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University of Louisville

Martha Finley's
Fiction For Girls

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts

Department of English

by

Virginia Haggard Rost

Year

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NAME OF STUDENT: Virginia Haggard Rost

TITLE OF THESIS: Martha Finley's
Fiction For Girls

APPROVED BY READING COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF THE
FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

Charles F. Virtue

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NAME OF DIRECTOR: Ernest C. Hassold

DATE: November 5, 1943

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to make an analysis and appraisal of Martha Finley's contribution to children's fiction in the Elsie Dinsmore books from a literary, not a psychological or a sociological point of view.

The books enjoyed a long period of popularity and the first two volumes are still sold in bookstores,¹ yet no careful study of the author's life or her work has been made. An examination of Poole's Index to Periodical Literature, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, and early biographical sketches shows that during Martha Finley's lifetime her work was ignored by contemporary literary critics. No critical magazine articles appeared and biographers gave only unanalytical lists of her books. There is, however, a modern trend toward a critical interest in the books. This criticism represents views from the opposite poles of indiscriminate scorn and indiscriminate praise. The article in the American Authors gives a typical example of the former:

It is difficult to understand how even Victorian children could be persuaded to swallow this

¹ "The total sales of all the books have been somewhat over 5,000,000 copies." (Letter from Mr. E.H.Dodd, December 5, 1935.)

"Copies are still in demand as Christmas presents for old ladies or as gifts from old ladies." (Mr. W.K.Stewart.)

Miss Helen Hoke, author of juvenile fiction, says, "Elsie Dinsmore is even being printed today, and in \$1.75 editions." (The Courier Journal, October 16, 1943.)

compound of sentimentality and masochism and clamor for more. Obedience, piety, and smugness are the keynotes of the volume and Elsie, eternally "bursting into tears", would seem to a present day child what she really is, a nauseous little prig; her dear papa a tyrant of the type of Mrs. Browning's father, with trimmings that make him the silliest sort of caricature of "Southern gentleman". . . A breath of fresh air would have blown the whole lot down. 2

A typical example of the latter, the indiscriminate praise, is a part of a letter which Mrs. Phillis Constable wrote in answer to a request for information about Martha Finley:

That women, girls, and children throughout the length and breadth of the land should be interested in Martha Finley is not to be wondered at when it is known that she is the authoress of the "Elsie Books", for while there are books and books, there are few that have, as do hers, the interesting situations, the pleasing romance, the wise religious suggestion, and pure love making, and better than all, the pure womanly tone. 3

During the last seventeen years a number of magazine articles about the Elsie books have appeared. Miss Honoré Willsie Morrow wrote an appreciative article for The Bookman in 1926 and nominated Elsie Dinsmore as "My Favorite Character in Fiction":

2 Kunitz, Stanley J. and Haycroft, Howard, editors, American Authors, 1600-1900, (New York: H.W. Wilson and Company, 1938), p. 272.

3 Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1939.

Copies of the correspondence appear in the Appendix.

Even now, I can't pick up one of the shabby red books without a return of the old thrill. Not that I ever reread her! That one memory shall remain in shadowy perfection with never a bitter ray of mature judgment to strike and destroy it. . . Although I agree with all you say concerning the literary horrors committed by her creator, the fact remains that no one ever competed in her profound reality to me. . . She is all that best educators and librarians say a child heroine should not be. And for all that, she is immortal, to me and a million others. 4

In 1927 Ruth Suckow published a critical analysis of the series. Although she stated that she had before her "forty volumes" her article refers only to fourteen. The meagre facts she gives are accurate, and her criticism of Martha Finley's philosophy is original and interesting:

Thus, among the lowest there began those teachings destined to spread through the example of our heroine to the highest reaches of the haughty aristocratic Southern society and to bring it later to complete repudiation of the vile doctrine that men are descended from monkeys. 5

In 1932 Miss Amy H. Dowe interviewed Miss G. B. Stern, who considered herself an authority on the Elsie books, and was inspired to write an article which contained many factu-

4 Morrow, Honoré Willsie, "My Favorite Character in Fiction," The Bookman, January, 1926, p. 546.

5 Suckow, Ruth, "Elsie Dinsmore: A Study in Perfection or How Fundamentalism Came to Dixie," The Bookman, October, 1927, pp. 126-133.

