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**Founding Mothers of Social Justice:
The Women's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston,
1877-1892**

By

Erica Harth

The life span of Harriet Clisby (1830-1931), who founded the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) of Boston in 1877, coincides almost exactly with that of Mother Jones (1830-1930). Neither woman was born in the United States; both strove to intervene in the social conflicts of developing industrial capitalism in that country. Mary Harris "Mother" Jones was one of the few women active in labor struggles dominated by men. She signed the manifesto of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1905, led miners' strikes, and was a founding member, with Eugene Debs, of the Socialist Party of America. Mother Jones was the daughter of an activist Irish construction worker; when her husband died she supported herself as a dressmaker. Harriet Clisby was a physician whose father had left the English middle class to try his hand at farming in Australia. If Jones pioneered a leading role for women in the working class, the far lesser known Clisby charted a path for middle-class women in the struggles for social justice that traversed both women's lives. Clisby and the early WEIU cannot be written off as a group of elite women dabbling in urban reform. In pursuing a vision of social justice for both poor and middle-class women, the founding members defined a new place for "ladies" as social activists.

Like many other women's institutions of the late nineteenth century, the WEIU got a big boost from the Civil War. It was a conflict that gave American women an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate their

social usefulness at home and on the battlefield, and it ended by propelling them headlong into the modern era. In the flurry of women's institution-building and renewed battles for the vote that marked the postbellum decades, women swept onto the public stage as never before. The history of the WEIU has tended to become lost in the welter of women's associations formed in the women's club movement of this time. Historians have paid it scant attention. Two organizations that preceded it by almost a decade, the New England Woman's Club (NEWC) and Sorosis in New York, have gotten much more notice, perhaps because the WEIU, arriving in their wake and borrowing heavily in personnel from the NEWC, has been seen as less original.¹ Even the historical record slights it, with astonishingly little in the way of personal correspondence.

Yet the WEIU was an historically pivotal organization, combining spirituality, self-improvement and social activism in a blend strong enough to span the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.² It has lasted to the present day, having become a fixture on the Boston scene, so well known to locals that almost everyone to whom I have spoken about it responds with a personal anecdote. The NEWC, on the other hand, is still in existence but with little presence or renown.

The longevity of the Union, as it is commonly known, may have something to do with its relative neglect by historians. For in its

¹ My profound thanks to Joyce Antler for reading this essay in manuscript form. The two most complete discussions of the Union are Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), pp. 73-91; and Sarah Deutsch, "Learning to Talk More Like a Man: Boston Women's Class-Bridging Organizations, 1870-1940," *American Historical Review* 97 (April 1992): 379-404. Both Blair and Deutsch see the WEIU as an organization with cross-class aims. For Blair, however, the early WEIU's distinctiveness lay in its "singular focus on morality" (76). She sees it as both an "adventurous and reactionary organization" (77). The WEIU was certainly not revolutionary. But the fact that it did not consciously or overtly seek to change existing relations of social class does not, in my opinion, make it "reactionary." Blair comes closer to capturing the distinctiveness of the WEIU in pointing to its "sophistication in using women's special traits to provide them with an entrance into public realms" (84). For a concise account of the New England Woman's Club and Sorosis, see Blair, pp. 15-38.

² The WEIU seems to have crossed many of the categories in which Anne Firor Scott places nineteenth-century women's associations. See Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

beginnings, it does indeed seem to boast few firsts. The initiatives of a central meeting place for working women and strangers to Boston, of an employment bureau, and of a “protective” service for working women, for example -- all of which were fundamental to the Union’s identity -- had earlier been taken by the YWCA or by the NEWC and by “Protective Unions” in other cities.

During the first year of its existence, at just about the same time that the New York Exchange for Woman’s Work was started in Manhattan, the WEIU opened a consignment shop for crafts and food produced by women. Both organizations charged a 10% commission on consignments, rolling back the profits on sales to the needy suppliers. Through quality control of articles submitted, the two organizations established shops on sound business principles and helped women to develop saleable skills.³ There has been some debate about which organization was started first. However, when the Union’s shop was detached from the Employment Bureau as a special department in 1879, the WEIU’s Committee of Industries looked to the New York Exchange as a model.⁴

The WEIU often succeeded better than other women’s associations engaged in similar projects, because its membership was fluid, its purpose manifold, its strategies adaptive. It did, as it happens, initiate important ventures, but it also had a knack of knowing how to grasp what was in the air. If its “ladies” sometimes verged on a caricature of the white, classbound reformer, they were also often energetic, bold and courageous. In the well-negotiated border between benevolence and social activism, which defined the organization at its origins, lies a clue to its endurance.

³ On the New York Exchange for Woman’s Work, see “Shall we have in New York a permanent business house for gentlewoman obliged to support themselves?” [Statement made for the Managers to the Advisory board of the N. Y. Exchange for Woman’s Work.] signed M. L. Choate (president) (New York, 1891), History of Women Microfilm, Reel 584, #8562; New York Exchange for Woman’s Work: Fifteen years’ work in New York City [n.p.], 1892, History of Women Microfilm, Reel 584, #8564; The New York Exchange for Women’s Work (n.p., n.d., perhaps 1902), History of Women Microfilm, Reel 944, #8664; and New York Exchange for Woman’s Work, Catalogue (New York, 1896), History of Women Microfilm, Reel 584, #4594-1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴ WEIU Annual Report, 1880, p. 28. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass.

The WEIU's founding generation of leaders reveals a diversity, if not in social class or ethnicity, then in political perspective and personal style. From Harriet Clisby, the founder and first president of the WEIU, to Mary Morton Kehew, its third president, the organization's language appears to have shifted its center of gravity from a spiritualized, nineteenth-century ideal of "union" (in the sense of the "Women's Christian Temperance Union," or "Protective Union") to something approaching the idea of a trade union. Early women's "unions," like the WCTU, were built on the principle of unifying women around a single issue. A Christian ideal of sisterhood in a hallowed cause was evident in the mass women's "Crusade" against intemperance in the winter of 1873-74, which resulted in the organization of the WCTU in 1874. As the "first mass organization of women in the United States and probably in the world,"⁵ the WCTU may have provided a model for Clisby. But the unity of women that she was seeking was not in the cause of a single issue and so was more elusive. A closer look at Clisby and her associates in the early years reveals not so much a shift of meaning toward a more labor-oriented association as it does a layering of meanings, reflecting the coexistence of the older idea of Christian benevolence with the newer, secularized movement for social justice.⁶

The NEWC's minutes for July 7, 1877, briefly mention that "Dr. Clisby had been allowed the use of the rooms one afternoon in June on business connected with the Sunday services."⁷ Since 1872, Harriet Clisby, a graduate of the homeopathic New York Medical College and Hospital for Women, had been conducting "Sunday Meetings for

⁵ Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 7.

