, for instance, was ‘a trade, and, like all other trades, undertaken with the one object of making money by it.’<sup>29</sup> Writers who were too close to the trade, who produced ‘mere compilations, ...hack-work, and are paid for as such’, were seen as menial, and represented as ‘mere composing machines’, producing unoriginal works, purely for money.<sup>30</sup> Without vocation, they could not hope to be creative or original. Unlike the representations of the professional writer, those of the hack were likely to include references to the physical conditions of production, particularly living conditions in ‘the attic, the broken teacup as an inkstand, and the blanket for all covering’.<sup>31</sup> While the hack toiled, the identification of authorship with the learned professions linked the writer with mental, not physical work.

An alternative image was presented in *Chambers’s Journal*, which used the term ‘authorcraft’.<sup>32</sup> This recognised the manual effort and labour involved in authorship, while allowing it to retain the status of a highly skilled occupation. The Rev. Thomas Binney also stressed the hard work involved in literature, when he made the central lesson of his Exeter Hall lecture to the YMCA in 1854, that the writer must ‘work and toil – toil and work’.<sup>33</sup> However, since most writers were from the middle classes, the manual work involved was usually glossed over, and authorship was only rarely presented as a craft. Thus, like money and commerce, the labour involved in writing was omitted from the picture of the ideal Christian writer.

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<sup>28</sup> [Lewes], ‘Condition of authors’, 285.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 349.

<sup>30</sup> [Lewes], ‘Condition of authors’, 290; ‘Pendennis’, n, 335. On the eighteenth-century distinction between the author as above financial concerns and the Grub Street hack, see Brewer, J., *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London, 1997), 144-51.

<sup>31</sup> [Lewes], ‘Condition of authors’, 293.

<sup>32</sup> ‘The authors of calamities’ *Chambers’s Journal* **ns 7** (1847): 129-31, at 129.

<sup>33</sup> Binney, T., ‘Authorship’ *Exeter Hall Lectures on behalf of the YMCA* **9** (1854), 14-15.

## The RTS Writers

When the first impressions of the Monthly Series were issued, only four writers' names appeared on title-pages. Later impressions revealed the names of three more writers, but the majority of the volumes remained completely anonymous. Through archival work, I have been able to identify all of the writers, with at least a name. There were forty-four of them, although my focus for the rest of this chapter will be on the forty who wrote original works for the Series. For some I have little more than a name; a few, mostly ministers, were made the subject of memoirs after their deaths; others, mostly professional writers, wrote letters of appeal to the Royal Literary Fund seeking help during illness or old age. Clearly, therefore, the following discussion will focus most on those writers for whom more information is available. A summary of biographical information is provided in the appendix.

Before focusing on specific examples, I want to give some idea of the composition of the group as a whole. There were five women, and thirty-five men. Of the women, four were unmarried and one of these supported herself solely by writing. Of the men, twenty-three were ordained, two were physicians, one was a banker, two were science lecturers and writers, five made a living from writing alone (including two of the ordained<sup>34</sup>), and the other three appear to have had independent means. There was a clear majority of men, and particularly of ordained men, among these writers – and three of the women were closely related to ordained men.<sup>35</sup> Despite the numerous denominations represented by the Society's subscribers, most writers whose denominations are known (Figure 4.1) were Baptists, Congregationalists or members of the Church of England, in relatively equal proportions – thus giving dissent a 2:1 majority over the Church, in contrast to the half-and-half rule for committee membership. A similar proportion holds true among the ordained writers, although in this case, the Congregationalists significantly outnumber the Baptists. In 1850, the average age of the group was 46 years, although the ordained writers were generally younger than the lay writers, by almost five years. Among the ordained writers, the

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Milner's health forced him to resign his pulpit; Charles Williams was the RTS editor. Both remained ministers, but without charge.

<sup>35</sup> Despite the large printed output of nineteenth-century ministers and clergy, there has as yet been no detailed study of this group as writers.

Congregationalists were mostly in their forties, while the Baptists were around 15 years younger. The Anglicans were either young, or nearing retirement (see Figure 4.2). This strongly suggests that the RTS writers were not simply those who needed money, as this would have produced a predominance of curates and young ministers.

Many of the writers came to the RTS through personal connections, either directly with committee members or through acquaintances who were already RTS writers. The connection could spread through families. Two of the women writers were the daughters of RTS committee members, and one of the young Anglican clergymen was the son of the Superintendent.<sup>36</sup> Selina Bunbury wrote for extensively for the RTS herself, and was probably responsible for encouraging her brother and her cousin, both of whom were clergymen, to write occasionally. Evangelicalism also provided networks of connections, particularly within denominations and through involvement in the major interdenominational societies. These networks were especially strong in London, as so many organisations were run from London and needed committee members. Provincial evangelicals could tap into these networks, especially if they came to London for the May meetings, and visited prominent members of their denomination, perhaps recommended by a 'friend of a friend'. Evangelicals who were active in their local denominational union, or their Bible Society auxiliary, could also come into contact with the London-based evangelicals, and hence be invited to write for the RTS.

The connections between Congregationalist ministers and laymen provide a good example of this. John Kennedy had met John Stoughton before moving to London, through the Congregational Union.<sup>37</sup> Both Stoughton and Kennedy were active in the BFBS, the LMS and the Evangelical Alliance, and they were both members of *Sub Rosa*, a monthly lunch-meeting for select London-based ministers.<sup>38</sup> One of Stoughton's friends in his congregation was Thomas Coombs, a member of the RTS committee.<sup>39</sup> George Smith was a friend and neighbour of Kennedy's, as well as

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<sup>36</sup> Thalia Henderson was the daughter of the Honorary Secretary, Ebenezer Henderson; Miss Stokes was the daughter of George Stokes, co-editor.

<sup>37</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 152.

<sup>38</sup> See Kennedy, *Old Highland days* and Lewis, G.K., *John Stoughton DD: A short record of a long life* (London, 1898).

<sup>39</sup> Stoughton, J., *Recollections of a Long Life* (London, 1894), 81.

being on the LMS committee.<sup>40</sup> Another of Kennedy's friends was the Baptist minister Joseph Angus, and Angus was the brother-in-law of another RTS committee member, Joseph Gurney.<sup>41</sup> Kennedy, as minister to the Stepney meeting house, would also have known John Cox, the curate at Stepney, who had been writing for the RTS for two years before Kennedy's arrival in London.

The evangelicals who formed these networks tended to be of roughly the same age and background, and this helps to explain the predominance of Congregationalists in their forties among the writers – the RTS committee had a similar structure. Of those copyright committee members whose denominations can be determined, there were four dissenters to one Anglican (and three unknowns), suggesting that the RTS was similar to the BFBS, in that, despite the half-and-half rule for executive committee membership, the dissenting members were more active behind the scenes.<sup>42</sup> These personal links also explain why, although the initial list of writers who were asked to contribute to the Monthly Series was roughly half Church and half dissent, those writers who were asked at a later stage were predominantly dissenting.

Not all RTS writers, of course, had personal connections. Of the Baptist ministers, we have already seen that the oldest, Angus, was related to a copyright committee member, but two others were completely unknown to the RTS. Samuel Manning wrote to offer a Monthly Volume, and Henry Dunckley entered a prize essay competition. Not only were these two ministers a decade or more younger than the Stoughton-Kennedy group, they were not based in London. In their cases, it was the name and reputation of the RTS which encouraged them to submit works. For Manning, at least, the RTS was his entry into national evangelical circles, rather than vice versa.

In addition to the ordained writers, the other distinct sub-group among the RTS writers is those trying to make a living from full-time writing. Most in this group had had previous careers, which, for various reasons they had exchanged for authorship.

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<sup>40</sup> 'George Smith', *Congregational Year Book* (1870): 346-9.

<sup>41</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 249.

<sup>42</sup> Howsam notes that membership of the general and print committees in the BFBS was equally split between Church and dissent, but that Anglicans were more numerous in the more visible audit committee, Howsam, L., *Cheap Bibles: nineteenth-century publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge, 1991), 28.

One of these professional writers was Charles Williams, the RTS editor, but since his position gave him a regular salary, and removed him from the vicissitudes of making a living by freelance writing, my discussion of professional writers will focus on the other six. Of these, three wrote mostly on the sciences, which, coupled with the two writers who were also science lecturers, constitutes a significant attention to the sciences among the non-ordained writers.<sup>43</sup> Given the traditional link between the country parson and natural history, this is surprising. Of all the actively ordained writers, only two wrote on the sciences. Kennedy was a London minister, who wrote on volcanoes. Edwin Sidney, however, did indeed have a country living, in Norfolk, and wrote on natural history. Despite his distance from London, he was able to play a moderately active role in scientific circles, corresponding with Cambridge botany professor John Stevens Henslow, presenting Friday evening discourses at the Royal Institution throughout the 1840s, and assisting Michael Faraday with ozone measurements.<sup>44</sup>

In a narrative based on the historiography of professionalisation and secularisation in the nineteenth century, this tendency for the science-writers not to be ordained might be pointed to as an early example of the developing conflict between men of science and the clergy, with Sidney as a surviving representative of the older school. But there are more immediate reasons why most of the RTS's ordained writers did not take an active role in the sciences. The traditional country parson was not an evangelical. Evangelical ministers gave more than one sermon a week, and visited their congregations and the local poor, organised Sunday Schools and day schools, and addressed and/or ran local benevolent organisations. Consequently, they had little time for any additional interests, least of all ones that could not be indulged in their study in the snatches of spare time they might find at the end of a day. Furthermore, many evangelical ministers worked in industrial urban environments, such as the East End of London. Living in such locations, and with so little spare

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<sup>43</sup> This is slightly complicated by the fact that Thomas Milner was a former minister. Although ordained, I am counting him as a professional writer, as he made his living from writing.

<sup>44</sup> *Blights*, iii. For information regarding Sidney's Royal Institution involvement, my thanks to Frank James. On Sidney and Faraday's ozone measurements, see James, F.A., ed. *The Correspondence of Michael Faraday*, 4 vols. (London, 1991-), iv, letter 2534.

time, it is hardly surprising that few evangelical ministers were able to participate in the sciences.

It could be argued that writers did not need to be active participants in order to be able to write about a subject. Kennedy, for instance, must have gained his information about volcanoes from books. For the purposes of writing short introductory works, the sciences could be just as amenable to book-based research as history and biography. Yet most ordained men had been educated, both at school and at their training college, in classics and theology, which included some literature and history. In their limited spare time, those subjects, rather than the unfamiliar sciences, would be the ones to which they would turn, and the ones on which they would be most likely to feel competent to write.

As a group, the RTS writers were mostly male, and mostly ordained, with a small number of women, other professionals, and full-time writers. Many had personal connections to the RTS, indicating that they were from a similar professional middle-class background as the committee members. The two writers of whom this was most obviously not true, William Martin the former apothecary's apprentice and John Kitto the former shoemaker's apprentice, were full-time writers who wrote for several publishers of whom the RTS was but one.

### **Deciding to Write**

The ideal Christian writer was one who wrote in the cause of evangelisation, and did so primarily from a sense of vocation. While there can be little doubt that such spiritual aims explained why writers chose to write for the RTS in particular, for most of them it was only minor part of their decision to write in the first place. When discussing their work, writers did acknowledge the spiritual aspect. Selina Bunbury regarded her novels and travel stories 'as helps to the cause of morals and religion', and William Martin aimed to inculcate 'a healthy love of nature & of Nature's God, in the minds of "general readers"'.<sup>45</sup> John Kitto's works were more immediately scriptural than most, dealing with the geography and history of the Bible lands, and he explicitly described them as aiding 'the diffusion of scriptural knowledge', and that it

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<sup>45</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848; RLF 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853.

was ‘my proper vocation’.<sup>46</sup> These writers were all making a living from their literary work, but they would still have agreed with John Stoughton that, ‘To lead men and women to Christ, is one of the highest honours God can bestow upon His children’.<sup>47</sup>

Writers also considered their sales figures in this light, for the greater the circulation, the more people could be brought to a knowledge of Christ. When Kitto discussed with an Edinburgh publisher whether to produce ‘popular (as distinguished from *scholastic*) books’, he decided that popular was better, as this would permit him ‘an extended measure of *usefulness*’.<sup>48</sup> Although Kitto suggested that he might also get more financial remuneration for a popular work, this would not have been true of most writers, as they sold their copyrights outright and had no financial interest in the sales. Thus, Bunbury welcomed the news that one of her works had sold 100,000 copies as good news for evangelicalism.<sup>49</sup>

Another intangible benefit from writing was a degree of personal fame, or reputation. The anonymity of the Monthly Series volumes did not necessarily prevent them contributing to their writer’s reputation. Firstly, the deep anonymity of *Vestiges* (1844) was exceptionally rare.<sup>50</sup> The names of anonymous writers were often known within the trade, and if the book gained any literary success, the secret was usually widely known within a few months. The *Pictorial Bible* appeared anonymously in 1838, and although it did not achieve the great fame of *Vestiges* or become common after-dinner conversation, Kitto’s identity as editor was soon known to interested parties, including Biblical scholars and publishers of theological works on the watch for future projects.<sup>51</sup> In addition, some writers were able to build up reputations despite anonymity.<sup>52</sup> Bunbury, for example, began writing anonymously in the 1820s

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<sup>46</sup> Ryland, J., *Memoirs of John Kitto, DD, FSA, Compiled Chiefly from his Letters and Journals. With a critical estimate of Dr Kitto’s Life and Writings by Professor Eadie, DD, LLD, Glasgow* (Edinburgh, 1856), 603.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 217.

<sup>48</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 603.

<sup>49</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848.

<sup>50</sup> Secord, J.A., *Victorian Sensation: the extraordinary publication, reception and secret authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago, 2000), 19-20.

<sup>51</sup> Eadie, J., *Life of John Kitto, DD, FSA* (Edinburgh, 1857), 297-300.