al inaccuracies offset by interesting observations. Miss Dowe made of Elsie a "modern child" who trained her father in the way he should go and who anticipated the popular comic strip:

Yet the days of "Bringing Up Father" may have dawned earlier than we suppose. . . How ironical, ~~then~~, to have Miss Finley's books removed from the shelves of public libraries as old-fashioned. 6

The New Yorker published Miss G.B. Stern's criticism in 1936. Miss Stern was thoroughly familiar with the Martha Finley books, but for the purpose of entertainment she deliberately caricatured the climaxes. One striking example of her misconstruction is a scene which will be analyzed in the thesis:⁷

Then papa comes home, and for about three volumes puts little Elsie through it because she won't sing music-hall songs on a Sunday. This is grand reading for the sophisticated adult who can keep his head. During a whole volume she is left sitting on the music stool without food or drink. Ultimately she falls off the music stool, hits her head, is threatened with a convent school, gets brain fever, cuts off her golden curls to be dealt round to remorseful relations, slowly recovers,

6 Dowe, Amy H., "Elsie Finds Herself a Modern Champion; G.B. Stern, English Novelist, Is More of an Authority on Elsie Dinsmore Than Most Americans," Publishers' Weekly, December 31, 1932, pp. 2384-2387.

7 Supra, pp. 52-53.

converts papa, and everything is lovely for the next few volumes. ⁸

This thesis aims at a more accurate and comprehensive study of Martha Finley's contribution to girls' fiction through an investigation based on a study of the background⁹ and analysis of the Elsie Dinsmore books.

Section one relates the background of the author's life and development of fiction for girls to this series.

Section two makes a literary analysis of the Elsie series divided into two parts, the basic books and the sequels. The basic books, Elsie Dinsmore (1886) and Elsie's Holidays at Roseland (1886) which were originally written as one volume, give the basic pattern and outlook for the entire series. The sequels, Elsie's life story, Lulu's life story, and the historical series, are analyzed for what they add to the basic pattern. The analysis centers on two points, the character structure and story movement. The characters are studied as individuals and as groups. The story movement is the plot or line of action used in developing the themes of the story.

⁸ Stern, G.B., "Onward and Upward with the Arts: Elsie Reread" The New Yorker, March 14, 1936, p. 51.

⁹ Finley, Martha, Elsie Dinsmore series 1868-1905. There are twenty-eight volumes, only twenty-six are analyzed. Two of them, Elsie's Winter Trip (1902) and Elsie and Her Loved Ones (1903), are so rare that they were not available for loan even from the Library of Congress.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

MARTHA FINLEY'S LIFE AND LITERARY CAREER

CHAPTER I

MARTHA FINLEY'S LIFE AND LITERARY CAREER

The purpose of this chapter is to assemble the known facts about the life and literary career of Martha Finley so that the resulting portrait may be used as a background for the analysis of her fiction.¹

The material for this study was compiled from four sources; standard encyclopaedias of biographical nature, magazine articles, Martha Finley's books, and correspondence with Martha Finley's publishers and librarians in cities where she had lived.² The encyclopaedic material was meagre, and the magazine articles which were all published after 1926 contained no additional material, as the authors had access only to these same encyclopaedias. Martha Finley's book,³ Mildred Keith, of autobiographical nature, supplied inci-

1 Much of this study does not directly relate to the analysis of the Elsie Dinsmore books, but it is included because it completes an otherwise unavailable biography. The book, Mildred Keith, from which much of the material about Martha Finley's childhood is drawn is "rare and not available for loan" from the Library of Congress. After a delay of two years a copy was procured from a second-hand book store.

2 Copies of this correspondence appear in the Appendix.

3 Finley, Martha, Mildred Keith (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1878).

dents about Martha Finley's girlhood, and the Elsie Dinsmore series⁴ of fictional nature added a few facts in the prefaces and in the content. The correspondence supplied new facts and quoted sources not available otherwise.

Martha Finley, known as the author of the Elsie Dinsmore books, was born April 26, 1828, in Chillicothe, Ohio, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. James Finley. She was of the same generation as three other well-known writers of fiction for girls, Helen Hunt Jackson, Mary Mapes Dodge, and Louisa May⁵ Alcott.