⁶ Lori D. Ginzberg points to the Civil War as the turning point in the evolution of women's benevolent work from Christian charity to a more business-like model. While the WEIU's history does reflect this trend, the "business" style that it eventually developed was different from that of the mainstream charities, as I will argue in this essay. See Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 196-202.

⁷ New England Women's Club papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. vol. 23.

Women,” at her home. From these meetings she developed the WEIU. (The NEWC originated in the home of a much better known physician, Harriot Hunt.) Among the members of the Sunday discussion group were Caroline Severance, the NEWC’s founding president, Julia Ward Howe and Howe’s daughter, Julia Anagnos, both of whom were prominent in Severance’s club. All would become members of the WEIU. Howe remained active in it for many years, although her first allegiance always remained the NEWC. Clisby’s “business” of July 7th in the NEWC’s quarters at 4 Park Street, which the Union would continue to use for three more years, seems to have been a financial committee meeting of the newly-formed WEIU, whose constitution had been adopted on June 11th by a membership totaling some fifty-five women.

A “union” is not a club, a distinction of which Clisby was well aware. The NEWC mimicked the exclusive men’s clubs to which many of the members’ husbands belonged. Although its official historian, Julia Sprague (also a member of the WEIU), somewhat defensively enumerates the association’s good works, the NEWC was primarily a social club.⁸ Membership was by invitation only, and names proposed by current members had to be approved by the Board of Directors. It took only two opposing votes from the Board to blackball a candidate, resulting in what was decorously called “non-admission.” The annual membership fee was \$10 a year for the first year and \$5 for every year thereafter; life membership cost \$50.⁹ In contrast, membership in the WEIU was open to any woman who could pay the \$1 annual fee; life membership was set at \$25.

Clisby saw the Union as a “union of all for the good of all,” an expression that the WEIU adopted as its motto.¹⁰ Along with promoting spiritual solidarity among women, Clisby also set about consciously to democratize women’s associations. The elite women who were her

⁸ See Julia A. Sprague, *History of the New England Women’s Club from 1868 to 1893* (Boston: Lee and Shepard), pp. 32-33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1.

¹⁰ Clisby uses the expression in her manuscript “Reminiscences,” only a fragment of which remains in the WEIU papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass., vol. 7, p. 136. The “Reminiscences” are not dated, but internal evidence suggests that Clisby wrote them around 1905.

companions might fear admitting “*any woman*, high or low, rich or poor, moral or immoral,” she said, but the doors of the Union, “must be wide open.” She specified that in its egalitarian aspirations the WEIU was to be an organization appreciably different from the NEWC or the Boston YWCA, which had been organized in 1866. The Union, in its non-sectarian and cross-class aims, would serve to “break down barriers” among women.¹¹

Clisby’s concept of the Union was thus both practical and spiritual. As a self-described “working-woman” and a foreign-born resident, she was especially interested in improving the lives of women workers and immigrants. But she couched her goals in Transcendentalist language laced with the Swedenborgianism she had imbibed from her adolescence. The height of Transcendentalism as a social, intellectual, and cultural activity (its leaders resisted the label of “Transcendentalist” applied to them by the public) had passed before the Civil War and Clisby’s arrival in the United States. But its influence continued to be felt, especially in Boston, where a number of WEIU members had personal ties to such leading lights as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, James Freeman Clarke, Theodore Parker, and Henry David Thoreau. Bronson Alcott’s daughter, Louisa May Alcott, was for a time a member of the Union, as was the wife of James Freeman Clarke. Ednah Dow Cheney, an animating spirit of the early Union, had attended Margaret Fuller’s “Conversations” during the 1840s, when she met Emerson, Parker and Bronson Alcott. In the 1870s and 1880s, she lectured at Alcott’s Concord School of Philosophy. Abby Morton Diaz, the Union’s second president, had lived and taught at Brook Farm from 1842 to 1847. “For many years,” Clisby recalled in her “Reminiscences,” speaking a little like a member of the Transcendentalist circle, “I had dreamed the ideal dream of seeing *at work* an Institution wherein the *needs of all classes* of women would be met, and which should be held together by the bonds of a love whose effects would be shown in *mutual service* and healthy co-operative activities.” She wanted a “*union* -- a woman’s rallying point.” The democratic principle of open admission for all women would demonstrate that “our lesser lives hold the power of unconsciously

¹¹ Clisby, “Reminiscences.” In the ms. many words and phrases are crossed out and then, presumably, kept. In my citations I attempt to make the best sense possible of the revisions.

merging themselves into a wider and grander and more universal life, a life that gives us a truer and firmer hold on humanity and that helps us to live.... more in harmony with that wondrous ineffable Life which is the Life of our Life."¹²

Clisby brought much of her own unusual background to her shaping of the Union's early character. At the age of seven, she had left London for the Australian bush, where she very early learned the lesson of self-reliance. Ten years later, she was baptized together with other members of her family in the Swedenborgian New Church in Adelaide. Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences that link the human with the natural and the divine in a cosmic unity, a doctrine which appealed to many of the Transcendentalists Clisby would later meet in Boston, stamped her adult life and work. Swedenborgianism attracted nonconformists, radicals and independent thinkers as well as people interested in mesmerism and spiritualism. Its medical counterpart was homeopathy, which emphasized natural and spiritual healing based on the curative principle of administering like to like, or substances that would produce the symptoms of the disease.