<sup>52</sup> Griffin, R.J., ‘Anonymity and authorship’ *New Literary History* **30** (1999): 877-95, especially 877-83.

when ‘an authoress was a curiosity’, but she eventually gained sufficient reputation as ‘The author of *A Visit to my Birthplace* etc’ to put her name on her works.<sup>53</sup>

Although intangible, a reputation could help to bring worldly rewards. For a professional writer, it would improve their chances of getting new commissions and being paid more for future works. Thus, Bunbury’s *Rides in the Pyrenees* (1844), yielded her ‘more fame than pecuniary remuneration’, but by doing so it had ‘done me service, having been so well received by the public press.’<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Kitto counted his fame as one of the reasons for optimism about the future, writing that, ‘my resources for such occupation [literature] are unexhausted, my publishing connections good, and my standing with the public much higher now than it has been at any former period of my career.’<sup>55</sup> Ministers could benefit in this way, but they might also find that a reputation as a writer would aid their ‘promotion’ to a more valuable living, or a more wealthy congregation, since published works brought their name to the attention of patrons and congregations.

Published works could also bring a reputation, not just as a writer, but as a scholar, which again could increase one’s literary engagements, or improve one’s chances of being invited to become a professor at a theological college. However, as Kitto’s distinction between popular and scholarly books indicates, the RTS Monthly Volumes, were unlikely to help a scholarly reputation. This is illustrated by the absence of the volumes, or their relegation to the small print, in the published memoirs of the minister-writers, many of whom became known in later life as theological scholars. Although a successful Monthly Volume might commend its writer to a publisher seeking a ‘popular’ volume, it was not equal commendation to the experts. This applied in the natural sciences as well as theology, as is particularly clear in the case of William Martin. Martin had been a curator at the Museum of the Zoological Society and a contributor to the Society’s *Transactions*. After losing his job during financial cutbacks in 1838, he felt relegated to the fringes of natural history circles. His former colleagues included Richard Owen, the comparative anatomist, John Gould, the ornithologist, and George Waterhouse, later the British Museum

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<sup>53</sup> RLF 1089.86, Bunbury to RLF, 01/07/1878.

<sup>54</sup> RLF 1089.11, Bunbury to RLF, 05/03/1845.

<sup>55</sup> RLF 1115.2, Kitto to RLF, 27/10/1845.

keeper of minerals and fossils. All of these men held paid positions in natural history museums in London, and their expertise had been recognised by Charles Darwin when he sought their help to classify specimens from his *Beagle* voyage.<sup>56</sup> They all wrote references for Martin to the Royal Literary Fund extolling his services to natural history.<sup>57</sup> Gould explained that his works were ‘duly estimated by Professor Owen, Dr. Gray, and indeed everyone in the same walk of science who may be considered competent judges of their merit.’<sup>58</sup> Owen, himself an RLF committee member, wrote that Martin ‘has been most industriously and honorably occupied in diffusing sound scientific information, in Zoology’.<sup>59</sup> Those solid adjectives were mirrored by Martin himself, when he claimed to have been uncertain as to whether his works merited reward, and referred to them as ‘not brilliant’ and having a ‘plain utility’.<sup>60</sup>

Martin’s publications were deemed to have merit, but as popular works, not as original contributions to natural history, such as those of Owen or Gould. Martin recognised the introductory status of his works when he described his aim as ‘to teach the principles of zoology popularly yet on a truthful basis, and, avoiding the “clap-trap” style, to impart some degree of information relative to the laws of organic structure and the thence-deduced rules on which the system of Zoology as a science is founded’.<sup>61</sup> Even in the early 1850s, over a decade after leaving the Zoological Museum, he still hoped to find another museum-based job, or some other position where his ‘scientific knowledge would render my services advantageous’, rather than remain a popular science writer.<sup>62</sup> However, his health declined, he became more depressed about his financial situation, and he found that scientific jobs eluded him.<sup>63</sup> It was small comfort to discover ‘that my labours were not unappreciated, even by the

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<sup>56</sup> Desmond, A., and J. Moore, *Darwin* (London, 1991), for example, 203-9, 225, 309-12.

<sup>57</sup> Cross, *Common writer*, 58, discusses the men of science who were involved in the RLF.

<sup>58</sup> RLF 1315.23, Gould to RLF, 02/02/1859.

<sup>59</sup> RLF 1315.4, Owen to RLF, 11/04/1853.

<sup>60</sup> RLF 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853.

<sup>61</sup> RLF 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853.

<sup>62</sup> RLF 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853.

<sup>63</sup> RLF 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853; 1315.14, Martin to RLF, 01/06/1854, and thereafter.

learned'.<sup>64</sup> The reputation that Martin gained as a popular writer was not equivalent to that he had hoped for as a man of science.

Most of the RTS writers were writing for money, as well as for reputation and their faith. This is most obvious in the case of the six who made their sole living from literary work, but it was true of ministers as well, who might at any age find it difficult to live on the income from their profession. Recently ordained men were likely to be curates or to have small congregations, and be unable to support a wife or family. By the time they moved on to better positions, they had usually got married and had a young family to look after. And once the family had grown up, the minister was starting to think about old age. Unless he had been fortunate enough to save regularly, in the absence of a pension he either had to keep working till he died, or was prevented by ill-health, or he had to find another source of income. Furthermore, at all times, as a person of considerable standing in the community, he had charitable drains upon his income that were not shared by other men earning similar salaries.<sup>65</sup> Frances Knight suggests that assistant clerks in the civil service, earning from £350 to £600, were on a similar income, but were effectively better off, as they did not share the professional responsibilities.<sup>66</sup>

In the Church of England, curates were notoriously poorly paid, on £50 to £100 a year, and often had lengthy waits before a living became vacant.<sup>67</sup> Several of the Anglicans who wrote for the Monthly Series had just moved to their first living, after around ten years as curate. Anglican livings could vary enormously in value, and bore little relation to their location, size, or the seniority of the incumbent. Knight has shown that 49% of livings were valued at over £300, and 4% were worth over £1,000, a sum unthinkable in the dissenting churches.<sup>68</sup> Despite the large proportion of livings worth less, John Kaye, bishop of Lincoln in the 1830s and 1840s, suggested

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<sup>64</sup> RLF 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853.

<sup>65</sup> Urwick gave 'at least *one-tenth* of his income to religious and philanthropic objects', through 'subscriptions to religious societies and charitable institutions' (see Urwick, W., *The Life and Letters of William Urwick, DD of Dublin* (London, 1870), 370). Kennedy also responded to begging letters and personal applicants for relief, giving to all but the most 'improbable stories' (see Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 180).

<sup>66</sup> Knight, F., *The Nineteenth-century Church and English Society*, (Cambridge, 1995), 134.

<sup>67</sup> Curate incomes are analysed in Knight, *Nineteenth-century church*, 127-29.

<sup>68</sup> Knight, *Nineteenth-century church*, 131-2.

that £200 was the absolute minimum for a clergyman to discharge his parish duties respectably. Knight suggests that this was optimistic, and that £500 was not lavish.<sup>69</sup> Of the RTS Anglicans, Cox's first living was worth £269 a year, Jones's was £400, and Sidney's was £509.<sup>70</sup> Cox and Jones held London livings, while Sidney's was in Suffolk, but Cox and Sidney both had parishes of under 700 souls, while Jones's contained over 10,000. Within a few years, Jones had moved to a smaller, richer living in Wiltshire.<sup>71</sup> All three of these young clergy were earning more than John Owen, who moved to a Leicester living worth only £240 a year, at the age of 57.

In the dissenting churches, a ministerial stipend depended upon congregational numbers and wealth, not upon endowments. As there were no curates or bishops, the range of stipends was smaller than that for clergymen, so although there were fewer very poor stipends, there were also fewer rich ones. Young ministers usually started with smaller congregations, often in poorer locations. When Kennedy accepted his first call, to Blackfriars Aberdeen, his congregation could afford to pay him only £80 a year.<sup>72</sup> Alexander started in Edinburgh on £130, although he was aware that if he had been willing to accept an English call, he could have had a higher stipend.<sup>73</sup> These incomes were marginally better than curates', but poorer than those of the clergymen who had just accepted their first livings. Since being called to another congregation depended on becoming known to other congregations, public speaking, supply preaching and writing were important. Kennedy, Alexander, and Stoughton (who was initially at Windsor) were all offered churches in London as a consequence of their preaching, and William Urwick was able to move from rural Sligo to Dublin for similar reasons. Since Alexander did not accept the call to Stepney meeting house, Kennedy became its minister a few years later.<sup>74</sup> There, he earned from £400 to £600 a year, including his literary earnings. His Aberdeen stipend had been just adequate to support himself, his sister and a family servant, but his Stepney stipend

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<sup>69</sup> Kaye cited in Knight, *Nineteenth-century church*, 132.

<sup>70</sup> The value of livings is given in the Clergy Lists. Cox became vicar of St. Helen's Bishopsgate, in 1849; Jones became incumbent of St James Curtain Road, Shoreditch, between 1845 and 1850; Sidney became rector of Little Cornard, Suffolk, in 1847.

<sup>71</sup> As vicar of Bradford with Westwood, he received £590. The Bradford population was 3,259, and that of Westwood was 356. Clergy List (1852).

<sup>72</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 114-5.

<sup>73</sup> Ross, J., *W. Lindsay Alexander, DD, LLD: his life and work, with illustrations of his teaching* (London, 1887), 63.

<sup>74</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 124; Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 166-7.

was barely sufficient for himself, his wife, seven children, and a servant.<sup>75</sup> Since the stipend depended on the financial health of the congregation, its value could go down as well as up, as Urwick discovered in Dublin. When he first arrived, he received £300 a year, but after some years, it fell to £250, due to falling numbers or to the economic problems of the mid-1840s.<sup>76</sup>

A problem which ministers shared with clergy was that their income did not arrive regularly. The income of livings was frequently dependent on land-rents, which might be due at five- or seven-year intervals, so that the 'annual value' cited in sources like the Clergy Lists was actually an ideal average. Kennedy's son explained the problem for ministers: 'Perhaps the worst of it is that that prosperous Church, loving him as it does, has a very unbusiness-like way of crystallising its affection. Not only is his ministerial stipend uncertain in amount, but it arrives at irregular intervals, and often in mere dribbles.'<sup>77</sup> Although Kennedy did not attempt to live in luxury, he occasionally found himself having 'to borrow from a friend when heavy school and college bills come in'.<sup>78</sup>

While ministers and clergymen were hardly alone in wishing to maintain a respectable place in society, their profession made it more necessary than for less public figures. Not only did their families have to appear well-dressed and their homes tidy and respectable, but they were expected to respond to appeals for charity.<sup>79</sup> The reduction of Urwick's stipend, and the erosion of his small capital 'in meeting necessary and increasing demands upon the family exchequer' meant that he could not afford to move to a house which was large enough for his growing family, and would be in a more healthy location for his ill wife. Fortunately for him, the move did take place, thanks to 'the kindness of a few ladies in the congregation'.<sup>80</sup> Church livings often came with houses, but the incumbent was expected to maintain the property, and by the mid-nineteenth century, decades of neglect had brought many such properties into

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<sup>75</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 180, 146.

<sup>76</sup> Urwick, *William Urwick*, 370.

<sup>77</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 180-1. See also Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 213-14.

<sup>78</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 180.

<sup>79</sup> Knight, *Nineteenth-century church*, 132. They might also bear the bulk of the cost of the Sunday or day school.

<sup>80</sup> Urwick, *William Urwick*, 230, 234. The ladies bought the lease, which allowed them to charge the minister a reduced rent.

very poor condition, necessitating expensive repairs.<sup>81</sup> Under such conditions, Kennedy reckoned that ‘no income conceivable to... [a] minister would enable him to keep his family in luxury, not to speak of saving money’.<sup>82</sup>

If he could not save money, then a minister or clergyman would have no source of income during a retirement entered from choice or ill-health. Anglicans could keep their livings until they died if they could work, or afford a curate to replace them. Dissenting ministers did not have the option of a curate, and many worked well into their seventies. However, their profession did supply ministers with a large number of well-wishers who knew them personally and might assist a frail, elderly or impoverished minister, as already illustrated in the case of Urwick’s house. Knight has suggested that similar support networks helped to disguise the actual poverty of many elderly Anglican incumbents.<sup>83</sup> Several of the Congregationalist ministers were able to retire thanks to the generosity of their congregations. Kennedy was paid an unspecified retirement allowance by his congregation, while Urwick and Stoughton received purses, containing £2,000 and £3,000 respectively, amid the speeches at their jubilee celebrations.<sup>84</sup> Once invested, those sums would provide an annual income of around £150 for the years of retirement.

The meagre and unreliable income of ministers and clergy, combined with the particular demands on their purses, meant that the financial remuneration available from writing could be very useful. But while the ordained could choose to write, as a way of making their incomes more comfortable, professional writers were usually forced to write for mere subsistence. Professional writers shared several of the problems of ministers, as they had to live on small and irregular incomes, and found it very difficult to save for old age. Theoretically writers did not have to keep up respectable appearances to the same extent as ministers, but in practice many of them did try to keep up their position, even when their incomes did not allow it. Unlike the ministers, they had fewer demands from charity cases, but they also lacked the

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<sup>81</sup> Knight, *Nineteenth-century church*, 136-8.

<sup>82</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 180.

<sup>83</sup> Knight, *Nineteenth-century church*, 130.

<sup>84</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 260-1; Urwick, *William Urwick*, 340; Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 147. The jubilee celebrated twenty-five years in the ministry.

support of a wide circle of well-wishers, and thus found it much more difficult to get out of financial trouble.

Before he had decided to make the ministry his profession, William Alexander had considered a literary career. He wrote to Adam Black, the Edinburgh publisher, mentioning that 'a friend' (i.e. Alexander) was considering settling in Edinburgh to write for the periodicals, and he got the following discouraging reply:

He must be a very young man indeed, and unacquainted with the difficulties in his way. Besides, I do not know any one who writes for the periodicals but who has something else to trust to, except Dr B., who is very clever, but who after all is starving. Any young man who thinks of such a thing would require to bring with him a good purse, as he would get very little for any of his papers until he acquired a name, and even then he could not live by it. Advise your friend to think of something else.<sup>85</sup>

Black's response made clear both the value of a 'name', or reputation, as a writer, and of an alternative source of income even once established. By the 1840s, it began to be possible for that alternative source of income to be a literary one, as the growth of the periodical press opened up opportunities for salaried, as well as freelance, journalists and editorial assistants. The RTS's own editorial department offered opportunities of this sort, with full-time salaries of £200 or £300. Although such positions provided a steady salary for writing, they restricted the writer's subject matter and genre. Only in his spare time would he be able to work on his own projects, but his day-job protected him from the vagaries of the publishing trade, and made it possible to live by the pen. Occasionally, sufficient success might allow journalists and editors to give up their salaries to concentrate on their own creative writing. Dickens, for instance, gave up his post as political journalist, although he still took on salaried editorial positions.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, part-time writers from other professions, if they were successful enough to put money in the bank to provide a source of income for the future, might become full-time writers. Thomas Dick gave up his school-teaching job to concentrate on

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<sup>85</sup> Black to Alexander, c1831, quoted in Ross, *WL Alexander*, 42-3.