Martha Finley's family was of an old and distinguished American stock on both sides. This background explained her interest in current American events and in American history.

Her paternal ancestors were of an aggressive and progressive nature. They, staunch Presbyterian Scotch, moved from County Armaugh, Ireland, came to America in 1734, and settled near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. John, Martha Finley's ancestor, the eldest of seven sons, was killed by Indians. John's son, Samuel, Martha Finley's grandfather, was educated

4 See Bibliography for complete list.

5 Alcott, Louisa May, (November 29, 1832-March 6, 1888).
Dodge, Mary Mapes, (January 26, 1831-August 21, 1905).
Jackson, Helen Hunt, (October 15, 1830-August 12, 1885).

by his uncle, Dr. Samuel Finley,⁶ a Presbyterian minister, who had established a boarding academy for boys at Nottingham, Maryland. In 1761 Dr. Finley was elected president of the College of New Jersey, now known as Princeton University,⁷ and served in this capacity until his death in 1776. Martha Finley's grandfather, Major Samuel Finley, because of such distinguished service under George Washington in the Revolutionary War, was made "collector of public monies for the northern territory",⁸ where he also received large tracts of land. The family moved westward and laid out the town of Newville, Pennsylvania. Some of this land was in Ohio, and Major Finley moved on to that territory. He became a general in the War of 1812, while his son, James, Martha's father, served as a lieutenant under him. James was graduated from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania and later⁹ studied medicine.

Martha Finley's maternal ancestors were equally noteworthy. Eleanor Butler, the grandmother, was the daughter

⁶ White, James and Company, publisher, (New York: 1901), The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. XI, p. 267.

⁷ Maclean, John, History of the College of New Jersey (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1877), pp. 249-276.

⁸ White, Op.Cit., p. 267.

⁹ Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Librarian, Cecil County Library, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1937.

of one of Pennsylvanis's early legislators, Thomas Butler, the grandson of the Duke of Ormond. Eleanor married James Brown, a descendant of John Brown, the covenantor, who was shot in a personal encounter by Graham of Cloverhouse.¹⁰ Their daughter, Theresa Brown, married her first cousin, Dr. James Brown Finley.

It was to this couple that Martha was born. Soon after her birth the mother died, and Dr. Finley remarried.

The stepmother relationship was often used in Martha Finley's books. This device brought the father and daughter into an unusually close relationship which one critic describes as "masochism".¹¹

When Martha was eight her father decided to leave Chillicothe and establish himself in South Bend, Indiana. Martha Finley used the incident of this trip and those of her life in South Bend as the subject matter of her book, Mildred Keith:

The journey, and that most sickly season, which I have attempted to describe, were all events in my own early childhood. The latter still dwells in my memory as a dreadful dream.

Our family --a large one --were all down

¹⁰ Willard, Frances E. and Livermore, Mary A., A Woman of the Century (New York: Charles Wells Moulton Company, 1893), pp. 290-291.

¹¹ Kunitz, Op.Cit., pp. 272-273.

with fever except my aged grandmother and a little sister of six or seven, and "help could not be had for love or money".

My father, who was a physician, kept up and made his rounds among his town and country patients for days after the fever had attacked him, but was at length compelled to take his bed, and I well remember lying there beside him while neighbors flocked into the room to consult with him about their sick ones at home. 12

Whether any more of the material of Mildred Keith is autobiographical than Martha Finley lists in her preface is actually unknown, but with this much factual material used, it is highly probable that she unconsciously reflected real descriptions of places and attitudes toward persons. This is assumed by Miss Mary Post of South Bend, Indiana:

The book, Mildred Keith, is thought by some to be of autobiographical nature. Some of the characters and incidents are said to be South Bend characters and incidents. 13

There are some circumstances in the life of Martha Finley that are analogous with circumstances in Mildred's life. The fictional Mildred and the real Martha were actually the eldest daughter of a large family. Mr. Keith, the fictional father, and Dr. Finley, the real father, were placed in the same financial and social strata, though the

12 Finley, Martha, Mildred Keith, Preface.

13 Letter from Miss Mary Post, South Bend, Indiana, December 7, 1939.

former was a lawyer and the latter a doctor.