Clisby discovered medicine in a visionary burst not unlike that which inspired her to form the Union. From Adelaide she had gone to Melbourne around 1856, where she met Caroline Harper Dexter, an unconventional woman who had founded an Institute of Hygiene. Among other innovations, the Institute promoted dress reform, a movement guaranteed to appeal to the young Clisby, who on her move to Adelaide from the bush gave in only reluctantly to her mother's demand that she exchange her short country dress for long skirts. She and Dexter collaborated on the first Australian magazine published by women, the *Interpreter*, which included a page of medical information and advice. After the publication of two issues it folded, and Clisby went to work as the editor of a shorthand magazine under the direction of Isaac Pitman (whose wife would later be listed as a member of Clisby's Union). When Pitman sent over from London an article by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell on "The Laws of Life, with special reference to the physical education of girls," Clisby's somewhat unfocused occupational adventures came to an

¹² Ibid.

abrupt close. From then on she single-mindedly pursued the goal of training as a physician.

It took tenacity for a woman to earn a medical degree in the 1860s. The world's first medical school for women, the New England Female Medical College, had been founded by Samuel Gregory only in 1848, and the vast majority of medical schools internationally did not admit women. Clisby managed to apprentice herself to a kindly male physician in Adelaide. Two years later, she traveled to England, where Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, one of the pioneer women physicians, advised her that she would have a better chance of getting her degree in the United States. In the meantime, Clisby earned her keep as a nurse in London's Guy's Hospital.

Once she got to New York, she found Elizabeth Blackwell, who had been an inspiration to Elizabeth Garrett (Anderson), as discouraging as Dr. Anderson had been. Blackwell, it is true, had had to overcome many obstacles in order to earn her degree from Geneva College (in western New York state) in 1849. But by the time that Clisby met her she had won a large measure of respect. Like Clisby's, her family had emigrated from England, in her case to the United States, and she had been influenced by Swedenborgian and Transcendentalist ideas.¹³ Surprisingly, then, Blackwell told her, in effect, to return to England. Instead, Clisby enrolled in the first graduating class of Dr. Clemence Lozier's Medical College and Hospital for Women. Although most of the institutions that admitted women were homeopathic, it is likely that, given her Swedenborgian conversion, Clisby would in any event have preferred homeopathy. But "regulars" were the majority and had more standing than the homeopaths, so Lozier secured permission for her students to attend lectures at Bellevue.¹⁴ There the women faced such hostility from male professors and students that they carried switches to ward off their persecutors. At the age of ninety, when Clisby had won fame as the

¹³ See Blackwell's autobiography, *Pioneer work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women* (New York: Schocken, 1977) and Ishbel Ross, *Child of Destiny: The Life Story of the First Woman Doctor* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950).

¹⁴ In the 1880s allopaths, or "regulars," outnumbered homeopaths by about ten to one. Martin Kaufman, *Homeopathy in America: The Rise and Fall of a Medical Heresy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971), p. 144.

world's oldest woman physician (to be topped by her own death at one hundred and one), she recalled that one of the lecturers at Bellevue was so eager to drive the women away that he invited a "colored patient named Jim, a big, strapping fellow," to class and asked him to undress. As the patient slowly proceeded, one of the women made a move to leave. Clisby stood firm, prompting the other women to follow her example. The case reached the press, with Henry Ward Beecher championing the women students' cause.¹⁵ (One wonders about the relation of race and gender implied in this anecdote. Among Clisby's close associates were such renowned feminists and abolitionists as Lucy Stone, William Lloyd Garrison and Julia Ward Howe.) Later the women went to class escorted by a military guard.

In New York and in Boston, to which she moved sometime around 1871, Clisby surrounded herself with women physicians. In New York, Dr. Lozier had taken her in for a time; in Boston in the 1870s, we find her at two different Winter Street addresses, at each of which several other female physicians were also residing.¹⁶ At least one of these physicians, a Dr. L.W. Tuck, was on the Union's Hygiene Committee. Among the founding members of the Union were several graduates of the New England Female Medical College. Dr. Mercy B. Jackson was on the Union's first Board of Directors (she died shortly thereafter); Dr. Arvilla B. Haynes was its first vice president. In 1880, both Clisby and Haynes were residing at 773 Tremont Street. Haynes and another early member, Dr. Caroline E. Hastings, were notable figures on the lecture circuit, and Haynes in particular was in much demand.¹⁷

¹⁵ *New York Tribune*, Nov. 4, 1928. For other details of Clisby's biography, see "Oldest Woman Doctor," *London Observer* (November 24, 1928), and the entries under "Harriet Clisby" in *The Australia Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (1977), and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1969). Stories about demonstrations of hostility toward women medical students, like the one Clisby relates here, were by no means unusual. See Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 8-9, 113-17. I am grateful to Joyce Antler for this reference.

¹⁶ I am grateful to Martha Gardner for this information.

¹⁷ For information on these physicians, see Phebe A. Hanaford, *Women of the Century* (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1877). For the New England Female Medical College, see Mary

By 1880, the year of the Union's incorporation, Haynes, who had served as chair of the Union's Committee on Moral and Spiritual Development, was lecturing on the "Anatomy and Physiology of Circulation," "Nutrition," and "Assimilation" for the WEIU's newly-organized Committee on Hygiene and Physical Culture. In January of that year, the Union had decided to offer a free course of public lectures on Tuesday evenings by a full roster of female physicians. Among them was another member of the Committee on Moral and Spiritual Development, Dr. Mary Safford, a professor of Gynecology at Boston University's homeopathic medical school, which had absorbed the Female Medical College after Gregory's refusal to give women a real managerial role and solid professional training had forced the closing of the women's college. Safford, a proponent of dress reform, also served on the staff of the Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital and carried on a private practice. At the Union, she lectured on the anatomy, physiology and diseases of the eye, and also gave a "talk upon Constipation, its causes, and how to avoid it." Among the other topics of that season were diet, dress, ventilation, and sanitary measures to prevent disease.¹⁸

The Hygiene Committee to all appearances did not stray far from women's traditional benevolence. For all the male opposition to their professional training, women, as physicians, could still be seen as playing their assigned role of nurturer and care giver. The initiative that the committee took in 1880, when it opened a Hygiene Room, for example, is consistent with this role. At the Hygiene Room, women physicians held regular hours of consultation every day "for the benefit of young girls and others connected with stores and manufactories, who need advice in hygiene and also medical treatment, but whose means will not admit of paying regular fees at the offices of physicians....We hope to benefit a class, a majority of whom are in need of just such care."¹⁹

In this type of work, however, the Union was breaking new ground. The Hygiene Committee is an instance of how the WEIU began to move

Roth Walsh, *Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply. Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

¹⁸ Annual Report, 1880, p. 32.