<sup>86</sup> Bonham-Carter, *Authors*, 69-70; Cross, *Common writer*, Ch. 3.

writing when he was 53 years old and had amassed savings from his teaching and his two successful books.<sup>87</sup>

Except for the few who gave up other sources of income after proven success in literature, the majority of full-time writers had acquired their profession from necessity. Writing was an especially likely option for single women on the death of their father, brother or other male relative. Given the education most women received, they had few options. School-teaching or becoming a governess, and writing were virtually the only genteel options available. Although women are estimated to have made up around fifth of authors, they almost all wrote novels, children's books or poetry, genres where an advanced education was less necessary.<sup>88</sup> In the Monthly Series, women accounted for an eighth of the writers. Despite the prose non-fiction needed for the Series, the works were all to be popular in style, to be generally comprehensible, and thus, like children's books, could potentially be written by women.

Anne Pratt began to write towards the end of her father's life, and after his death in the mid-1840s, she made her living from school-teaching and botany writing until her marriage twenty years later.<sup>89</sup> Selina Bunbury began writing while still living with her family, because, when she was seventeen (c1820), her clergyman father lost his 'large estates in Ireland' after 'a ruinous Chancery suit, of about forty years' duration'.<sup>90</sup> Although Bunbury had apparently not shown 'any previous inclination or talent for writing', it was through writing that she did her bit to help the family finances. For the next twenty years she wrote 'anonymously, and successfully, in periodicals and otherwise, for the alleviation of family distress.'<sup>91</sup> When her parents died in the mid-1840s, she expected to be supported by her brother Robert, an evangelical clergyman, who had just received his first living at Swansea (£291), and her first cousin, Walter Shirley, the newly-translated evangelical Bishop of Sodor and

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<sup>87</sup> RLF 1241.1, Dick's application form, 11/01/1850. See also Astore, W.J., 'Observing God: Thomas Dick (1774-1857), evangelicalism and popular science in Victorian Britain and Antebellum America' (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1995), 38-42.

<sup>88</sup> Cross, *Common writer*, 167.

<sup>89</sup> DNB, BBA, Graham, M., 'A life among the flowers of Kent' *Country Life* **161** (1972): 1500.

<sup>90</sup> RLF 1089.12, Printed appeal for Bunbury.

<sup>91</sup> RLF 1089.1, Application Form, 04/01/1844.

Man. Unfortunately, as she explained to the Royal Literary Fund in 1848, ‘In a brief space of time, my Father, Mother, brother and cousin have gone to the grave.’<sup>92</sup> She had inherited some money from her mother, but it was ‘insecurely vested’, and lost.<sup>93</sup> From this point on, writing became Bunbury’s main source of income, rather than the additional aid it had previously been. She managed to support herself and several family members for the remaining thirty-five years of her life.

Yet women were not alone in being forced to write for a living. John Kitto’s deafness precluded most jobs, and after being at various times a shoe-maker, a librarian and missionary-station printer, when he returned from an expedition to Persia, at the age of twenty-nine (1833), he was employed on a salary of £192 a year as an editorial assistant to Charles Knight, to help with SDUK publications.<sup>94</sup> In 1841-42, Knight suffered financial trouble, and Kitto lost his job.<sup>95</sup> Writing seemed like his best option for supporting his family, and he struggled to do so for the next twelve years. Thomas Milner was a Congregational minister till the age of forty, and had been writing works of theology and natural science for the previous fifteen years. However in 1847, ill health compelled him to resign his charge.<sup>96</sup> Again, his previous experience with writing made it seem like a viable alternate profession, and so it proved, albeit with some sticky patches, for the next thirty-five years. William Martin, as we have seen, had been employed by the Museum of the Zoological Society from the age of 32 years (1830), and began his writing career in natural history while working there. After the museum cutbacks in the late 1830s, his colleague Waterhouse got a position at the British Museum, thanks to a reference from Darwin.<sup>97</sup> Martin was employed on an annual salary by the publishers Baldwin, Cradock & Joy to produce an extensive work on quadrupeds.<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, Baldwin & Co. went bankrupt almost immediately afterwards, leaving Martin to become a freelance natural history writer for the remaining twenty-five years of his life.

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<sup>92</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848.

<sup>93</sup> RLF 1089.12, Printed appeal for Bunbury.

<sup>94</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 530-8.

<sup>95</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 580.

<sup>96</sup> RLF 1385.2, Milner to RLF, n.d. [1855].

<sup>97</sup> RLF 1315.7, Waterhouse to RLF, 13/04/1853. On Waterhouse, see Desmond and Moore, *Darwin*, 309.

<sup>98</sup> On Martin, see RLF 1315.3, Martin to RLF, 11/04/1853 and 1315.7, Waterhouse to RLF, 13/04/1853.

These writers all managed to survive on their literary income for substantial lengths of time. Yet their degree of satisfaction with writing as a sole source of income may be gauged by their frequent hopes of finding an additional regular income, however small. Such a resource would relieve much of the stress of being an writer, by providing, as Kitto put it, something ‘on which I may be able to fall back in time of need; and which may be to me as a staff to rest on in my sufficiently perilous career.’<sup>99</sup> One of Kitto’s plans was to be appointed warden to the new cemetery being established at Woking, where he had moved for the cheaper rents in the late 1840s.<sup>100</sup> Martin’s hopes centred on the London museums of natural history, where he wished ‘to obtain some official situation, humble though the salary might be.’<sup>101</sup> Bunbury’s plan was to take a house in Cheltenham where she would act as a companion to elderly ladies, but she was unable to find the money to rent the house.<sup>102</sup> Nor were Kitto or Martin any more successful.

There was no doubt in the minds of these minister-writers and professional writers that literary work could produce worthwhile financial benefits. For the part-time writer, the actual amount was perhaps not that important – the £30 or £35 received for a Monthly Volume was simply a welcome addition, however much it happened to be. But for the professional writers, the issue was more urgent, although they had different assessments of how much they needed to earn. Bunbury felt she had had a good year in 1848, when she earned £150 from her two Monthly Volumes, several SPCK works and various contributions to periodicals.<sup>103</sup> While Bunbury had only herself and a sister to support, Kitto had a wife and six children in 1845. He thought that £660 a year would be ‘fair’, but that £330 was ‘a miserable pittance’.<sup>104</sup> That his estimate was not unreasonable can be seen from the *North British Review*’s suggestion in 1850 that a writer with a wife and six children might need to earn £600 a year.<sup>105</sup> The extremes of the single Bunbury and the family man Kitto indicate the

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<sup>99</sup> RLF 1115.6, Kitto to RLF, 13/12/184(9?).

<sup>100</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 685.

<sup>101</sup> RFL 1315.11, Martin to RLF, 16/04/1853.

<sup>102</sup> RLF 1089.22, Bunbury to RLF, 04/02/1851.

<sup>103</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848.

<sup>104</sup> He had received £1000 for the *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* (1845), which ought to have taken him 18 months, rather than 3 years, Eadie, *John Kitto*, 335; RLF 115.2, Kitto to RLF, 27/10/1845.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 360.

range of incomes that a writer might be trying to achieve, and put them in the same income bracket as the ministers already discussed.<sup>106</sup>

The incomes of writers like Dickens and Thackeray seemed to illustrate that literature could be as secure a source of income as any other profession. *Fraser's Magazine* argued that even in the 'ordinary current' of writers, 'we find able literary men in England, making incomes averaging 300*l.* a-year, some less, of course, some more', whereas in France or Germany, writers were far less fortunate.<sup>107</sup> *Fraser's* estimated the range of realistic incomes for a writer at £200 to £1,000 a year, and the *North British Review* concurred with this, claiming that 'many men... in London, Edinburgh, and other parts of the country' earn from £300 to £1,000 a year, and that 'some, with very little effort, earn... considerably more'.<sup>108</sup> Estimates like these encouraged potential writers by countering what *Chambers's Journal* called the 'general sense of the wretched nature of a purely literary life'.<sup>109</sup>

In reality, what any individual writer, outside the select group of famous novelists, could earn was enormously variable, and dependent on numerous factors apart from the amount of writing they produced. Writing was paid at a 'per sheet' rate, which was usually sixteen printed octavo pages, although for short articles in the popular periodicals, this might be translated into a 'per page', or a 'per column' rate. However, this rate varied between publishers and periodicals, and with the editor's assessment of the writer's reputation and ability. The literary journals, particularly the quarterlies, paid more per sheet than most weekly or monthly periodicals. Well-known writers were paid more, with Thackeray receiving twice as much per sheet after the success of *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) as he had done before.<sup>110</sup> The RTS standard rate was £10 a sheet for all its publications, including its periodicals, which put it in the same bracket as *Chambers's Journal*, *Bentley's Miscellany*, and the

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<sup>106</sup> Both writers and ministers were clearly in the middle classes, and far better off than people like agricultural labourers, earning around £26 a year (see Dauntton, M., *Progress and Poverty: an economic and social history of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), table 16.1). For a writer, Charles Dickens was enormously wealthy. He earned around £2,900 a year from his writings, not including the editorial work he undertook (see Bonham-Carter, *Authors*, 69-70).

<sup>107</sup> [Lewes], 'Condition of authors', 286.

<sup>108</sup> 'Pendennis', 348.

<sup>109</sup> 'Authors of calamities', 129.

<sup>110</sup> Bonham-Carter, *Authors*, 61.

*Penny Magazine*.<sup>111</sup> The Society might increase this to twelve guineas for famous preachers, or in recognition of particular effort, while it could also reduce it for RTS employees who wrote for publication in their spare time.<sup>112</sup>

In book publishing, most publishers were willing to pay higher rates to attract more famous writers, and this meant that although the RTS's £10 a sheet rate compared well with the other periodicals, it was less impressive as a book rate. Both the SDUK and John Murray paid substantially more per sheet for the volumes of their libraries than the RTS did for the Monthly Series. The RTS writers were also paid less per word, because while Murray's printed sheet was composed of sixteen octavo pages, the RTS tended to use smaller formats, with more pages per sheet. Yet, since the Society also used smaller type, there was an equivalent number of words on each smaller page. Thus, the difference between the £30 payments for the Monthly Volumes, and those of £180 for the SDUK and £220 for Murray, is only partly to be explained by the difference in length.<sup>113</sup> The RTS rarely paid over £120 for the longest works it published, and its payment structure was much more similar to that of Chambers, who were also aiming to publish cheap books in small formats, and employed similarly mid-ranking writers (although in Chambers case, they were more likely to be school-teachers than ministers).<sup>114</sup> These sliding rates and variations between publishers meant that writers who were less-known had to produce more words to match the incomes of the better-known. Since they were also working for periodicals which took shorter articles, or publishers who wanted small works, they had to write more separate items, which means spending proportionately more time doing research.

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<sup>111</sup> *Chambers's Journal* paid between 10s. and 15s. a column, with 16 columns per number, while *Bentley's Miscellany* paid 12 guineas a sheet (and the *Dublin University Magazine* paid £7 for two sheets), Cooney, S.M., 'Publishers for the People: W. & R. Chambers – the early years, 1832-50' (Ph.D., Ohio State University, 1970), 94-5. The *Penny Magazine* paid £1.11.0 a page, Ryland, *John Kitto*, 528. The RTS usually paid £10 a sheet, RTS CCM 20/01/1847.

<sup>112</sup> Twelve guineas a sheet were paid to Rev. Hugh Stowell, and Dr. Moore, see RTS CCM 22/07/1840, and 17/10/1849. On rates for RTS staff, and their relatives, see RTS CCM 17/03/1847, and 01/06/1842. On the rates at Chambers's, see Cooney, *Publishers for the people*, 94-5.

<sup>113</sup> For a discussion of the cost of volumes in the libraries of Murray and the SDUK, see Bennett, S., 'Revolutions in thought: serial publication and the mass market for reading' in *The Victorian Periodical Press*, eds. J. Shattock and M. Wolff (Leicester, 1982): 225-57, at 160-61.

<sup>114</sup> Cooney, *Publishers for the people*, 196-7.

The RTS did not usually find it problematic to pay its writers less than other book publishers.<sup>115</sup> Unlike commercial publishers, who competed with each other to catch or keep popular writers, the RTS rarely sought new writers. Offers of works came to the committee, and it assumed writers would keep writing for the Society because of their dedication to the evangelical cause. The majority of its writers were not dependent on writing for money, and most had close personal connections with the RTS. Thus, the payments made by the Society were not intended to attract writers, and the need for the published works to be as cheap as possible mitigated against higher payments. However, the relatively low remuneration available from the RTS meant that it would be well-nigh impossible to make a living as a professional writer by writing for the RTS (or similar organisations) alone.

### **Choosing What to Write**

Someone who had decided to become a writer had to decide what sort of works to write. This entailed decisions about subject matter, genre and format, and depended whether the writer was aiming for a book or periodical, or a popular or scholarly work. Most of the writing a minister or clergyman did was in some way related to his profession, as he wrote sermons, lectures, and addresses for his congregation and the public, and perhaps lecture courses for theological students.<sup>116</sup> Published works frequently derived from some of these writings, such as volumes of sermons, tracts on contemporary problems, reviews of recent theological works, printed versions of lectures, or textbooks based on college teaching. Tracts and periodical articles were a usual starting point for ministers seeking publication, as they were short, and relatively easy to find a publisher for. These small works, such as Alexander's pamphlet on the cholera outbreak, or Urwick's tracts on the evils of intemperance, were unlikely to be financially profitable, but they might bring the writer's name to the attention of the religious world.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Although, later in the century, at least one bestselling writer was willing to argue the case, see Rickard, S.L.G., "Living by the pen": Hesba Stretton's moral earnings' *Women's History Review* 5 (1996): 219-38.

<sup>116</sup> Urwick, Stowell and Angus were heads of theological colleges in the 1840s, and Kennedy and Stoughton were professors at New College in the 1870s. East was appointed head of Calabar College, Jamaica in 1852.