The story begins with the preparation for the trip and the experiences fit in well with what was known of Martha Finley's heritage. The fortune in land the early Finleys had acquired from a grant from General Washington was apparently gone, and this sentence from Mildred Keith may explain the loss:

Riches take wings, and a large family and
unfortunate investments supplied them. . . 14

Dr. Finley's rapidly increasing family had many needs, and there was probably another well established physician in Chillicothe with whom to share a practice. The doctor was of an aggressive family, not content to take the easy route of making the best of things as they were, so he decided to become a pioneer to the newer, but developing, Indiana:

"Can't consider it well enough to be
barely making the two ends meet while a growing
family must be constantly increasing my expenses". . .

"'Nothing venture, nothing have'. I'm
moving to a new country where land is cheap.
I shall invest something in that and hope to
see it increase largely in value as the town
grows." 15

14 Finley, Martha, Op.Cit., p. 252.

15 Ibid., p. 19.

The family were disappointed in their Indiana home. They had left a "substantial brick house standing far back from the street, in the midst of a garden where the grass is velvety green spangled with violets and snowballs and lilacs".¹⁶ After a long and arduous journey of many days they saw their new home in Indiana:

A great dead wall of rough weather boarding broken by one window only and that in the second story, was what met their view as they looked up; down below first a heap of sand, beyond that a wilderness of weeds and brushwood. 17

Poverty was described most convincingly in Mildred Keith, as Martha Finley herself was familiar with it. The industrious pioneer spirit was not daunted by the dismal house, and many hands soon made of it a home:

But little of their heavy furniture had been brought with them from the old home, but its place was partially supplied by turning packing boxes into chintz-covered and cushioned lounges, and toilet tables, whose unsightliness was concealed by dainty drapery. Ingenuity and taste had done wonders in making the house comfortable and attractive at small expense. 18

Establishing religious and educational routine was essential in the new home. The training which Martha's

16 Ibid., p. 6.

17 Ibid., p. 16.

18 Ibid., p. 87.

grandfather had received from devout Dr. Finley, president of Princeton, must have been inherent in the Finley household, as according to the eulogy in Dr. Finley's obituary¹⁹ this was a resolution to which he had adhered:

"As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord", was the resolution with which Mr. and Mrs. Keith had begun their married life.²⁰

In Mildred Keith, on the Sabbath the entire family went to the church which they helped develop with their membership, their prayers, and their labors:

The church membership was as yet very small; Sabbath School ditto. The newly arrived family made an important addition to the ranks of both teachers and scholars.²¹

Education in a pioneer town was obtained with difficulty. Although biographers make only a general statement that Martha Finley was educated in private schools, it is possible that the school was taught by the minister, as in Mildred Keith, and that Martha acted as tutor to her many brothers and sisters, as did the fictional Mildred. It is possible that Finley relatives in Ohio realized that there

¹⁹ Letter from Miss Mary Post, South Bend, Indiana, December 7, 1939.

²⁰ Finley, Martha, Op.Cit., p. 110.

²¹ Ibid., p. 125.

would be little reading material in a backwoods town and sent a box that provided entertainment and amusement for the whole family. The following excerpt not only gives an idea of the value of the reading materials, but also gives an indication of Martha Finley's reading background:

Father, mother, and Mildred made haste to lift and lay aside the papers for further perusal, for newspapers were too rare in those days to be despised even though some weeks old. . .

"Books, oh how delightful!" Cooper's Naval History of the United States... . Scott's works also; those for older folks and his Tales of a Grandfather for the children. 22

Martha Finley gives other evidence of her reading in the Elsie Dinsmore books. She lauds Miss Warner's Wide Wide World as child literature, and she makes use of Bancroft and Lossing's histories as subject matter for many of her books. The Bible is, however, the book with which she is most familiar, and the one from which she quotes most frequently.

Martha Finley reflected in her book, Mildred Reith, little sympathy with the poor and illiterate people of the Indiana town. She had a feeling of superiority:

They are not cultivated people, or very refined, but they're clever folks and kind neighbors; especially in times of sickness; and would feel dreadfully hurt if we should decline their invitations. They are not the sort of people we exchange formal calls with; indeed they never make

22 Ibid., p. 143.

them; but, as mother says, while society here is in the crude state it is now, it will not do to insist upon making associates of those only who are congenial. 23

In the Elsie books Martha Finley eliminated by a romantic setting all necessity for undesirable associates. Everyone was rich and "cultivated".