¹⁹ Ibid.

away from the charity visitor's campaign for the moral uplift of the poor and closer to the spirit of the settlement house movement that sprang up in the United States in the late 1880s and 1890s. In the Hygiene Committee, as in the settlement houses, the ideal was one of mutual benefit to helper and beneficiary. Female physicians did not have many professional opportunities, although as alternatives to male gynecologists they served an important moral function in preserving the modesty of their middle-class patients. In the Hygiene Committee, physicians could benefit from the professional experience and personal gratification they gained there as much as poor patients could benefit from their low-cost care.

From the outset, the Union aimed to meet the needs of both middle-class and poor women. Clisby remarked on the number of "sad and solitary" women whom she had met both in New York and Boston, not only "in the poorer and hard-toiling ranks of life," but also "among women living in affluence and ease," where "there was equally a dearth in their lives that raised in their minds a discontent, a restlessness of purpose, with a stolid indifference that, in many cases led to serious nervous and other maladies which the Doctor was supposed to cure."²⁰ The first annual report (1890) of New York's College Settlement, run by college women, expresses a similar idea of mutual aid: "We do not look upon our work as done by one class of society for another class of society; not as up-town residents, nor from the height of proud superiority to our fellow-men in any regard do we go down to labor in the tenement-house district. All sorts and conditions of men are brought into contact in the Neighborhood Guild. All both give and receive; all are both teachers and taught; and the lesson for all is the brotherhood of man."²¹

In seeking the "educational, industrial and social advancement of women," as its Constitution specified, the Union distanced itself from both men's and women's benevolent associations. Its founding generation perceived that middle-class women, excluded by their gender from the control of finances and other prerogatives of power, were not positioned to support programs of moral uplift such as those instituted by male philanthropists. All women -- middle-class and poor alike -- they

²⁰ Clisby, "Reminiscences," pp. 108-09.

²¹ As quoted in Annie Nathan Meyer, ed., *Women's Work in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 1891), p. 341.

reasoned, needed to be trained to meet men on an equal basis. Clisby put it in Swedenborgian terms:

The Heavenly Father has entrusted the laws of His creation to *both* objects of His love, the man and the woman, demanding of them no one-sided man rule, but a conjoint application of man and woman *working together* in all those offices, and under those laws that He Himself has created for the perfection of the race through the individual and the family. Women, far from being indifferent to what is going on around them like so many sticks and stones, should feel that they have *an* interest in everything in the *world equally with men*....²²

In the early WEIU, then, the project of self-improvement was closely bound up with that of community-improvement.²³ The founders wanted to give middle-class members the opportunity both to develop their own talents and capabilities and in the process to make their contribution to the community at large. The leaders' eagerness to promote the interests of women can make them sound like radical separatists of the 1960s. Replaced in their own time, they speak a language that derives in part from the Union's desire to train women for participation and leadership in civic life, in part from Clisby's spiritual vision.

The Union, unlike the NEWC, began by excluding men from participation. In the NEWC, men were from the beginning admitted as associate members; although the WEIU gave honorary membership to male donors from its founding, men could not become associate members until 1903. In the early days of Clisby's "Sunday Meetings for Women," both men and women were invited as speakers. In 1874, the members decided that meetings should be restricted to women. When the meetings were incorporated into the Union's agenda under the auspices of the Committee on Moral and Spiritual Development, the question of male participation again came up. The committee members unanimously decided to continue to exclude men. "They felt that woman, by her

²² Ibid., pp. 125-26.

²³ See Scott, pp. 111-40.

organization, comes into near relation to the Infinite, and is receptive, through her spirituality, of divine truth; that she was well calculated to be the teacher to lead her sisters into that spiritual unfolding that comes to *all* from true seeking." By excluding men, moreover, the committee did not risk running out of speakers. Its roster for 1880 reads like a roll call of the nation's leading women lecturers: Kate Gannett Wells, Ednah Dow Cheney, Lucia Peabody, Julia Ward Howe, and Mary A. Livermore, all of whom were both NEWC and WEIU members.²⁴

Such separatism as the members instituted was part of Clisby's larger plan to bring women into the fold of a universal humanity. "The ideal of an association is that in which all true elements meet and find their place in the uses to which they subserve. Just so far as these fail to meet, just so far is there a lack of the perfect unitary idea, and just so far do we fall short of the divine ideal. In a complete association both men and women would be equally represented, now the twain are acting apart... Our present apartness, not separateness is the indispensable earnest of our future indissoluble union."²⁵

It is interesting that a novel based remarkably closely on Clisby's life omits the Swedenborgian connection altogether and presents the Union's founder as something of a socialist feminist (although a churchgoer). The Australian novelist and journalist Shirley Darbyshire (pseudonym of Shirley Ruth Meynell) knew Clisby's last companion, Alice Callow, and may have known Clisby herself.²⁶ The Henrietta (Harriet) of her *Henrietta Condon, M.D.* (1936) is a woman-identified woman who, inspired by the example of Brook Farm, organizes a commune in Melbourne, steadfastly refuses repeated proposals of marriage from a faithful suitor, and consistently opts for female companionship instead. She cuts her hair unfashionably short and dons mannish clothing.²⁷ In her "Reminiscences," however, Clisby writes disapprovingly of

²⁴ Annual Report, 1880, pp. 23-25.

²⁵ Annual Report, 1979, p. 6.

²⁶ What little information there is on Darbyshire can be found in *Who Was Who Among English and European Authors* (Detroit: Gale, 1978).