<sup>117</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 55; Urwick, *William Urwick*, 118-9.

Many of the editors of the religious periodicals were ministers, and so the denominational networks helped ministers who were new to periodical writing to get started. Alexander and Kennedy both wrote for the *Scottish Congregational Magazine*, and Alexander later edited the *Congregational Magazine*. Kennedy also wrote for the *Nonconformist* and the *Sunday School Chronicle*, and he later edited the *Christian Witness* and the *Evangelical Magazine*. Stoughton was also a sometime editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*, while Ferguson and Stowell were sometime editors of the *Eclectic Review*. Stowell contributed to a range of periodicals, including the *Congregational Magazine*, the *Eclectic Review*, the *Christian Times*, the *Biblical Review* and the *British Quarterly Review*. All of these periodicals had dissenting editorial policies, although the *Eclectic* and the *British Quarterly* were literary rather than religious journals.

Tracts were usually published at the writer's own expense, except when an organisation like the RTS offered a few pounds for them. This was also true of sermons and most theological works except where the writer was known, and was fortunate enough to find an interested publisher.<sup>118</sup> Friends or members of the congregation often encouraged ministers to publish their sermons and lectures, which was why Stoughton's first three works were published. He was fortunate that in one case, a friend was so keen that he offered to cover the cost of publication.<sup>119</sup> Due to the ephemeral nature of tracts and periodical articles, books were better at making their writer's reputation, and it was thanks to the 'wide and lasting esteem among his brethren in various sections of the church', as a consequence of his first book, that Stowell was appointed president of Rotherham College.<sup>120</sup>

Many ministers lacked the time or inclination to pursue any writing beyond this immediately theological material. Benjamin Luckock, for instance, published a volume of sermons, and a poem called 'Faith', as well as the Monthly Volume on *Jamaica*. When his widow applied to the Royal Literary Fund for a grant, she did not mention *Jamaica*, presumably considering it too small a work to be worth citing, even

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<sup>118</sup> [Lewes], 'Condition of authors', 290.

<sup>119</sup> Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 48-50.

<sup>120</sup> Stowell, W., *A Memoir of the Life and Labours of William Hendry Stowell, DD* (London, 1859), 122.

though its existence put Luckock's literary contribution a little beyond the usual for ministers.<sup>121</sup> Presented only with his other two works, the RLF committee decided that the 'Literary merit of his works [was] not sufficient to establish a claim'.<sup>122</sup>

Luckock was able to write on Jamaica because, although he was existing on a meagre curate's stipend in London, he had spent twenty years as a missionary in the West Indies. Most of the other ministers who wrote for the Monthly Series had to draw on their libraries and leisure interests for their subject matter. Several first got involved in writing on non-theological topics because of the dissenting habit of giving a weekday evening lecture to the congregation, in addition to the Sunday sermon. There was a literary society at the Stepney meeting house with which Kennedy soon became involved, while the young Stoughton had joined the newly-founded Windsor and Eton Literary and Scientific Institute.<sup>123</sup> Both these organisations gave the ministers further opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing on secular topics. Kennedy lectured to his society on 'the Holy Land, arctic exploration, volcanic phenomena, and ethnology, with special reference to the unity of the race and the primitive condition of mankind'.<sup>124</sup> As a consequence of these lectures he was invited to address the students at the nearby Baptist college, on the subject of the river Jordan. At that lecture Joseph Gurney, of the RTS committee, was 'so struck by the valuable information contained in the lecture, and the lucidity with which it was conveyed, that the young minister was asked to write on *The Jordan and the Dead Sea*' (and subsequently on *Idumaea* and *Volcanoes*) for the Monthly Series, and he became one of the first contributors to the *Leisure Hour*.<sup>125</sup>

Edwin Sidney also turned lectures into Monthly Volumes, but in his case the transition was less easy. His interest in natural history led him to develop 'the habit of examining in my walks the various blights of the corn plants in all their stages', and he addressed the Royal Institution on the subject in 1844. This later became his Monthly Volume on *Blights of the Wheat*. Sidney offered the RTS two more volumes

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<sup>121</sup> She was not alone in this view. Milner listed his works for the RLF, but stated at the end, 'the Minor Volumes of the Religious Tract Society omitted', RLF 1385.6, Milner's application form, 25/06/1868.

<sup>122</sup> RLF 1153.1, Luckock's application form, and MS annotation, 19/10/1846.

<sup>123</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 249; Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 48.

<sup>124</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 249.

<sup>125</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 249-50.

based on Royal Institution discourses, one of which it accepted – although when the manuscript arrived, it was so full of diagrams and technical language that it could not be published in the Monthly Series. Sidney did get another work published in the Series, but only after extensive revisions made it appropriate for the readers of the RTS, rather than the auditors at Friday evening discourses at the RI.<sup>126</sup>

For most of the ministers, ‘secular’ writing was an occasional occupation. Kennedy and Stoughton, for example, published many more books, including many with the RTS, but the majority were on subjects connected with religion and theology. Stoughton became the major historian of his denomination, while Kennedy wrote on apologetics. Charles Williams and Samuel Manning were unusual in giving up their charges to become full-time editors for the RTS, but both remained ordained and saw their work for the RTS as a different way of carrying out their Christian vocation. In contrast, the Baptist, Henry Dunckley, commenced his ministry in Salford in 1848 and wrote his first work for the 1851 RTS prize essay competition on ‘The Condition and Claims of the Working Classes, together with the means of securing elevation’. He won the first prize, and went on to write two Monthly Volumes. He then began writing for the local newspaper and won another prize essay, set by the Anti-Corn Law League. By 1855, he had decided to give up his ministry, and become editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*. He became a well-respected journalist, but working for Christ had ceased to be his sole vocation.<sup>127</sup> For the other ordained writers, their Christian vocation meant that they always wrote in a Christian tone, even when on secular subjects, and they tried to be selective about the publishers they worked for, preferring those with sound religious credentials, such as the RTS and SPCK, or William Collins and John Cassell. Both Kennedy and Ferguson wrote volumes for ‘Cassell’s Library’ (1850-) as well as for the RTS Monthly Series.<sup>128</sup> As far as I know, none of the ordained writers wrote for the SDUK or Chambers.

For the professional writers, the need to make an income meant that they could not afford to be so selective of topics or publishers. Some, like Milner, always wrote in a

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<sup>126</sup> RTS CCM, 14/07/1847. The work which was too technical was published as *The Philosophy of Food and Nutrition in Plants etc* (RTS, 1849).

<sup>127</sup> DNB; BBA; Baptist Handbook (1897): 168-70.

<sup>128</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 251; Congregational Year Book (1876): 333.

Christian tone, while others, like Martin, adapted their style to suit the publisher, producing Christian works for the RTS and secular ones for the SDUK. The professional writers published in quite different journals from the ordained writers. Bunbury wrote for the literary *Fraser's* and later for the *Cornhill*, while Kitto wrote for the *Penny Magazine* and later edited the *Journal of Sacred Literature*, and Milner contributed variously to the *Leisure Hour*, the SPCK *People's Magazine*, the *Christian Witness* and the *Christian World Magazine*.<sup>129</sup> Martin was able to place his natural history articles in a wide range of journals, principally the *Penny Magazine*, and the *Visitor* and *Leisure Hour*, but at various times he also wrote for the *National Cyclopaedia*, *Hogg's Instructor*, the *Home Companion*, the *Illustrated London News*, and *Recreative Science*.<sup>130</sup> *Hogg's* and *Recreative Science* both had religious affiliations, as, of course, did the SPCK and RTS periodicals. But professional writers needed more outlets for their work. Martin had also written for the SDUK's 'Library of Entertaining Knowledge' and for Knight's 'Farmer's Library'. And although Bunbury recorded in 1851 that she had published forty-six (presumably short) works with the SPCK over the last year, she was also writing 'numerous' small works for Chambers throughout the 1850s.<sup>131</sup>

In choosing subjects to write on, Martin and Kitto drew endlessly on their experiences from life before they became professional writers. Martin wrote on almost any aspect of vertebrate zoology, while Kitto produced book after book on the history, geography, and peoples of the Holy Land, where he had worked as a missionary printer. Dick and Milner had both studied for the ministry, which gave them material for theological writings. Dick was a keen amateur astronomer, which provided another source for his writings, while Milner's interests lay in geology and geography, on which he published extensively. Bunbury's particular forte was the high-toned novel and the travel narrative, although both she and Milner also wrote history for the RTS. Bunbury's travel books were all based on her own journeys, but as her finances grew more fragile, it became difficult to gather fresh material. In 1856, she appealed to the RLF for a grant, explaining that, 'my abode in Sweden, and rather hasty visit to

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<sup>129</sup> These are listed on the several application forms the writers submitted to the RLF.

<sup>130</sup> RLF 1315.27, Martin's application form, 04/06/1860.

<sup>131</sup> RLF 1089.21, Bunbury's application form, 04/02/1851. 1089.72, Bunbury's application form, 24/10/1871.

Finland, have proved very profitable to me in affording new and interesting matter', and if she could now visit Finland properly, and perhaps Russia, she would have something new to write about.<sup>132</sup>

Bunbury and Milner produced on average one book a year, while Martin and Dick wrote one every two years. In addition, they all wrote shorter works, such as those for the RTS and SPCK, and periodical articles. Martin wrote over a thousand articles during his literary career, making an average of forty a year although, since this includes the period of his illness, during health he must have been producing close to one a week.<sup>133</sup> Dick, Kitto, Milner and Martin all wrote four or more Monthly Volumes for the RTS. In contrast, the ordained writers generally wrote only one or two. In the 1840s, most of the dissenting ministers were only just getting started in book-publishing. Even the older clergyman, Edward Grinfield, with more experience of publishing, wrote only a couple of books a decade. In the 1820s, he had produced almost a work a year, but that work was likely to be a letter, sermon, or a pamphlet of 'reflections' or 'observations' on recent publications, including William Lawrence's *Lectures in Physiology* (1819) and Henry Brougham's *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People* (1825).<sup>134</sup>

Ministers usually started their writing career with smaller works, of the sort Grinfield had published, or for organisations like the RTS and SPCK. These publications brought in only a little (or no) money, but they helped to make the minister's name, and, with RTS publications, they allowed him to participate in the evangelical cause on a scale larger than his own locality. Once they had discovered that they could write, ministers might think about the larger work. Kennedy and Stoughton both started their scholarly work in connection with teaching appointments at New College, the London training college for Congregational ministers. This involved preparing lecture courses, and forced them to think at a more expert level than previously.<sup>135</sup> Scholarly works were much more effective at garnering respect for

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<sup>132</sup> RLF 1089.34, Bunbury to RLF, 01/04/1856.

<sup>133</sup> RLF 1315.27, Martin's application form, 04/06/1860.

<sup>134</sup> Grinfield, E., *Cursory Observations upon the Lectures in Physiology, Zoology, and Natural History of Man, by Mr. Laurence* (2nd ed. London, 1819); Grinfield, E., *A Reply to Mr. Brougham's Practical Observations upon the Education of the People* (1825).

<sup>135</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 226; Stoughton, *Recollections*, 163-93.

their writers, but they were almost always the product of later life, particularly when ministers might have ceased to be as actively involved in their myriad pastoral duties as they had been when younger.<sup>136</sup>

For the professional writer, a long book was tempting, as it would bring a higher sum for copyright. But they took longer to produce, which meant longer until any money was forthcoming for them. In 1844, Bunbury was worried about the state of the trade, and felt that it was not a good time to be trying to dispose of small works. She was therefore ‘anxious to devote my time and thoughts to the publication of longer and more prepared works’. However, ‘all the money I received for my last and longest work, *Coombe Abbey*, was necessarily expended [in medical fees], and... I have absolutely none until I can prepare and dispose of another.’<sup>137</sup> She hoped the RLF would give her a grant which would enable her to survive until the book was completed. She could then use the payment from it to live on while writing her next book. Until she built up a small reserve of capital, she was ‘obliged by my circumstances to write for money small works, but as I have no other sources of income I cannot help it’.<sup>138</sup> Short books (and periodical articles) allowed a writer to live, but it could seem like a hand-to-mouth existence.

Around the same time as Bunbury’s dilemma, Kitto was making the opposite decision. He had tended to write longer works, relying on advances from his publisher until they were complete. His problem was that his latest work, the *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* (1845), turned out to involve ‘twice the time and labour which I had supposed sufficient for it, and... that which might have been a fair remuneration for the labour of 18 months became a miserable pittance when spread over three years’.<sup>139</sup> Since he had received most or all of his payment in advance, he was no better off when the work was finished than when he had begun. His plans for the future were the opposite of Bunbury’s: ‘It is my hope that by giving part of my

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<sup>136</sup> Several Monthly Volumes were later expanded into lengthier works, including Grinfield’s *Jesuits* (1853) and Stoughton’s *Shades and Echoes of Old London* (1864).

<sup>137</sup> RLF 1089.2, Bunbury to RLF, 04/01/1844.

<sup>138</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848.

<sup>139</sup> RLF 1115.2, Kitto to RLF, 27/10/1845.

attention to less ponderous works than have hitherto occupied my time... I may yet be able to bring up my family in comfort.’<sup>140</sup>

These cases would seem to support *Chambers’s Journal’s* assertion that the professional writer ‘aspire[d] to labours of a higher kind than those to which he devotes himself’, wishing to write speculative systems or laborious historical works, but that, ‘the necessity of bread forbids’, and the writer was forced to write on subjects and in formats which ‘are not according to the *first intention* of his mind’.<sup>141</sup> The *North British Review* noted that in this the writer was ‘no worse than any other daily toilers’, for many professionals found their work tedious and far removed from what they would ideally do.<sup>142</sup> However, Bunbury and Kitto were not always conscious of the fortune with which *Chambers’s* and the *North British* credited them when asserting that, ‘Perhaps few enjoy the good fortune of the literary man in having daily labours so near akin to those on which they would spend themselves.’<sup>143</sup>

Kitto and Bunbury were frustrated in their desires to write longer works, as in the absence of any savings on which to live, they had either to rely on publishers’ advances or the benevolence of the RLF, or write short works instead. RLF grants were not large, of the order of £25, and while that might keep Bunbury for two months, it would be gone within two weeks in Kitto’s household. Publishers did not like giving advances, for, according to *Chambers’s Journal*, they regarded ‘the poorer [writers] as unscrupulous in taking advances, and careless in discharging obligations’.<sup>144</sup> In fact, as John Sutherland notes, it was not just the lowest ranks of writers who requested advances and ran up debts with their publishers, but with writers like Thackeray, the publisher was more willing to help, in the expectation of benefiting from the writer’s future works.<sup>145</sup> Publishers agreed to give advances only if they trusted the writer to produce the work. The RTS gave advances on Monthly Volumes to Kitto, Milner, Dick and Martin, all of whom were known to the Society as productive writers. If the writer received his payment in one or more advances, he

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<sup>140</sup> RLF 1115.8, Kitto to RLF, 03/02/1849.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Authors of calamities’, 130.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 371; see also ‘Authors of calamities’, 130.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Authors of calamities’, 130-1; see also ‘Pendennis’, 371.