Martha Finley gave further distinct evidence of her dislike of the townspeople by her characterization of the three uncouth youths who proposed to Mildred Keith. Martha Finley did not marry, and it is possible that she had received similar unsuitable offers of marriage. The first suitor was an egotistical young man who thought any girl would be delighted to win him:

He was the only son of the wealthiest man in the place and, because of his great expectations looked upon by most of the young girls and their mammas as a desirable match. Mildred, however, was of a different opinion, knowing him to be idle, purse proud, vain and conceited. 24

The second suitor received a curt note of rejection. A manual laborer would never be considered as a fit companion for a doctor's daughter:

Nicholas was quite a reader for a man of his station and limited opportunities; his family were proud of his attainments; he even more so; he was given to displaying them on all pos-

23 Ibid., p. 165.

24 Ibid., p. 25.

sible occasions; often wasting a great breath in the charitable effort to enlighten the ignorance of his associates. . . He was a shoemaker by trade. 25

The third suitor the girl really pitied in a superior way. He wrote a miserably misspelled note to which Mildred replied politely, but negatively. She corrected the poorly constructed note which accidentally reached its author's hands:

"Eh! what's this?" as his eye fell on the letter and he recognized his own awkward, ill-shaped hieroglyphics. . . There were some words in pencil along the margin; he held it up to the light and slowly deciphered them.

He was not accustomed to reading writing and this had become slightly blurred; but he made it out clearly at last; a jesting remark about his mistakes in spelling and grammar which were many and glaring. 26

Martha Finley never married and in her books there are evidenced the two probable reasons. First, Mildred Keith's reactions toward the eligible males of the town could have been Martha Finley's own. That she might have married if she had received a suitable proposal is possible. She was not opposed to marriage as an institution, as all of her heroines married. Second, Martha Finley showed in Elsie Dinsmore that the love that she had for her father was

25 Ibid., p. 189.

26 Ibid., p. 227.

too strong and had established an ideal no one could meet. The husbands of the important characters were fatherly gentlemen who never interfered with a devoted father-daughter relationship.

When Martha was twenty-two her father died. Dr. Finley had been not only the town physician, but he had been very active in the educational and religious life of the community. He died on May 20, 1851, and the obituary notice published in a St. Joseph, Michigan, weekly newspaper read in part:

Since his residence here, he has filled various offices of trust both in civil and ecclesiastical life. For many years school commissioner of the county and at a later period until his death, notary public, he performed all the duties devolving upon him honestly and well. For thirty years a professor of religion, he has always been an elder in the Presbyterian Church of this place during the whole term of his residence, holding also at his death the additional office of Superintendent of the Sabbath School connected with the church. 27

The loss of her father must have been a tragic blow to Martha Finley. The place given to fathers in her books on a high pedestal of integrity seems to have been her monument to him.

27 Letter from Miss Mary Post, South Bend, Indiana, December 7, 1939.

Her father's death made it necessary that Martha decide upon a career. She, who had probably acted as tutor for the thirteen young brothers and sisters, selected teaching as her occupation. She entertained her young pupils with tales which were to become the nucleus for her stories, and apparently she began writing at once. In 1853 she sent the manuscript for her first story under the pseudonym, Martha Farquharson, the Gaelic spelling of Finley, to the Baptist Board of Publishers.²⁸ Her venture was successful and this same year she moved from South Bend, to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, and from there to Philadelphia where she continued to teach and write.

Subsequent stories were accepted by the Presbyterian Publishing Company. The titles listed in the United States Catalog reveal the character of these stories: Do Good Library, 9 volumes, Honest Jim Series, 6 volumes, Little Books for Little Readers, 6 volumes, and Pervit's Nest Stories, 12 volumes. These books are all out of print, but a list of the twelve titles of the last series will give an insight as to the specific nature: "Pervit's Nest", "Harry's Fourth of July", "Harry's Ride", "Harry's Walks", "Harry's Little Sister", "Harry's Christmas", "Harry and His Chickens",

²⁸ Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1939.