²⁷ Shirley Darbyshire [Shirley Ruth Meynell], *Henrietta Condon, M.D.* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1936).

defiant women, women hating society, living lives to shock this society; not immoral nor unmoral nor unrespectable women, but . . . living among themselves *as they would*, solitary or not solitary, married or single, dressing as they would, speaking and thinking as it pleased them, acting independently, holding on to personal rights without regard to their neighbor. I used to see many of these same women, young and old, in churches and meetings, invariably accompanied by papers which they opened loudly and read when anything was uttered that was not to their taste. They acted on the theory that they were sufficient to themselves and all else might go by them.²⁸

Clisby may be alluding to suffragists or to militant dress reformers, or both. (Her fictional counterpart is an anti-suffragist. The real Clisby's views on suffrage are not known. The Union as an organization never got actively involved in the campaign for women's suffrage.) In any event, there were limits to Clisby's farsightedness and unconventionality.

The protagonist of *Henrietta Condon, M.D.* is by and large a woman of the author's own time rather than of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century Clisby may have chosen women companions, but she was not a militant separatist. Clisby's Union depended heavily on men for its activities, and not only for financial backing.²⁹ Men were on the advisory board from the beginning.

The Union's networking of necessity extended to both men and women. Alice Goldmark Brandeis was a Union member; her husband, Louis Dembitz Brandeis, already on his way to being one of the nation's foremost legal minds, gave a lecture in the series of "Talks on Law" which the WEIU held during 1882-83. Samuel Wells, the husband of Kate Gannett Wells, was the son of a Maine Supreme Court justice and

²⁸ Clisby, "Reminiscences," pp. 111-12.

²⁹ Sarah Deutsch rightly points out that from the outset women of the WEIU needed the financial backing of men for their physical headquarters and their public activities. See Deutsch, p. 391.

state governor. Kate Gannett Wells, who had been a vice-president of the NEWC, served from 1879 to 1900 as head of the Union's Protective Committee. As early as 1878, this committee had begun to organize free legal consultations for women workers who had been defrauded of their wages, a service modeled on New York's Protective Union. Through her husband's connections, Kate Gannett Wells had access to the best legal advice. In 1897, Elizabeth Glendower Evans, known primarily for her championing of Sacco and Vanzetti, was chairing the Committee on Domestic Reform. Her committee supervised a placement bureau for domestic workers, and through its Domestic Reform League, organized the year before, attempted to regulate relations between employees and employers in domestic service. (In part, the Committee was attempting to recruit domestic workers away from the factory, which would help to solve the "servant problem" -- not one of the Union's more successful efforts.)³⁰ Because of the friendship of Evans and her husband with Brandeis and his wife, it is not surprising to find Alice Brandeis on Evans's committee.

Union members were well aware of the strategic necessity to call on husbands and other male connections. Serving on the Protective Committee were Harriet Sewall and Mrs. Tolman Willey. Both women's husbands were lawyers who donated their services to the Union's Protective Department. Harriet's husband, Samuel E. Sewall, was a feminist supporter of women's institutions. He served as a director of the New England Female Medical College, where Lucy, his daughter by his first wife, studied under Dr. Marie Zakrzewska, a member of the Union. When Zakrzewska left the Female Medical College to found the New England Hospital for Women and Children, Sewall served as a director and legal advisor for the new institution.³¹ (Later, in 1882, Kate Gannett Wells, an anti-suffragist and reluctant feminist, turned to Dr. Lucy Sewall

³⁰ On Elizabeth Glendower Evans, see Robert Goodman, "The Improper Bostonian: Elizabeth Glendower Evans," unpublished essay in the Essay Collection of the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, May, 1979. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. Goodman does not mention Glendower Evans' activities in the WEIU.

³¹ See Walsh, pp. 64-66. For Samuel E. Sewall, see Nina Moore Tiffany, *Samuel E. Sewall: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1898).

for a medical consultation. She disliked women doctors but felt “loyalty to the cause” of medical training for women.)³²

The women, however, may have been ambivalent about leaning so heavily on their men. In 1884, after Kate Gannett Wells expressed the Committee’s gratitude to their male lawyers, she proceeded to her real agenda, the empowerment of women through acquisition of the kind of skills they were learning in the Protective Department: “But in the future there may be a firm of Mesdames Sewall & Willey.... One should see the calm persistency of this firm of Sewall & Willey. They listen for hours to tales that could be told in ten minutes. They win the confidence and learn the secret griefs or zealous hatreds of their plaintiffs. They realize that the loss of fifty cents in wages to a girl is equal to the loss of \$5 to a retail merchant or \$500 to a wholesale dealer.”³³ Four years later, in fact, a Miss Lelia J. Robinson appears on the list of the Protective Committee’s attorneys.³⁴

In the meantime, while the middle-class Union members were working for the empowerment of all women, whatever power they themselves might possess necessarily depended on male connections. In 1880, the Protective Committee delegated two of its members, a Mrs. M. F. Walling and Abby Morton Diaz, to pay a visit to “Mr. Wright” about the enforced standing of women in shops.³⁵ Carroll D. Wright was director of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics, the nation’s first such bureau (organized in 1869). Diaz and Walling seem to have had no trouble getting to see him.

From its inception, the Union had been concerned about the enforced standing of women in shops. Saleswomen in small stores -- dry goods shops, bakeries, and the like -- typically worked a ten to eleven-hour weekday and a half-day on Saturdays. In some shops and bakeries, women also worked on Sundays. The allotted “dinner hour” (our lunch

³² See Mary Margaret Huth, “Kate Gannett Wells: A Biographical Study of an Anti-Suffragist” (unpublished M.A. thesis, History Dept., University of Rochester, 1980), pp. 113-15.

³³ Annual report, 1884, p. 43.

³⁴ Annual Report, 1888, p. 37.

³⁵ WEIU papers, Protective Committee Minutes, p. 4.

hour) was quite often a half-hour or less. During these long hours, employers did not want the women to sit down while customers were in the shop, which meant that in most cases the women were standing for almost the entire workday.