<sup>144</sup> ‘Authors of calamities’, 129.

<sup>145</sup> Sutherland, *Victorian novelists*, 112.

was unlikely to receive much or anything when the work was finished. The promise of a substantial sum in one lump thus rarely materialised, and the writer of longer books was not necessarily any better off financially than the writer of short books, except for the hope that his reputation was being made.

As the *North British Review* explained, ‘the needy author is at a great disadvantage; for whilst the publisher is sure of being able to obtain an abundance of manuscripts, a manuscript is anything but sure of obtaining a publisher at all’.<sup>146</sup> Thus, professional writers would not be well-advised to start a major new project without first obtaining a commission with a publisher (which was essential for living off advances). Some forms of shorter works, such as periodical articles, children’s books and religious tracts, could be written ‘on spec’, because publishers were constantly looking for such works. The RTS and SPCK regularly published large numbers of very small works, selected from those sent in, rather than specially commissioned. Writers who could produce the appropriate style could rely on the societies to take numerous small works. Thus, although inexperienced writers might start their careers with the RTS or SPCK as a gentle introduction to the commercial publishing world, experienced writers continued to write for the societies, as they were like the periodicals in providing a useful outlet for short works when commissions for larger works were unforthcoming. However, works like those in the Monthly Series, although short as books, were too long for any professional writer to write ‘on spec’. Although many publishers were producing cheap series of short popular non-fiction works, the widespread use of reprints in the 1840s restricted the opportunities for writers. It was not till the 1850s and beyond that the market in original popular non-fiction became large enough for writers to be able to rely on it the way they could on periodicals.

The *New Quarterly Review* outlined three possible relationships between writers and publishers. The options for the publisher were: ‘*First*, to print, publish and advertise the work at the author’s expense, and to account to him for the proceeds, if there should be any. *Second*, to produce it at their own expense, and to account to the author for one-half or perhaps two-fifths of the profits. *Third*, to buy the manuscript

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<sup>146</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 356.

out and out.<sup>147</sup> Although the first method was often used of necessity for sermons, it was not to be recommended to writers, as the publisher had little incentive to promote the work, and there was unlikely to be any profits. The *New Quarterly* reported that although the shared-profits system was most common, ‘every author’ would prefer the outright purchase of copyright system. The argument was that under shared profits, it was too easy for the publisher to make up the account books so that there were no profits to share, as the novelist Charles Lever accused the Dublin publisher (and RTS agent) William Curry of doing, shortly before Curry’s bankruptcy.<sup>148</sup> Under purchase of copyright, the writer got a clear payment, and would also be able to see his book being ‘well pushed’, as it was ‘the publisher’s absolute property’.<sup>149</sup> The *New Quarterly* reviewer claimed that the only works which were purchased outright were those of writers whose ‘favour is so high with the public, that there is no risk whatever in the transaction’ – in other words, he was discussing transactions such as the £1,200 George Smith paid Thackeray for *Henry Esmond*.<sup>150</sup>

The reviewer neglected a different, and much larger, class of writers who sold their copyrights outright. The RTS always bought copyrights, as did Chambers for their Educational Series. This was simpler for the publisher, since it got the transaction over, and did not require the publisher to keep accounts for all their writers until their books sold out. It also gave the publisher the power to do whatever he wanted with the work including revisions and later editions in different formats. Literary writers might be uncomfortable with that, but non-fiction writers could be more practical. One of the contributors to *Chambers’s Journal* explained that, ‘In writing for you, as I said before, one works for money, & not for fame; and if you purchase my wares, I think you have a right to do what you please with them.’<sup>151</sup> Selling the copyright allowed the writer instant and definite payment, and made it possible to make a living. However, writers whose works sold well might later regret the decision. Thomas Dick had sold his copyrights outright, and was slipping into poverty although his books continued to sell. He explained to the RLF that although *The Christian*

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<sup>147</sup> ‘Authors and publishers [1]’, 12.

<sup>148</sup> ‘Authors and publishers [1]’, 12-15. On Lever and Curry, see Sutherland, *Victorian novelists*, 90-3.

<sup>149</sup> ‘Authors and publishers [1]’, 16.

<sup>150</sup> Sutherland, *Victorian novelists*, 104-11.

<sup>151</sup> Catherine Crowe, quoted in Cooney, *Publishers for the people*, 62, n2.

*Philosopher* had reached its 12th edition, and his *Solar System* had sold over 80,000 copies, ‘I derive no pecuniary benefit whatsoever from the sale of my works however extensive it may be’.<sup>152</sup> Occasionally, publishers made discretionary payments to writers whose works had sold particularly well, and some of Dick’s American publishers did this, but such generosity was rare.<sup>153</sup>

### **The Practices of Writing**

Writing had to be balanced with research, correspondence and checking proofs, as well as family life and, in some cases, the demands of another profession. Time-management, or, as *Chambers’s Journal* put it, ‘steady industry and unfailing fidelity’, was thus an essential skill.<sup>154</sup> The *North British Review* suggested that too many people became full-time writers after trying another profession, because ‘they have not had patience sufficient to give them fair chances of eventual success’ in the initial choice of profession.<sup>155</sup> The reviewer claimed this was why literary men were so often disorganised, and recommended that those considering literature as a profession should do so ‘more advisedly and deliberately... It should be pursued with as much consistency and regularity as any other learned profession.’<sup>156</sup> Discipline was needed to combat the ‘irregular social and moral habits’ which might result from the ‘irregular distribution of time’ necessitated by ‘the absolute requirements of literary labour’, particularly that on the daily and weekly periodicals.<sup>157</sup> Writers were expected to be as disciplined as factory-workers, save that they were presumed to be capable of exerting self-discipline, without a bell or steam-whistle.

In order to write undisturbed, Bunbury, like many writers, started work early in the morning, usually before seven o’clock, although we do not know when she stopped.<sup>158</sup> Kitto had initially tried staying up late, but after ‘having twice exposed himself and his family to the risk of conflagration by his nocturnal slumbers in the library’, he too decided to opt for early mornings.<sup>159</sup> This was more problematic for

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<sup>152</sup> RLF 1241.2, Dick to RLF, n.d. [1850].

<sup>153</sup> Astore, *Observing God*, 240.

<sup>154</sup> ‘Authors of calamities’, 131.

<sup>155</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 347.

<sup>156</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 369.

<sup>157</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 358.

<sup>158</sup> RLF 1089.11, Bunbury to RLF, 05/03/1845.

<sup>159</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 552.

Kitto than for most writers, as he was deaf, and thus slept through alarm clocks and the night watchman's bell.<sup>160</sup> His wife, Annabella, had to respond to one of these alarms, usually around 4am, and rouse her husband before going back to sleep. Kitto's day was then strictly organised, with allotted periods for dealing with correspondence, writing, and spending time with his family. On first rising, he made a cup of tea, and then wrote, in his study, until 'the rest of the family were ready for breakfast'. He worked in the garden for a while, and then, after dressing, retired to his library for reading until dinner at one o'clock. Tea was at five o'clock, and the interval was 'generally given to answering correspondents, and correcting proofs'. During tea, he read aloud to his wife. Afterwards, he went back to his study, and 'worked at his desk till between nine and ten, and then read till eleven'.<sup>161</sup> He thus felt able to promise punctuality to his publisher, for, 'My working day is twice the usual length – from *four* AM to *nine* PM, with little interruption – hard work enough, but necessary'.<sup>162</sup> During those seventeen hours, he had spent no more than three with his family, over meals, another three hours doing proofs and correspondence, and the remaining eleven either writing or reading. Much of this reading was research for new works. Kitto was fortunate in having a personal library of around 3,500 books in his library, which came close to rivalling Anthony Trollope's 5,000 volumes.<sup>163</sup> Yet even with this library, Kitto did not have the resources for all his new works. He had been in the habit of using the British Museum library when he began working for Knight, but he found that it took too long to walk there and back, and he could not spare the time from his writing. Annabella Kitto went to the British Museum on his behalf, so that research and writing could be carried on simultaneously.<sup>164</sup>

Perhaps even more than the professionals, writers with other careers had to plan their day particularly carefully. Trollope was one of the most dedicated, having determined to write something every day. To do this, he usually rose at 5.30am to write before starting his work for the Post Office, and occasionally started at 4am when under

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<sup>160</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 552.

<sup>161</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 552-3.

<sup>162</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 606.

<sup>163</sup> Charles Knight had helped Kitto gather this library, to assist his research, see Ryland, *John Kitto*, 616, 550-1. On Trollope's library, see Glendinning, V., *Trollope* (London, 1992), 431.

<sup>164</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 536, 551.

pressure of a deadline.<sup>165</sup> He also learned how to write on a portable desk which he could use during all the hours he spent travelling on Post Office business in trains, and on steam-boats.<sup>166</sup> Few of the ministers who wrote for the RTS were as organised or as determined as Trollope, and since they did not work office hours, found it difficult to keep to a regular timetable for writing. The professional demand for sermons meant that ministers and clergy already had to find time every week for writing, before works for publication were taken into account. Sermons were expected to take an hour to deliver orally, making them around 8,000 words long.<sup>167</sup> Although ministers might think about their sermons all week, most reserved Friday or Saturday for writing them. Most needed two sermons for Sunday, and might be expected to deliver a lecture to their congregation on a week-day evening. Thus, when Alexander accepted the call to North College Street, Edinburgh in 1834, he was expected to write and deliver three discourses every week.<sup>168</sup> In addition to their duties with their own congregations, many of the ministers preached on other occasions during the week, perhaps in neighbouring villages, or gave lectures to students or the YMCA, or addressed Bible Society meetings. Kennedy's son remembered how his father never had a free evening:

He is off to preside over some of the multitudinous organisations clustering at the meeting-house, or to take his week-night service; or to address some special gathering – of policemen, or journeymen bakers, or sweeps and scavengers; or to preach or lecture at some other Church in the neighbourhood – or in any other neighbourhood, for that matter.<sup>169</sup>

Some of the preaching might be extempore, but most of the lectures, sermons and addresses on special occasions were likely to be prepared in writing in advance.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Glendinning, *Trollope*, 265, 351-2. Morning writing became such a habit that even after his retirement from the Post Office, he continued to do his daily writing before breakfast – but breakfast took place much later, 431.

<sup>166</sup> Glendinning, *Trollope*, 218.

<sup>167</sup> This is the length of one of Stowell's sermons, see those appended to Stowell, *William Stowell*. The BBC allows for 140 spoken words a minute, which amounts to 8,400 an hour.

<sup>168</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 69.

<sup>169</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 196.

<sup>170</sup> On Alexander, see Ross, *WL Alexander*, 82-3. On Kennedy, see Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 119-20, 198. The ministers varied as to whether they prepared notes or full text, and changed their practice with age, or depending on the importance of the occasion

Accepting invitations to deliver lectures thus involved a greater time commitment than just the duration of the lecture. Any other writing had to be fitted into whatever spare time was available.

The biographies of urban evangelical ministers and clergymen commonly detailed the busy and complex timetables of their week, in which it is almost incredible that they found time to write anything other than their essential sermons and lectures. The following account of ministerial life in Edinburgh was Alexander's response to a suggestion that he should spend more time in pastoral visiting. It equally illustrates the difficulty of finding time to write:

Now, when it is considered that I have three discourses a week to prepare and deliver, that I am often called besides to preach, sometimes at home, sometimes at a distance; that I have church meetings, prayer meetings, deacons' meetings, committee meetings, and public meetings to attend; that I have baptisms to perform in the houses of members, funerals to attend; that I have to converse with numerous applicants for church fellowship; and that I have many calls on my time besides which I cannot prevent, – I leave it to the good sense of any candid man to say whether, even supposing I never were to enjoy the luxury of reading a book, or to occupy myself in literary exertion, or to spend an hour with my family and friends, it be possible for me [to do more visiting].<sup>171</sup>

Alexander's defence reveals that ministers' families, like those of the professional writers, had to be fitted into tightly-defined short periods of time, while reading and writing for personal interest or pleasure was a luxury. Stoughton described books as his 'only extravagance', and tried to find at least a short space in each day 'for steady reading'.<sup>172</sup> Despite this, most ministers did gather libraries, and find time to use them, while the biographies reveal their efforts to get access to books they did not own. Like Kitto, both Kennedy and Stoughton used the British Museum library, and they also had access to the dissenting Dr. Williams's Library, and those of the several

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<sup>171</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 137.

<sup>172</sup> Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 64, 213.

denominational training colleges.<sup>173</sup> Kennedy was also known to borrow from Mudie's circulating library for his researches.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, through their network of personal connections, they could use the shelves of friends and colleagues. Stoughton recorded being delighted to find 'a large collection of books' under the 'hospitable roof' of his friend, congregation member and RTS committee member, Thomas Coombs.<sup>175</sup> This access to a network of private scholarly resources, and the learned conversation that went with it, provided an encouragement for literary activity that professional writers could rarely match.

Time pressure was a serious problem for the minister-writers, although since they were not seeking to make a living by their writings, failure to write did not matter as much as it would have done for professional writers. About six years into his ministry, Alexander's heavy workload, described above, brought on ill-health, and the doctors feared consumption. He was forced to abandon some of his activities.<sup>176</sup> Kennedy felt that the other demands on his time meant that he could not aim to be a great scholar. He concentrated instead on 'drawing from other men's accumulations of knowledge; he digested what he got, and he produced works scholarly, logical, clear, and full of nervous force; and no one could ever say that he was slipshod or unworkmanlike in his literary style'.<sup>177</sup> This sort of work – scholarly in style, but mostly derivative – was all that most busy ministers could hope to produce, and it was also what the RTS was interested in. Original scholarly works would be sent to a publisher better used to promoting such publications among a learned audience.