"Aunt Kitty's Fowls", "Harry's Grandma", "Rose and Bobbie",
 "Harry at Aunt Jane's", and "Harry and His Cousins".²⁹

Success with these Sunday School publications encouraged Martha Finley to enter the field of novel writing. In 1867 her first child's book Cassela was published. In that same year she began writing Elsie Dinsmore, which, due to its great length, was published in 1868 in two volumes.

In a letter from Martha Finley's publishing house, Dodd, Mead and Company, Mr. E. H. Dodd, Jr., stated that his grandfather advised the division of the story:

The original volume of Elsie Dinsmore was twice as long as the one first published. My great-grandfather, Mr. Moses Dodd, advised the author to cut it in half and publish the latter half as the second volume in the series. 30

After writing another juvenile book in 1870 called Old Fashioned Boy and an adult novel, Wanted a Pedigree, neither of which was successful, Martha Finley listened to a demanding public and furthered the Elsie series. In the next book, Elsie's Girlhood, which was published in 1872, she stated in the preface:

"Some years have elapsed since my little heroine, Elsie Dinsmore, made her debut into the great world. She was sent out with many an

²⁹ Wilson, H.W. and Company publishers-United States Catalog (Minneapolis and New York, 1912).

³⁰ Letter from Mr. E.H.Dodd, Jr., New York, December 6, 1939.

anxious thought regarding the reception that might await her there. But she was kindly received, and such has been the favor shown her ever since, that the publishers and author have felt encouraged to prepare a new volume in which will be found the story of those years that have carried Elsie on from childhood to womanhood--the years in which her character was developing, and mind and body were growing and strengthening for the real work and battle of life.

May my readers who have admired and loved her from a child find her still more charming in her fresh young girlhood; may she prove to all a pleasant companion and friend; and to those of them now treading the same portion of life's pathway a useful example, also particularly in her filial love and obedience.³¹

This was followed in 1875 by Elsie's Womanhood and in 1876 by Elsie's Motherhood. These books were a great success and in 1876, after visiting with her cousin in the town of Elkton, Maryland, Martha Finley decided to make this place her home. Here she purchased a beautiful small residence in the most aristocratic part of the village, and, financially able to be relieved of teaching, she devoted
32
all her time to writing.

Martha Finley tried her hand again at adult fiction. In 1878 a novel called Signing a Contract and What It Cost was published. This same year, believing that the public must be tired of her brain child Elsie Dinsmore, her publish-

³¹ Finley, Martha, Elsie's Girlhood (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1872), Preface.

³² Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1939.

er suggested that she create a new character for child
³³
 readers. As a result a new heroine appeared named Mildred
 Keith.

Mildred Keith enjoyed moderate success, Martha Finley
 launched this new series and patterned the titles after
 the successful Elsie books. In 1879 Mildred at Roselands
 appeared, titles similarly to Elsie's Holiday at Roselands,
 and the second half of Elsie Dinsmore. Popular demand caused
 the author to return to what she considered would be the
 very end of the Elsie series and in 1880 Elsie's Widowhood
 appeared with this prefatory explanation:

. . . The public made the title and demanded
 the book; and the public, I am told is autocratic. 34

A Thorn in the Nest, another try at adult fiction,
 was published in 1880 and was followed in 1881 by Mildred
and Elsie, a new addition to the Mildred series which seems
 like an attempt to combine the more realistic Mildred with
 the idealized Elsie. Continued popular demand for the Elsie
 books brought forth in 1882 Grandmother Elsie.

33 Dowe, Amy H., "Elsie Finds a Modern Champion;
 G.B. Stern, English Novelist Is More of an Authority on
 Elsie Dinsmore Than Most Americans," Publishers' Weekly,
 December 31, 1932.

34 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Widowhood (New York:
 Dodd, Mead and Company, 1880).

It must have been about this time that the editor of a large daily paper remarked, "For God's sake give us something besides Elsie".³⁵ Martha Finley must have been influenced by this statement. The name Elsie continued to appear on the cover, but the heroine was changed to a little girl named Lulu.