The results of the meeting between the two WEIU women and Wright have not been recorded, but Wright's fifteenth annual report, for 1884, speaks sympathetically about the difficult working conditions of saleswomen, among other women workers. "A good many saleswomen," we read, "consider their work very hard, and that it has a bad effect on their health; in one instance, a girl says she has paid out over \$500 in doctor's bills during the past few years." Wright specifies that enforced standing is one of the hardships of trade: "In bakeries the strain of long hours and standing is especially felt by the salesgirls, while in other branches of business the health of many girls is so poor as to necessitate long rests, one girl being out a year on this account."³⁶

Wright's work led to the establishment of a national Bureau of Labor, which soon thereafter, in 1889, became the Department of Labor. Wright headed the national bureau and department for over two decades. There is no known connection between Wright's report of 1884 and his meeting with the WEIU delegation from four years before. The visit may, however, have laid the foundation for the Union's continuing relationship with the Massachusetts Bureau.

In 1905, the Union organized a Research Department, which offered fellowships to college women for studies on various aspects of working conditions for Boston women. Under the direction of Susan Kingsbury (from 1907 to 1915), the Research Department published a number of reports for the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics. By 1910, this collaboration had produced several reports on domestic service, a comparative study of the cost of homemade and prepared food, and a report on the social statistics of working women. May Allinson's

³⁶ Carroll D. Wright, *The Working Girls of Boston* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1889), pp. 52-53, 70-71. On the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor and women, see also Henry F. Bedford, "Good Men and 'Working Girls,'" *Women of the Commonwealth: Work, Family, and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts*, ed. by Susan L. Porter (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), pp. 85-98. On the enforced standing of saleswomen, see also Maud Nathan, *The Story of an Epoch-Making Movement* (New York: Doubleday, 1926).

Dressmaking as a Trade for Women (1916) and Amy Hewes' *Industrial Home Work in Massachusetts* (1915) were among studies by fellows in the Union's Research Department published by, or in cooperation with, the Bureau.³⁷ Between 1906 and 1918, with the aid of fellows' reports, the Union presented bills to the State Legislature, sometimes successfully, on a variety of issues affecting women's lives.

The kind of networking used by the Union was nothing new in women's benevolent work. Since the earliest female benevolent societies of the 1790s, women's organizations had been closely tied to the work and influence of men. Men's benevolent societies, it should be said, also depended, to a significant extent, on the skills and services of women, such as the fundraising of their antislavery fairs.³⁸ What distinguished the Union's networking, among women as well as among men and women, was the scope that it gave members to wage campaigns for social justice.

From its founding, the Union drew on elite connections for its advocacy, lobbying and institutional innovations. Through networking among individuals, the Union was eventually able to build coalitions and inter-organizational cooperation. Mary Morton Kehew's connection with Mary Kenney O'Sullivan is a case in point. Kehew (1859-1918), was the Union's third president, who served from 1892 to 1913. She succeeded in bringing the labor organizer Mary Kenney O'Sullivan from Chicago to Boston, where she served on the Union's board. O'Sullivan and Kehew worked together on founding the Union for Industrial Progress, which encouraged trade unionism among women workers. Later they cooperated in the Women's Trade Union League, organized in Boston in 1903 with Kehew as its first president and Jane Addams as vice-president.

Under Kehew's presidency, the WEIU developed a working relationship with Simmons College. The Union's School of Housekeeping, opened in 1897, and its School of Salesmanship, which

³⁷ For a convenient list of these publications, see Robert B. Jennings, "A History of The Educational Activities of The Women's Educational and Industrial Union from 1877-1927", p. 11 unpublished doctoral dissertation (June 1978), pp. 145-49.

³⁸ See Ginzberg, p. 45-48.

began in 1905, both operated in close cooperation with Simmons. Eventually the college took over the two schools.³⁹

The interlocking familial and social connections among the WEIU members helped to energize the organization and to move it forward. Mary Morton Kehew's maternal uncle, Marcus Morton (1819-91), a chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, was a distant relation of Abby Morton Diaz. Kehew's family tree of Mortons and Kimballs reached back to the seventeenth century. Her maternal grandfather, another Marcus Morton, had been a governor of Massachusetts. One of the benefits of this elite social background for both Kehew and Diaz was that each in her own way could break social rules and get away with it.⁴⁰ Kehew, along with her sister, Hannah Parker Kimball, became involved in the labor movement. Abby Morton Diaz was introduced at an early age to anti-slavery meetings by her father. By the time she was twenty, she was living and teaching at Brook Farm, where she made a distinctly unconventional marriage to Manuel Diaz, variously described as Spanish or Cuban. The marriage seems to have broken up while Abby Morton Diaz was still young, for she was left to raise two young sons on her own. As an enormously popular writer, mainly of children's books, she seems to have supported herself and her family in somewhat straitened circumstances. The last year of her life, 1904, finds her still advertising a course of lectures in *The Woman's Journal*.⁴¹ At Brook Farm, Diaz met a young Englishwoman named Georgiana Bruce (later Kirby), who had worked as a governess in the home of the Reverend Ezra Stiles Gannett, Kate Gannett Wells' father. Two of Kate's cousins were also living at Brook Farm.⁴²

³⁹ On the WEIU's association with Simmons College, see Laurie Crumpacker, "Beyond Servants and Salesgirls: Working Women's Education in Boston, 1885-1915", in Porter, *Women of the Commonwealth*, pp. 207-32.

⁴⁰ See Mercedes M. Randall, *Improper Bostonian: Emily Greene Balch* (New York: Twayne, 1964), p. 113. Randall makes a similar point about Kehew's social status.

⁴¹ *Woman's Journal* (Saturday, Jan. 9, 1904), p. 11.

⁴² See Lucy M. Freibert, "Creative Women of Brook Farm," in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, ed. by Wendy E. Chmielewski et al. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 79.

Clisby entered this web of social and family ties as a complete outsider. Only a handful of activist Union women had a background that might approach hers in unconventionality. Mary Livermore, for example, had overridden the objections of her father to take a position as a tutor with a family in Virginia in 1839 and had worked for the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. But Livermore, Howe, Diaz, Ednah Dow Cheney and the other WEIU members who were prominent in abolitionist circles were nonetheless solidly rooted in the social milieu of elite Boston. Clisby, with her years in the Australian bush, her travels, her Swedenborgian faith and her career, brought to “organized womanhood,” in the clubwomen’s phrase, a trailblazing spirit that helped to shape an association with distinctly activist leanings and yet which did not fit neatly into a descriptive category.