Given all the other calls on their time, we would expect the ministers and clergy to take longer to complete a work than the professional writers. Since ministers' writing hours were so erratic, it is difficult to estimate an average rate of production for them. Trollope wrote at least twenty pages (5,000 words in his handwriting) a week and sometimes five times that.<sup>178</sup> Since he was a particularly prolific part-time writer, we might take his least productive weeks as rough estimates for the minister-writers. In

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<sup>173</sup> Lewis, *John Stoughton*, 100.

<sup>174</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 269.

<sup>175</sup> Stoughton, *Recollections*, 81.

<sup>176</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 99-100, 158.

<sup>177</sup> Kennedy, *Old Highland days*, 247.

<sup>178</sup> Glendinning, *Trollope*, 240.

contrast, Bunbury, writing full-time, produced more than Trollope in his most productive weeks, usually writing fifty pages or more a day (7,500 words in her handwriting), which is over seven times as much as the ministers, assuming she only worked a five-day week (which is unlikely).<sup>179</sup> At those rates, a Monthly Volume of 50,000 words would take Bunbury almost seven days, while a minister would take nearer to ten weeks. Figure 2.22 has already shown that it took a year for two-thirds of the Monthly Volumes to be completed. The average time taken was eleven months for professionals, and twelve and a half months for ordained writers. It is clear that neither group was writing their Monthly Volumes constantly from the time they agreed to do them, and that the professionals were not significantly faster than the ministers. This is partly because both groups had to do research before they could start writing. They may also have had current projects to complete before starting a new one. It is also likely that although professionals wrote more words per week, they were not all for the same project. In particular, writers produced periodical articles at the same time as working on a longer work, in order to keep some money flowing in. Hence, their rate of progress on the longer work would be slower than expected.

From the discussion of rates of work, it becomes obvious that writing was not just an intellectual exercise. It involved the physical work of moving the pen across the page, and between the page and the ink-well. Although Bunbury said that she ‘usually’ wrote ‘as many as from 40 to 50 pages daily’, she could, if pressed, write more.<sup>180</sup> During a particularly abrupt shortage of money, she reported that ‘I have written at one time 72 pages of large paper in the day, and indeed have worked hard.’<sup>181</sup> Biographies rarely record the physical practices of writing, but it is possible to deduce some general points from the recommendations of contemporary manuals for writers, which were presumably responding to actual practices.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> RLF 1089.2, Bunbury to RLF, 04/01/1844; 1089.11, Bunbury to RLF, 05/03/1845.

<sup>180</sup> RLF 1089.2, Bunbury to RLF, 04/01/1844; 1089.11, Bunbury to RLF, 05/03/1845.

<sup>181</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848. See also RLF 1089.12, Appeal on behalf of Bunbury, n.d., which claims she often wrote 70 to 80 large pages a day.

<sup>182</sup> Trollope’s practices are particularly well-known in comparison to those of most other writers, see Glendinning, *Trollope*. Allen Dooley made extensive use of writers’ manuals in Dooley, *Author and printer*.

Advice to writers usually included the recommendation to write on one side of separate clean sheets of paper, preferably all the same size.<sup>183</sup> Common writing paper was said to be the most convenient size, as foolscap was too large for either writer or compositor to work with happily.<sup>184</sup> The worst of the alternatives, according to an anonymous pamphlet writer, was ‘the fashion much cherished by ladies, of writing in pretty copy-books, which are all very well in their way, but which must be torn to pieces before they are put upon the compositors’ cases’.<sup>185</sup> As an experienced writer, Bunbury wrote on separate sheets. Another unfortunate habit was that of some poverty-stricken writers who ‘recycled’ paper to save buying fresh sheets. This made their copy extremely difficult for editors, publishers’ readers, and compositors to read. Alexander may have been guilty in this respect, for the paper he used for sermons ‘was of all sizes, from a broad quarto page to one not larger than an ordinary envelope, and of all kinds – the back of a circular or blank page of a letter, or any scrap of paper that came readily to hand’.<sup>186</sup> If he emulated Alexander Pope by sending his copy for publication in such a form, it would not have been popular. The anonymous writer remarked of Pope that, ‘It would have been better economy in him to have laid out a little money upon decent writing-paper, instead of using dirty parings and savings’, as the cost of paying for corrections in proof would outweigh that of buying new paper.<sup>187</sup>

Writers were also urged to write a clear hand – or if they could not, to have their manuscript copied before sending it to the publisher.<sup>188</sup> Although Stowell was said to produce ‘beautifully-penned manuscript’, Alexander exhibited a ‘somewhat loose and careless penmanship’.<sup>189</sup> Combined with his idiosyncratic use of paper, this cannot have helped the legibility of his copy. The necessity of making a fair copy also applied ‘whenever a manuscript is roughly written, and full of emendations or alterations, erasures and interlineations’, in other words, whenever a work was significantly revised.<sup>190</sup> Thus, although Stowell’s manuscripts were clearly written,

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<sup>183</sup> ‘Hints to our contributors’ *Leisure Hour* 3 (1854): 316-18, at 318; *Advice to authors*, 7.

<sup>184</sup> *Advice to authors*, 10.

<sup>185</sup> *Advice to authors*, 7.

<sup>186</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 290.

<sup>187</sup> *Advice to authors*, 8-9.

<sup>188</sup> Dooley, *Author and printer*, Ch.1; *Hints*, 317; *Advice to authors*, 5.

<sup>189</sup> Stowell, *William Stowell*, 214; Ross, *WL Alexander*, 290.

<sup>190</sup> *Advice to authors*, 5.

he regularly got to the stage where he needed to write them out all over again, just so that the fair copy could be ‘blurred, blotted, interlined, supplemented, and patched, till it was absolutely necessary to have it written again’.<sup>191</sup>

Writers had different ways of working: Kitto sat at his desk, but Alexander worked ‘*standing* at his high desk (for it was only in the very latest years that he sat)’.<sup>192</sup> For professional writers, the necessity of working even when they felt ‘so unwell as to feel scarcely able to do so’, meant that they sometimes worked from more unusual places.<sup>193</sup> Bunbury was able to ‘write a little, and correct for the press, sitting up in bed’ while suffering from bronchitis.<sup>194</sup> Martin, however, was so disabled during the final years of his illness that he was able to keep working only by ‘dictat[ing] from his bed of suffering’.<sup>195</sup> These times of illness apart, writers usually worked in a space dedicated to literary activities. Kitto had his ‘drawing room... completely fitted up with bookshelves, and an Arnott’s stove’, as well as a spirit lamp, so that he could make his cup of tea and work in comfort in the cold early hours.<sup>196</sup> Alexander’s desk was in ‘his own library, with books to right of him, books to left of him’.<sup>197</sup> However organised his thoughts may have been, his working area resembled the confusion of his untidy copy for, ‘he was by no means methodical in dealing with things he had to handle, such as his books, papers, &c., which often got into such a state of confusion that he required the aid of others to bring them into something like order’.<sup>198</sup> It seems unlikely that Alexander would have been successful at his youthful dream of being a professional writer.

The subordination of family life to literary work would be no different from most professional men, were it not that ministers and professional writers worked in the home, and did not stop at the end of an office day. Alexander’s relationship with his family was recorded by one of his children’s friends:

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<sup>191</sup> Stowell, *William Stowell*, 214.

<sup>192</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 240.

<sup>193</sup> RLF 1089.11, Bunbury to RLF, 05/03/1845.

<sup>194</sup> RLF 1089.22, Bunbury to RLF, 04/02/1851.

<sup>195</sup> RLF 1315.28, MJ Martin to RLF, May 1860.

<sup>196</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 552.

<sup>197</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 240.

<sup>198</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 290.

Though spending his time almost entirely at home, [he] was not day by day a central figure in the home life. He was known ‘to be in the study’, ‘to be making sermons’. He appeared at prayer time and at meals, when there was lively talk, and he took kindly but brief notice of his children and their friends, but he did not linger in the sitting-room. His own library... was his distinctive place. He was then known to be at his work.<sup>199</sup>

A young family could be a nuisance for a writer seeking peace and quiet for focussed work, which is why it was so important to have a separate room dedicated to study. However, wives and older children, particularly daughters, could be called into service as assistants. As we have already seen, Annabella Kitto went to the British Museum for her husband. Once Stowell’s eldest daughter was old enough ‘to act as his amanuensis’ it became her job to copy out his manuscript for him to revise yet again.<sup>200</sup> Female relatives also took dictation from the sickbed of an enfeebled writer, as Mary Jane Martin did for her husband, and as a niece almost certainly did for the elderly and blind Bunbury.<sup>201</sup> The importance of female help was noted by the *North British Review*, which referred not only to copying, but to the importance of thrift and careful housewifery to make ends meet on the irregular and perhaps insufficient income the writer would produce. The reviewer commented that writers ‘would often do better if they were more fortunate in their wives; but literary men sometimes make very strange alliances, and have little housewifely help at home to balance their own irregularities’.<sup>202</sup>

The woman’s role as housewife, helpmate and nurse became complicated when the woman was also a writer. A married woman could not, by definition, be a professional writer while her husband was alive, so her writing was always subservient to her domestic roles. But a single woman forced to support herself as a writer could still have family responsibilities to bear. At various stages in her life,

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<sup>199</sup> Ross, *WL Alexander*, 240.

<sup>200</sup> Stowell, *William Stowell*, 214.

<sup>201</sup> RLF 1089.59, Bunbury to RLF, n.d.; 1089.67, Bunbury to RLF, 03/07/1867.

<sup>202</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 361-2. The reviewer went on the accuse writers of being ‘men of impulse – of ardent, hasty temperament; and the enthusiasm of the moment often determines the future tenor of their domestic lives’, 362.

Bunbury supported either wholly or partially her brother, a school-teacher sister, two orphaned nephews, a widowed and ill sister, and an orphaned niece.<sup>203</sup> The sisters and niece lived with her, but were able to contribute little to the domestic economy, while one sister needed active nursing. Bunbury was also expected to act as nurse to other members of her extended family. In 1843, she spent almost the entire year ‘attending a case of consumption’ which prevented her ‘from doing anything for myself’.<sup>204</sup> Similar attendance on sickbeds occupied no fewer than nine months of 1855-56.<sup>205</sup> While nursing was exclusively a female preserve, male writers did have responsibilities to their extended family, as when Dick took care of his widowed sister, and his five orphaned grandchildren.<sup>206</sup> However, the married male writer could leave the actual domestic care to his wife, so that although he might have to write more to support the extra mouths, he would not be prevented from writing by their presence.

### **Literature and the Domestic Economy**

For observers watching the success of Dickens or Thackeray, the potential rewards of literature might appear to be great, but for most writers, the financial gains were small and irregular. It was difficult to maintain a household, and virtually impossible to save for the future, so relatively small upsets could destroy the fragile financial equilibrium of a moderately successful writer. Writers generally came from the middling classes of society, and frequently felt they had to keep up at least the appearance of this status even when their income barely allowed it. Martin conceded to the RLF that, ‘Hard indeed for some time has been the struggle to maintain that respectability of appearance which my position requires.’<sup>207</sup> One of the consequences of ‘keeping up appearances’ was that, although the Martins had been struggling from the early 1850s, it was not until his final illness at the end of the decade that his friends and RLF referees realised how badly off the couple were.<sup>208</sup> Only one referee had commented, in 1854, that ‘I know he has long struggled to maintain his

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<sup>203</sup> RLF 1089 ff.

<sup>204</sup> RLF 1089.2, Bunbury to RLF, 04/01/1844.

<sup>205</sup> RLF 1089.34, Bunbury to RLF, 01/04/1856.

<sup>206</sup> RLF 1241.2, Dick to RLF, n.d. [January 1850].

<sup>207</sup> RLF 1315.2, Martin to RLF, 08/04/1853. His wife also noted the need, and the effort involved, ‘to keep our position’, 1315.28, MJ Martin to RLF, May 1860.

<sup>208</sup> RLF 1315.22, Owen to RLF, 20/01/1859; 1215.23, Gould to RLF, 02/02/1859.

respectability'.<sup>209</sup> Being an editorial assistant himself (to Charles Knight), Andrew Ramsay was perhaps more aware of the realities of a literary life than the natural history men could be.

The income needed to maintain a writer's household depended upon the size of the family in it. Martin's lack of children made it easier for him to support his wife and mother by writing, but meant that there were no grown children to help, either physically or financially, later in life. Kitto fell ill in his forties, when his children were still young, and his widow was left with a much greater burden than was Martin's. Parents could still end up having to help adult children, and when one of Milner's sons emigrated to New Zealand, he was assisted by his brother and father. He subsequently did well enough that, when his sister was widowed with three children, both brothers sent support. Otherwise, the burden would have fallen on Milner.<sup>210</sup> This happened to Dick when one of his married daughters and her husband died, and the care of their children fell to the grandparents. The savings Dick had put aside for his old age rapidly disappeared with five young children to care for.<sup>211</sup> There was no way that unexpected deaths could be planned for, and their financial implications could be severe on those who were left to cope. Bunbury looked after a seemingly regular stream of dependent family members, who were the cause of her regular applications to the Royal Literary Fund. Yet, since the grants she received amounted to only £375 over forty years, i.e. less than £10 a year, she was doing remarkably well in the long run. It was usually at the points of sudden change in the family, such as deaths or illnesses, that her economy was over-stretched.<sup>212</sup>

*Fraser's Magazine* claimed that a writer had to be 'very unlucky or very "impracticable", if he do not earn an income which will support him and his family'.<sup>213</sup> Like other people, writers occasionally made bad financial investments, or acted as security for unreliable friends.<sup>214</sup> Milner's 'confidence misplaced in another'

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<sup>209</sup> RLF 1315.16, Ramsay to RLF, 21/06/1854.

<sup>210</sup> RLF 1385.16, Milner to RLF, 25/06/1868; 1385.22, Milner to RLF, 05/02/1881.

<sup>211</sup> RLF 1241.2, Dick to RLF, n.d. [1850].