Clisby’s fragmentary “Reminiscences,” are just about all that she left in the way of a personal record. We do not know the causes or nature of the illness that led her, in October 1878, to resign her position as president of the WEIU. The Annual Report of 1879 says only that her physicians advised her to “suspend all mental labor for the winter.” The Board, however, was reluctant to accept her resignation, which its members succeeded in changing, instead, to a leave of absence. Under Clisby’s leadership, the WEIU, at the end of its first year, could boast a membership that had grown to four hundred, public quarters that housed a reading room and library, a program of instruction, an Employment Bureau and other services for working women.

By December 1880, Clisby had formally resigned. A letter from Cannes, dated December 17, expresses her deep regret at the necessity of her absence. At the inaugural meeting for second president Abby Morton Diaz in February of 1881, several women spoke in tribute to Clisby, among them Mary Safford, who had known her in New York. Safford called her a “grand, fine, earnest, true woman,” with a “spirit of the true philanthropist -- that of beginning in a small way and willing to wait patiently for results.”⁴³ The 1881 Annual Report records only that Clisby departed “hoping to regain her health”.

Clisby did come back in 1882, and although she continued to serve the Union in various capacities, she never again took on the presidency.

⁴³ *Boston Evening Transcript* (February 17, 1881), p. 1.

She saw herself as a mover, not a leader. "I was there," she recalled (perhaps in part by way of apology), "to give birth to *the work* and to start it, but I never had the idea that I was to remain as its presiding officer for any length of time."⁴⁴ In 1885, she went to Geneva, where she founded a "Union des Femmes." She returned to Boston in 1888, and her name figures on the Hygiene and Moral and Spiritual Development Committees until 1894. But she may have spent much time in Europe during that period, which ended with her permanent departure for England and the continent.

Abby Morton Diaz (1821-1904), WEIU president until 1892, was an appropriate successor to Clisby, for she was fired with the spirit of transcendentalism. Diaz's career as a writer of children's books attests to her fundamental belief in the molding of character through education as a response to social problems. To a greater extent than Clisby, she emphasized the "Educational" side of the WEIU. In her presidential address of 1882, she envisioned a Union that would function mainly to prepare women for motherhood.

Character is to a very great degree determined by woman. Is there nothing more to follow? It would seem that so think the oracles. These assert, 'It is a woman's vocation to train up her children,' with a tone of satisfaction, as if this were the end of the matter, whereas it is only the beginning. Why, if so tremendous a responsibility rests with woman, prepare her to meet it. Educate her, enlighten her, bring her up to the highest possible plane morally, intellectually, spiritually, and, by opening to her many avenues of industry, give her the strength which comes of self-helpfulness.⁴⁵

She later repeated this message in her two major writings on women, *A Domestic Problem: Work and Culture in the Household* (1875) and *Only a Flock of Women* (1893). Under her presidency, the Union organized free "Mother's meetings" "to discuss the best methods of

⁴⁴ Clisby, "Reminiscences," pp. 155-56.

⁴⁵ WEIU Annual Report, 1882, pp. 11-12.

training children.”⁴⁶ The idea of these meetings may have been borrowed from the Mother’s Club of Cambridge, started in 1878. But whereas the eight founding members of the Cambridge club were educated young women seeking intellectual stimulation as well as a forum in which to discuss raising their children, the Union’s initiative seems to have had a broader aim of social and moral uplift through education on mothering.⁴⁷

Diaz certainly did not neglect the “Industrial” side of the Union. As early as 1878, she had been instrumental in urging the Protective Committee to help women workers who were being cheated out of their wages. And she had shown such concern about the working conditions of saleswomen that in the following year the Committee delegated her to pressure Union and NEWC members to boycott shops that mistreated their saleswomen. In this tactic, Diaz and the Protective Committee seem to have anticipated the Consumer’s League, which boycotted shops where women were victims of unfair labor practices. The national League, formed in 1899 largely through the efforts of Florence Kelley, is better known than the Massachusetts League, founded a year before. Mary Morton Kehew and John O’Sullivan (husband of Mary Kenney O’Sullivan) were on the organizing committee of the state League.⁴⁸

Diaz, however, consistently advocated “right form” over reform. Perhaps having been obliged to assume sole responsibility for her children made her more acutely aware of the importance of education. Perhaps, in an era that promoted the building of moral character, she wanted to prevent her children and others from committing youthful errors similar to her own. Whatever the reason, she tried to steer the Union away from reform, at least as some conceived it.

Diaz, in her presidential address of 1884, sounded a note of warning against standard forms of charity. To improve social problems through penal reform and similar measures would be, as she put it, to “cipher in the wrong rule.” “We are trying to do a sum in the rule of reform that should be done in the rule of right form, trying to do a sum in the rule of punishment which should be done in the rule of prevention. And, let

⁴⁶ WEIU, Annual Report, 1887, p. 26.

⁴⁷ On the Mother’s Club of Cambridge, see Scott, pp. 121-26.