<sup>212</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848; 1089.67, Bunbury to RLF, 03/07/1867; 1089.88, Jebb to RLF, [1878]; 1089.92, Bunbury to RLF, 31/05/1881.

<sup>213</sup> [Lewes], 'Condition of authors', 288.

<sup>214</sup> On the mis-investment of Bunbury's legacy from her mother, see RLF 1089.12, Printed appeal on behalf of Bunbury, n.d.

cost him dearly, and it took him eighteen months of ‘incessant literary labour’ during 1852 and 1853 to clear his responsibilities to point when he felt able to ‘hold up my head in society as owing no man anything’.<sup>215</sup> Bunbury encountered bad luck in 1848, when she was living with a sister in Liverpool. Her sister had just had to close her school, due to the economic depression. Bunbury herself had had a fairly successful year, and in August she went to the Bank of England to withdraw enough funds to see herself and her sister through the winter. She told the Royal Literary Fund that, ‘on returning [I] was beset by four thieves and robbed in a moment of the entire. The notes were stopped at the Bank, but I have had many letters \*\*\*\* [Illegible in MS – perhaps ‘of credit’] and from time to time they were presented in a total and paid’.<sup>216</sup> She and her sister were forced to borrow money from a ‘kind lady’ in order to live.<sup>217</sup>

Bad luck could not be avoided, but *Fraser’s* charge of impracticality was a different matter. The *New Quarterly Review* believed that writers needed a sounder grasp of the financial details of their profession, to avoid being duped by unscrupulous publishers, and the review devoted two articles, intended as ‘a sort of confidential communication to our brethren of the pen’, to educating them.<sup>218</sup> More common, however, was the *North British Review’s* assertion that, ‘It is not so much that authors do not know how to make money, as that they do not know how to spend it’.<sup>219</sup> The reviewer went on to claim that writers were ‘desperately bad arithmeticians. They are not clever at £:s:d. We believe them to be as honest as their neighbours, but they are certainly more careless... The same pen will rarely write articles and square accounts.’<sup>220</sup> He believed that this explained why literary men seemed to be so much worse off than other professionals with similar incomes.<sup>221</sup> Few of the RTS writers

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<sup>215</sup> RLF 1385.1, Milner’s application form, 07/07/1855;1385.2, Milner to RLF, n.d. [July 1855].

<sup>216</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848.

<sup>217</sup> In a later recollection, Bunbury mentioned the loss of £400, although this seems a generous amount for the subsistence of two single women for a winter, RLF 1089.92, Bunbury to RLF, 32/05/1881.

<sup>218</sup> ‘Authors and publishers [1]’; ‘Authors and publishers [2]’ *New Quarterly Review* 3 (1854): 143-50. Quote at ‘Authors and publishers [2]’, 143.

<sup>219</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 357. *Chambers’s Journal* suggested that this belief, that writers were frivolous with money, accounted for the distrust of publishers towards writers, ‘Authors of calamities’, 129.

<sup>220</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 360-1. See also 357.

<sup>221</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 357.

ever had enough money to even think about being reckless with it.<sup>222</sup> Carelessness, or lack of arithmetical knowledge was possible, although most writers came from backgrounds in which education would have included basic arithmetic alongside literary skills.

Without being reckless, Bunbury admitted that, 'I was not able to lay up any part of the sums I received', because she was 'obliged to write generally for the moment'.<sup>223</sup> Kitto was forced to live off advances, due to his 'want of capital'.<sup>224</sup> This meant that they could not save for the future, let alone follow *Chambers's Journal's* advice to set up a literary firm, in which writers would be their own employers.<sup>225</sup> Writers had no way to accurately predict their income, so advance budgeting was difficult, and most seem to have barely survived from one payment to the next. This meant that if bad luck did befall them, they had few or no resources on which to draw. Kitto and Milner both sold parts of their libraries in attempts to raise money. This was a desperate measure for, as Kitto noted, 'the books... are most essential to my future labours, which it has taken me many long years to get... together, and which once lost I may not hope to recover.'<sup>226</sup> Dick sold his best telescope for similar reasons.<sup>227</sup> Shortly thereafter, 'necessity... compelled the Doctor to let, on a rent, the principal part of the house that he has occupied and to retire with his family to the Attics'.<sup>228</sup>

After attempts like these had been made, as Kitto explained, 'I had no resource for the subsistence of my household but the contracting of some debts, the pressure of which now lies heavily upon me, and threatens to break up my domestic establishment.'<sup>229</sup> Tradesmen would give credit, but not for ever, and not without limit. This was one reason Mary Jane Martin particularly welcomed the RLF grants, for 'ready money in hand giv[es] great advantage in every kind of purchase'.<sup>230</sup> Writers who ran up debts could usually avoid the debtor's prison only by finding a benevolent friend, relative or

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<sup>222</sup> On well-known writers who frittered away their earnings, see, for instance, Sutherland, *Victorian novelists*, 112 (on G.A. Lawrence at the gaming tables).

<sup>223</sup> RLF 1089.2, Bunbury to RLF, 04/01/1844.

<sup>224</sup> RLF 1115.8, Kitto to RLF, 03/02/1849.

<sup>225</sup> 'Authors of calamities', 130.

<sup>226</sup> RLF 1115.8, Kitto to RLF, 03/02/1849.

<sup>227</sup> Astore, *Observing God*, 51.

<sup>228</sup> RLF 1241.15, Meffan to RLF, 14/07/1853.

<sup>229</sup> RLF 1115.8, Kitto to RLF, 03/02/1849.

<sup>230</sup> RLF 1315.47, MJ Martin to RLF, 30/10/1853.

institution to pay off the creditors, and unlike ministers and clergy, their profession did not provide an automatic circle of well-wishers.<sup>231</sup> Friends of the writer could advertise his poverty to try and raise a public subscription for his relief, but the necessary publicity meant that it was a last resort. The subscriptions for Dick and Kitto happened in the final years of their lives, and were intended as much to provide future support for the bereaved dependants as for the writer himself. Kitto's subscription raised £1,800, which paid his debts and funeral expenses, and left enough to secure an income of around £60 a year for his family.<sup>232</sup>

The Royal Literary Fund was the best known of the charitable organisations to which writers could apply before the public subscription was needed. It is their files that have been so illuminating on the condition of some of the RTS writers. There were also other charitable organisations on which writers might be able to make a claim. Bunbury, for instance, eventually discovered that she could receive a £40 a year pension as the daughter of a deceased clergyman of the Church of England.<sup>233</sup> Pensions, of between £25 and £300, could also be sought from the Civil List, and carried an aura of deserved reward that grants from charitable foundations did not.<sup>234</sup> Applicants to the RLF frequently felt themselves to be begging, and as one referee noted, 'It is always painful to solicit alms.'<sup>235</sup> Without savings invested in stocks or an annuity, a pension was the only way in which a writer could retire, or at least reduce their workload in their later years. However, the pensions were hard to get. Kitto got one of £100 a year, but it took three attempts before Dick received one of £50.<sup>236</sup> *Fraser's* complained that in the distribution of Civil List pensions, too 'little falls to the share of real merit', and too much to those with the right friends.<sup>237</sup> The article closed with a call, laden with military metaphors, for a change to the system of

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<sup>231</sup> See Cross, *Common writer*, Ch.2, on writers and debt.

<sup>232</sup> Eadie, *John Kitto*, 372, note. I estimate the £60 pa from investing the £1,200 in 5 percents. For Dick's subscription, see RLF 1241.10, Lowe to RLF, 27/03/1851.

<sup>233</sup> RLF 1089.66, Application Form, 03/07/1867.

<sup>234</sup> On Civil List pensions for writers, see Cross, *Common writer*, 82ff.

<sup>235</sup> RLF 1315.23, Gould to RLF, 02/02/1859.

<sup>236</sup> RLF 1115.14, Press-cutting with Kitto's application form, 01/03/1854; 1241.17, Press-cuttings with Dick's application form, 08/11/1854; 1241.19, Petition to Lord Aberdeen, n.d. [1854?].

<sup>237</sup> [Lewes], 'Condition of authors', 285.

pensions, so that the claim of the ‘veteran writer, battered in long and hard-fought service’ would be recognised as much as that of the soldier.<sup>238</sup>

Saving and the related problems of bad luck and getting a pension, were problems for all writers, as, indeed, for all those with low, irregular incomes. Ministers tended to have slightly more financial security than professional writers, with a rough expectation of their income from year to year. They would also have the support of their entire congregations in illness or old age, rather than just their personal friends, and relatives. This meant that, while all writers would be affected by the occupational hazards of literature, professional writers were likely to be hit harder. The main hazards were publishers’ bankruptcies and work-related illnesses.

Publisher’s bankruptcy might seem as improbable as being beset by robbers, but it was a not uncommon event in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1841 Kitto recorded, ‘the only publishing house with which I had up to that time become connected [i.e. Knight], fell into difficulties, which brought to a most unexpected close an arrangement then recently formed which had promised me a fair income for some years.’<sup>239</sup> Martin suffered two publishers’ bankruptcies in the early part of his career as a professional writer, firstly that of Baldwin, Cradock & Joy in 1837/8, and then that of Whitehead & Co. in 1840. Whitehead had engaged him on an annual salary to write a *Natural History of Quadrupeds*.<sup>240</sup> Unfortunately, ‘One volume of the work was scarcely completed when the firm became insolvent and Mr. Martin was again left without resources.’<sup>241</sup> It happened to Milner an unfortunate three times: W.S. Orr in 1854, Freeman of Fleet Street in 1857/8, and W.&R. McPhun of Glasgow in the mid-1870s.<sup>242</sup>

During 1853-54, Milner was working particularly hard to make up for the debts of the friend for whom he had stood as security. He received several advance payments

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<sup>238</sup> [Lewes], ‘Condition of authors’, 295.

<sup>239</sup> RLF 1115.2, Kitto to RLF, 27/10/1845.

<sup>240</sup> RLF 1315.3, Martin to RLF, 11/04/1853.

<sup>241</sup> RLF 1315.7, Waterhouse to RLF, 13/04/1853.

<sup>242</sup> RLF 1385.12, Quinton to RLF, 06/05/1858; 1385.22, Milner’s application form, 05/02/1881.

from the RTS to assist him, including an unusually large one of £100.<sup>243</sup> Milner reported that, in early 1854:

I then accepted a commission from Messrs. Orr to produce a 'Natural History of the British Isles', as an introductory volume to a series of six, to be called the *British Naturalist*, in which McGillivray's *Birds* were to reappear. I spent eight months upon the work – never received a sixpence in advance upon it – contracted a heavy debt for books – went with the knowledge of Mr. Orr into the country to recruit my health and finish my task as to be ready for publication by 1855 – and within ten days of my leaving London early in October, that house failed, and I was ruinously impoverished.<sup>244</sup>

Milner had undertaken a substantial amount of research and writing on a work for which he had not yet been paid, and suddenly had no expectation of being paid. The unfortunate events of the previous year had left him without any savings to fall back on. His own estimate of the effects of Orr's bankruptcy was as follows:

The consequence to me has been, that instead of receiving as I expected about £250 for the volume, with the commencement of this year, I have not had a farthing, and must wait three years for what the winding up of the business will bring. – I have the expenses to meet – and I have endeavoured to meet them by depriving myself of the bread that perisheth.<sup>245</sup>

Not only was Milner left unpaid for his work, but he had debts to pay for the purchase of specialist books for his research, and he was starving himself to meet them. Although there were legal procedures for the payment of creditors after a bankruptcy, as Milner was aware, they were extremely slow and unlikely to yield full payment.

Just before leaving London, Milner had placed a plan for an extensive new work on 'Our Island Home' before the RTS committee, which would involve him writing four

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<sup>243</sup> RTS CCM 15/02/1854.

<sup>244</sup> RLF 1385.2, Milner to RLF, n.d. [July 1855]. Orr's bankruptcy is discussed in Chambers, W., *Memoir of Robert Chambers with Autobiographical Reminiscences* (New York, 1872), Ch. 13.

<sup>245</sup> RLF 1385.2, Milner to RLF, n.d. [July 1855].

volumes, each twice the length of a Monthly Volume, with the possibility of another four to come.<sup>246</sup> This was intended to provide Milner with a definite source of income for the next year or two, once he had finished with Orr's 'Natural History' and the other RTS works he was already committed to. The RTS copyright committee approved the plan in mid-October.<sup>247</sup> Despite his sudden impoverishment as a consequence of Orr's failure, Milner threw himself into his work for the RTS, although he needed another £100 advance in February 1855. But by the end of that year, the strain and the additional work were having their effect. In December, John Henry Cross, of the RTS editorial department, went to visit Milner and reported that he had been 'incapacitated... for literary work' as a result of his recent 'pecuniary trials'.<sup>248</sup> As well as nervous stress, he was suffering from paralysis of his arm.<sup>249</sup>

Publishers' bankruptcies had clear financial implications for writers, and Milner's case shows that they could also injure health. But they could affect publisher-writer relations in a more general way. A spate of bankruptcies, as in 1847-48 or again in 1853, affected perceptions of the state of the trade, even though available data suggests that the trade continued to grow throughout both 'crises'.<sup>250</sup> Publishers became more careful about taking on new projects, something that writers often bemoaned when unable to place their works. According to the perceptions of writers, the state of trade was bad throughout the 1840s. Kitto referred to 'the generally bad state of their [publishers'] business' in 1840, and to 'a time of such depression in the book trade' in early 1849.<sup>251</sup> Just four months earlier, Bunbury had remarked on 'all the adverse circumstances of this year'.<sup>252</sup> Again, in 1853, Martin found the state of the trade such that 'for months and months, I have received no order of any great importance from any publisher'.<sup>253</sup> As well as disinclining publishers to take on new projects, bankruptcies deprived writers of their trade connections just as much as

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<sup>246</sup> RTS CCM, 20/09/1854.

<sup>247</sup> RTS CCM, 18/10/1854.

<sup>248</sup> RTS CCM, 19/12/1855.

<sup>249</sup> RLF 1385.2, Milner to RLF, n.d. [July 1855]. Milner did manage to complete some work by January the next year, but the RTS had to send it to more 'competent hands' for revision, RTS CCM, 19/03/1856.

<sup>250</sup> Eliot, S., *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919* (London, 1994).

<sup>251</sup> RLF 1115. 2, Kitto to RLF, 27/10/1845; 1115.8, Kitto to RLF, 03/02/1849.