⁴⁸ Nathan, pp. 69 and 173.

reformers and prison builders strive as they may, the problems of vice and crime will never be solved until the forgotten woman, the character moulder, be brought forward as a factor in the solution."⁴⁹

Diaz's emphasis on prevention, rather than cure, echoed the sentiment of many postbellum reformers. In the wake of the severe depression that hit the nation from 1873 to 1877, charity workers sought a more "scientific" or business-like approach. The Charity Organization Societies that were formed in many northern cities from 1877 on gave little direct financial aid and instituted instead a reconstructed system of "friendly visiting" by moneyed volunteers, generally women, which was designed to educate the poor in self-sufficiency. The societies aimed to eliminate waste and redundancy in whatever funds were dispensed by coordinating the activities of various charities and keeping careful records. The underlying assumption was that the able-bodied poor were responsible for their condition; the remedy, therefore, was a moral education in self-reliance. The methods of the new charity, according to Lori Ginzberg, sharpened class distinctions at the expense of gender solidarity.⁵⁰

In Boston, Annie Fields (a member of the WEIU) was active in forming the Associated Charities in 1879. It operated on many of the same principles as the Charity Organization Societies. Friendly visitors looked to instill the virtues of industry and thrift in the poor, rather than dispense relief. The Associated Charities was tightly organized into district conferences, which included the public and private agencies of the area. The organization streamlined administration, gathered statistics on the poor, and tried to create friendly relations between the social classes.⁵¹

Although Diaz's language of "right form" often comes close to the old discourse of moral uplift borrowed by the new charity, the Union's efforts at community improvement were nonetheless distinct. Gender

⁴⁹ Annual Report, 1884, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Ginzberg, p. 198. On the Charity Organization Societies, see Ginzberg, pp. 196-98, and Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 148-55.

⁵¹ On the Associated Charities, see Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Protestants Against Poverty: Boston's Charities, 1870-1900* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1971), pp. 59-77.

solidarity in the Union provided a strong counterweight to class barriers and tilted the organization toward labor reform and economic justice for women rather than reconstructed charity. When the Associated Charities or the Charity Organization Societies protested that they were not there to dispense charity, they were reflecting a felt need, after the great depression of the 1870s and the devastation of the Civil War, for thrift and caution in dealing with poverty. Diaz may have favored prevention over cure, but the Union's chief goals were to remedy and redress injustice against women and to promote their educational and economic advancement across social class.

These goals were nonetheless not articulated without disagreement. The Protective Committee declared that it wanted to "dispense justice, not to give charity"⁵² only after some dissension within the ranks. Much time was spent in the Committee's early meetings wrestling with the problem of how to get legal advice at little or no cost. In the March 1879 meeting, Abby Morton Diaz reported that one of the lawyers with whom she had met asked either for a small salary or for a percentage on sums recovered from women's wages that had been fraudulently withheld. Julia Sprague suggested that "each person who recovered a sum by our means, should pay us a per cent that they might not be encouraged to too much dependance [sic] on others. Quoted the principles of the Associated Charities. Someone replied that this was not a charity."⁵³ The matter of securing low-cost or free legal help continued to plague the Committee, however. A year later, one of the lawyers appeared before the Committee to argue for taking a percentage from complainants. He wasn't after the money, he said; he wanted to foster self-reliance among the women. The sums involved were so small that any lawyer who took on the cases would, in effect, be performing an act of charity, but he himself, he continued, did not believe in charity. In perplexity, the women tabled the discussion. At the next meeting, justice again won out over charity reform, with the Committee's decision: "the Protective Department shall give its labor free to working women."⁵⁴

⁵² Annual Report, 1879, p. 22.

⁵³ Protective Committee Minutes, March 3, 1879.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1880 and March 8, 1880. Cf. Deutsch, pp. 394-95.

When, under Kehew's presidency in 1898-99, the policy was finally revised to give lawyers a 5% commission, the issues were somewhat different from what they had been two decades before. The Committee felt that it was unfair to expect entirely pro bono work from lawyers "who often themselves had need of compensation." "Too much work is given away for nothing," they said.⁵⁵ After all, there were now women lawyers. More important, the Union was becoming increasingly professionalized with a large staff of paid employees. At the close of Kehew's presidency, there were 290 people on the Union's payroll, and her successor in office, Mary Schenck Woolman, was a paid professional. In the interest of efficiency, all legal services required by the Protective Committee were now to be consolidated with one salaried lawyer. The 5% commission would help to pay him. Clients would be pleased by the new system, the Committee explained, because business could now be transacted more speedily. The Committee also felt more comfortable about assigning what had become a large workload to a paid lawyer, rather than to a volunteer.

Kehew's main interest was labor, not moral reform. One of her major initiatives was to make the various departments self-supporting and to run the Union on a more business-like basis so as to overcome operating deficits. Consignors of handiwork, whose department had split from Food in 1893, for example, were, as of 1899, to be charged a 10% commission on sales during the first year and 15% thereafter, rather than the flat fee which had been levied on them since 1895. By this means, the Union claimed, small sellers would gain an advantage. The plan was "scientific" to a certain extent, but differed from the charity reformers' program of moral training. The Union's aim was to give women the kind of vocational training that would enable them to compete on the capitalist market:

The Committee feel that if after the experimental year a consignor is not able to manufacture at a less cost of time and material, she must recognize that she is unfitted to cope with the business world as represented in the Handiwork sales-room, and therefore find herself unable to meet the payment of 15 per cent required on all sales

⁵⁵ WEIU, Annual Report, 1899, p. 50.

after the first year. In this age of novelties a woman must be ingenious and use her hands and brains at the same time to be successful at making salable articles. It is hoped that all who have consigned in this department for one year have learned something of the relation of hand labor to the general money market.⁵⁶

With Kehew's presidency, we move into a new era for the WEIU, one in which the organization's network would expand much more into the public sphere and would be increasingly inter-institutional. Kehew's active involvement in labor organizing during her presidency distinguished her from her predecessors. By 1905, the Union that she was presiding over had 2,937 members, and its 120 paid employees now belonged to the WEIU's Employees Association.

For all its distance from Clisby's vision of universal communion, the Union had maintained a certain continuity. It offered middle-class women an outlet for practical work in the community, which often skirted older forms of benevolence, but, in general, was geared to improving the conditions of women's lives in concrete ways. Because the Union was institutionally innovative, yet socially conventional, it was able to get things done. Because it actively involved working women as well as the socially elite, it defied simple classification and was able to diversify its activities. Its self-description in 1905 was not far from the truth: "It is a non-resident settlement, a woman's exchange and a woman's club all embodied in one organism; all vitalized by the spirit of social service."⁵⁷ Tentatively and inconsistently, to be sure, by the time of Kehew's assumption of the presidency in 1892, the Union was on its way to establishing itself as one of the nation's first middle-class women's organizations for social justice.

⁵⁶ WEIU, Annual Report, 1899, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁷ Annual Report, 1905, p. 7.