<sup>252</sup> RLF 1089.18, Bunbury to RLF, 23/10/1848.

<sup>253</sup> RLF 1315.3, Martin to RLF, 11/04/1853.

deaths. Kitto had reckoned his connections as one of the few positive things about his position in 1845.<sup>254</sup>

Illness was the other major cause of financial trouble reported by the RTS writers, for medical, and perhaps funeral, bills were expensive, and writers could be prevented from earning. Even when they were not personally ill, the writers' opportunities to work might be severely restricted by the presence of illness, particularly in the case of women writers, who were expected to attend in the sickroom. If writers themselves became ill, they were generally prevented from working, although dictation from the sickbed might be an option. Martin's wife performed this help for him, but Milner's wife was herself an invalid, forcing him to employ an amanuensis, at a cost he found 'very crippling'.<sup>255</sup> The amount of work that could be carried out depended upon the nature and severity of the illness, and as long as the invalid remained clear-headed and conscious, they could work if an assistant was available. But work of any sort was unlikely if they suffered, as Milner did in his seventies, from 'a seizure of an apoplectic kind [which] threw me headlong from the top of the stairs to the bottom, with the usual result of perfect insensibility and complete helplessness on my part.'<sup>256</sup>

Apoplexy was (probably) not an occupational hazard for writers, but nervous illnesses and eye-strain could result from over-long hours of reading and writing. Milner, Martin and Bunbury all had problems with their hands and wrists as a consequence of the repetitive effort involved in continual writing. In 1844, Bunbury reported that her continued writing 'brought on an affection of the nerve of the right arm, which renders its use at all times rather difficult, and sometimes deprives me of that use for a couple of months at a time'.<sup>257</sup> She used her left hand to write some of her shorter works, but by 1853, she had to report 'the loss, I fear permanently, of the use of the right arm. I trust to acquire more facility in writing with the left.' The doctor reported that 'the nerve of the arm [was] injured by the constant action of writing, [and] the pain is at times most acute'.<sup>258</sup> Since she was still complaining of an injured right arm a decade later, one suspects that she kept trying to use it, and thus

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<sup>254</sup> RLF 1115.2, Kitto to RLF, 27/10/1845.

<sup>255</sup> RLF 1385.1, Application Form, 07/07/1855; 1385.2, Milner to RLF, n.d. [July 1855].

<sup>256</sup> RLF 1385.23, Milner to RLF, 04/02/1881. He only partially recovered, and died the following year.

<sup>257</sup> RLF 1089.2, Bunbury to RLF, 04/01/1844.

<sup>258</sup> RLF 1089.27, Bunbury to RLF, 01/11/1853.

aggravated the injury so that, unlike Milner, she did not recover fully. Bunbury became able to write quite legibly with her left hand (compare Figures 4.3 and 4.4), but she complained that ‘I cannot accomplish the amount of work I have hitherto done.’<sup>259</sup> This had serious ramifications for her income.

The *North British Review* noted that, ‘Rest and recreation, fresh air and bodily exercise, are essential to an author, and he will do well never to neglect them.’<sup>260</sup> However, long hours indoors at the desk were necessary to make a living, and health would be sacrificed to that end. The *North British* reckoned that it was this unhealthy lifestyle that made writers prematurely old, adding that, ‘At an age when other men are in the possession of vigorous faculties of mind and strength of body, they are often used-up, enfeebled, and only capable of effort under the influence of strong stimulants.’<sup>261</sup> When he began life as a writer, Kitto walked from his house in Islington to Knight’s offices near St. Paul’s, and back, each day. But by the mid-1840s, he was working at home all day.<sup>262</sup> After several years of this, he began to suffer from severe headaches and ‘neuralgic affection’, as well as being very overweight. His doctor ordered two hours, or six miles, of walking as his daily exercise. Kitto commented to a friend, ‘Think of that for a man who has almost lost the power of putting one leg before another!’<sup>263</sup> While Kitto was merely obese, Martin suffered from ‘complicated disorders’ which included, as well as ‘heart disease’ and asthma, ‘gouty affection of the whole system, the head and stomach alternately with the limbs’.<sup>264</sup> He was often unable to hold a pen, since his hands ‘discharge[d] portions of chalk attended with ulceration.’<sup>265</sup> The chalky discharges were another symptom of gout. Although gout was usually associated with a patrician lifestyle, a significant causal factor was lack of exercise.

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<sup>259</sup> RLF 1089.27, Bunbury to RLF, 01/11/1853.

<sup>260</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 359.

<sup>261</sup> ‘Pendennis’, 359.

<sup>262</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 536, 552-3.

<sup>263</sup> Ryland, *John Kitto*, 624.

<sup>264</sup> RLF 1315.28, MJ Martin to RLF, May 1860.

<sup>265</sup> RLF 1315.42, MJ Martin to RLF, 18/11/1862. Milner also had medical problems arising from his lifestyle, see RLF 1385.3, Aspray to RLF, 9/07/1855.

Few writers could afford to stop working to recuperate, so when Milner wanted to convalesce on the North Yorkshire coast, he sought an RLF grant.<sup>266</sup> Writers felt forced to work through an illness, or to start work before they were fully recovered. This often led to a relapse, as one of Kitto's referees explained: 'Nine months ago he informed me that his physician had ordered him to abstain altogether from literary work, for some time. But he could not and did not: and the result is, that he is now prostrated.'<sup>267</sup> Annabella Kitto explained that this pattern had occurred several times over the previous three years, with Kitto struggling to complete a work, and just managing it before 'he is overtaken by utter prostration thus leaving his family without the means of support, until, by the blessing of God, health be re-established'. If he recovered from his current illness, she planned 'to get him from home'.<sup>268</sup>

A long illness was expensive and exhausting, and might leave the survivors unable to fend for themselves. Letters from Mary Jane Martin and her referees detail the final stages of Martin's illness, and its effect on her. In 1860, when Martin was 'completely prostrated by illness' and 'in the greatest agony', Mary Jane wrote to the RLF that:

Unless some kind and generous hand can be found to aid us, [we] must end in utter destitution, since a guinea or two now and then, as health permits, with the help afforded by the Royal Literary Fund, and my own earnest but weak and most inadequate struggles as a woman to keep our position and supply the sufferer's wants, alone interferes, to prevent [this].<sup>269</sup>

His condition did not improve, and by 1863, she had admitted to giving up 'a hope (long clung to) of more than solace and alleviation'.<sup>270</sup> When he died the following year, leaving her 'destitute of present supplies and future support', Mary Jane was worn out by almost three years of constant sick-room attendance.<sup>271</sup> Her referee

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<sup>266</sup> RLF 1385.24, Milner to RLF, n.d. [c. Sept. 1880].

<sup>267</sup> RLF 1115.16, Horne to RLF, 04/03/1854.

<sup>268</sup> RLF 1115.15, A Kitto to RLF, 06/03/1854. They went to the spa town of Cannstadt, but he died there six months later, of a 'neuralgic affection', RLF 1115.19, Press-cuttings from *The Times*.

<sup>269</sup> RLF 1315.28, MJ Martin to RLF, May 1860.

<sup>270</sup> RLF 1315.47, MJ Martin to RLF, 30/10/1863.

<sup>271</sup> RLF 1315.54, MJ Martin to RLF, n.d. [March 1864].

wrote to the RLF that ‘Mrs. Martin herself professes considerable literary abilities but, from her increasing years and diminished health consequent upon her husband’s long illness it is not to be expected that for the present at least these can be in any way available to her.’<sup>272</sup> The Martins had received £120 in grants during his illness, and Mary Jane Martin was allowed a further £50 on his death, £15 of which was to defray funeral expenses and the rest to help support her. In 1867, her friends tried to get her a civil list pension, but what happened to that attempt, or to her, is unrecorded.<sup>273</sup>

Martin was sixty-six years old when he died, which was almost exactly the average age at death for writers reported by William Guy to the Statistical Society in 1859.<sup>274</sup> This was at a time when the average life expectancy among the British population as a whole was around thirty-seven years.<sup>275</sup> Guy’s figures showed that writers were shorter-lived than other professionals, especially ministers, by three or four years.<sup>276</sup> He attributed the reduced life expectancy to the sedentary lifestyle of the literary profession, and he also noted that married (male) writers lived for five or six years longer than their unmarried counterparts, thus bearing out the importance of female assistance.<sup>277</sup> In fact, apart from Kitto and Martin, most of the RTS professional writers lived rather longer than Guy would have predicted. Milner died at 75, Bunbury at 79, and Dick at 83 years. The minister-writers encompassed relatively early deaths, such as Stowell’s at the age of 58, as well as exceptional longevity, such as Kennedy, Stoughton and Angus, who all passed 86 years.<sup>278</sup> The long lives of some of these writers and minister-writers emphasise how important it was to provide for old age. All three of the long-living ministers were able to retire in their last years through the generosity of their congregations and their grown-up families. But Milner, Bunbury and Dick were all writing till the very ends of their lives, under the increasing infirmities of old age. Bunbury discovered that it was not just failing eye-

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<sup>272</sup> RLF 1315.55, Gould to RLF, 27/02/1864.

<sup>273</sup> RLF 1315.59, Murray to Blewitt, 27/11/1867.

<sup>274</sup> Guy, W.A., ‘On the duration of life as affected by the pursuits of literature, science and art: with a summary view of the duration of life among the upper and middle classes of society’ *Journal of the Statistical Society* 22 (1859): 337-61, at 343. This figure was based on the members of Guy’s sample who were born in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only. Almost half of his sample were from earlier centuries.

<sup>275</sup> Dauntton, *Progress and poverty*, 575, Table 1.c.

<sup>276</sup> Guy, *On the duration of life*, 359-60.

<sup>277</sup> Guy, *On the duration of life*.

<sup>278</sup> Angus died at 86, Kennedy at 87, and Stoughton at 90.

sight and a paralysed right arm that hindered an elderly writer from earning a living, for the tastes of the publishers and the reading public had changed over the course of her writing career.<sup>279</sup> She had specialised all her life in high-toned novels and travel books, but by the 1860s, sensational novels were in demand. Bunbury could not or would not write such works. Her reputation as a novelist had dwindled away, and many of her earlier publishers had died. She was still writing in the early 1880s, but felt uncertain of making her way with new publishers amid ‘the multitude of present writers’.<sup>280</sup>

## Conclusions

Until this chapter, my discussion of the production of cheap popular science works has been one in which publishers are central, with writers being present in the same manner as paper-merchants and printers, as agents who do work for the publisher and are paid for it. Writers differed from the other agents in the relative complexity of their tasks, and hence the amount of oversight placed on them. The editorial and committee procedures existed to ensure that the writers’ works came up to the Society’s standard, yet the nature of literary work meant that a standard could not be defined as exactly as the quality of paper, or the size of type and number of lines of text per page. The writer had theoretically more creative freedom than the printer, and the editorial procedures were there to keep that freedom in check. Finding writers who could reliably produce works in the requisite Christian tone helped to reduce the amount of revision and alteration needed at the editorial stage.

Just as all the Society’s operations were balanced between commercial and philanthropic aims, so their relations with writers had two facets. In the pages of the committee minutes, writers do appear as paid agents, yet this has to be contrasted with the image of the ideal Christian writer which appeared in the obituaries and similar materials. The ideal Christian writer was above the mercenary ‘trade’ aspects of publishing, and pursued literature rather as a spiritual vocation. This was an extrapolation of the image of the secular writer as a learned professional, in contrast

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<sup>279</sup> Harrison Ainsworth was an active writer for sixty years, which Sutherland suggests gave him one of the longest literary careers of the nineteenth century. Bunbury’s career lasted sixty-three years. On Ainsworth, see Sutherland, *Victorian novelists*, 153-9.

<sup>280</sup> 1089.92, Bunbury to RLF, 31/05/1881.

to a 'mere' tradesman's hack. Yet while the potential for earning an income was frequently central to discussions of the professionalisation of authorship, spiritual vocation meant that money was supposed to be irrelevant to the Christian writer. Furthermore, like the secular professional, the Christian writer was presented as engaging in intellectual work, rather than the manual labour of a hack.

The image of the ideal Christian writer was thus clearly misleading in two ways, by ignoring both the importance of money in the writer's decision to write, and the physical work involved. Even for part-time writers, like the ministers and clergymen discussed in this chapter, financial remuneration was a much appreciated side-effect of writing for Christ. For the professionals, the payments were essential for survival, and writing only for Christ was unlikely to generate enough. The less tangible benefit was the increase of personal reputation, which could subsequently lead to more financial reward. Writers were often presented as being hopeless with money, yet when those I have discussed fell into financial trouble, it was rarely from personal ineptitude or recklessness. The financial equilibrium which could be maintained solely through writing was a fragile one. It did not allow for long-term budgeting, and it prevented writers with familial demands from saving. This lack of savings meant that publishers' bankruptcies and personal or family illness could be disastrous, and even if such obstacles could be surmounted, there was no hope of retirement for the veteran writer.

The representation of authorship as a mental rather than physical activity has been continued by modern studies of nineteenth-century authorship which concentrate more on the works produced by great authors than on the processes of production. Unlike most professionals, writers worked at home, and this meant that time-management and self-discipline were essential for professional as well as part-time writers. But working in the home also had its advantages, and the presence of female helpers, doing research, taking dictation or making fair copy, indicates that authorship was not always a solitary activity, pursued alone at the desk. It could become a collective family activity.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> On the Taylor family's collective efforts, see Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*.

In the 1840s and 1850s, the RTS was one of the few publishers engaged in cheap non-fiction publishing to actually use the services of writers. Most of the other series, as discussed in Chapter Two, involved reprinted works. Those publishers were thus able to treat the words of their books as raw materials in the same way as paper and ink. The RTS's emphasis on Christianised popular science, and its desire for short books, prevented it taking the reprint option. The Society had to find writers, and commission them to produce specific works, written in a suitable tone. It had to be particularly careful as most of the works were published anonymously, so that the RTS was the sole authority for their contents, and bore all responsibility for them. Within a decade of the period I have been examining, many more publishers were commissioning original works for their cheap series of non-fiction. This forced publishers to deal with the ambiguities in the status of the writer, and decide whether they were respectable professionals or people of vocation, or whether they should be regarded as 'if they were mere composing machines, without any everyday life of their own apart from the work of composition'.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> 'Pendennis', 336 n.