Martha Finley's work was pleasing the public, if not the newspaper editor, so the effervescent Elsie books and the Mildred series continued on side by side through the years.³⁶

In 1891 the copyright law was passed and in 1893 all of Martha Finley's previous works were copyrighted. Until this date the publishers paid Martha Finley "only what they saw fit", but after this date Martha Finley received royalty.³⁷ The Tragedy of Wild River Valley which appeared in 1893 was Martha Finley's last venture in adult fiction. Elsie at the World's Fair appeared in 1894, followed by Elsie's Journey

³⁵ Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1939.

³⁶ 1882 Mildred's Married Life, 1883 Elsie's New Relations, 1884 Elsie at Nantucket, 1885 The Two Elsie's, 1886 Mildred's Boys and Girls, 1889 Mildred's Friends at Woodlawn, 1888 Christmas with Grandmother Elsie, 1889 Elsie and the Raymonds, 1889 Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds, 1891 Elsie's Winter Trip, 1891 Elsie's Loved Ones, 1892 Elsie's Vacation, 1893 Elsie at Ion. In 1894 Mildred's New Daughter marked the last of the Mildred series.

³⁷ Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1939.

on Island Waters 1894, Elsie at Home 1897, Elsie on the Hudson 1898, Elsie in the South 1899, Elsie's Young Folks 1900, Elsie's Winter Trip 1902, Elsie and Her Loved Ones 1903, and Elsie and Her Namesake 1905. The seemingly endless stream of Elsie books came to an end after thirty-seven successful years. The Elsie books had not only been "best sellers, but perpetual best sellers".³⁸ This same year Martha Finley closed a long and successful career with the publication of Twiddledewit, her only venture into humor.

Throughout Martha Finley's fiction there is evidence of political and social interest. She devoted entire volumes to such topics as the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, the World's Fair, and the Spanish-American War. She projected her beliefs about the evils of drinking, smoking, and gambling. Her opinion of woman's suffrage was given through the medium of Elsie:

"I have no desire to vote myself; but I think only native born citizens, or those who have been twenty-one years in the country, should have a vote, and not even they unless able to read and write, capable of understanding our form of government, and possessed of some little property, --that last in order that they may appreciate more fully the burden of taxation, and be less ready to make them heavier than need be." 39

³⁸ Letter from Mrs. Phillis Constable, Elkton, Maryland, January 22, 1939.

³⁹ Finley, Martha, Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1890), pp. 146-147.

Little is actually known of Martha Finley's experiences during the time she was writing. A few clues are given in her texts. In the preface of Elsie at Nantucket she told that she spent a summer on Nantucket Island in 1880. She was then fifty-two years old. The summer was pleasant and proved to be profitable as she used her experiences in a book:

Three years ago I spent some six weeks on Nantucket Island, making the town of the same name my headquarters, but visiting other points of interest, to which I take characters of my story; so that in describing the pleasures of a sojourn there during our heated term, I write from experiences; though in addition to my own notes, I have made use of Northey's "'Sconset Cottage Life" to refresh my memory and to assist me in giving a correct idea of the life led by summer visitors who take up their abode for the season in one of those odd little dwellings which form the "original 'Sconset".

Should my accounts of the delights of Nantucket as a summer resort lead any of my readers to try it for themselves, I trust they will not meet with disappointment or find my picture overdrawn. 40

In 1890, when Martha Finley was sixty-one, she gave, perhaps unconsciously, an incident in her life beginning with a "Prefatory Note" in Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds:

The author, having received many letters from young and interested readers, has decided to acknowledge them in this way, because feeble health and much work for her publishers make it impossible to write a reply to each gratifying epistle. 41

40 Finley, Martha, Elsie at Nantucket (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1884), Preface.

41 Finley, Martha, Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1890), Preface.

In the next volume Elsie, who was then about Martha Finley's age, had a very serious illness from which it was doubtful that she would recover:

She had learned that it was far more serious than she had supposed; that, in fact, her only escape from sure and speedy death lay in submission to a difficult and dangerous surgical operation. 42

The incident had a happy ending as the character, Elsie, recovered, and so did Martha Finley who lived twenty years longer.

On January 30, 1909 this obituary appeared in the South Bend Daily Times:

Elkton, Maryland, January 30. After a lingering illness, Miss Martha Finley died at her home here today, aged 80 years. She was one of the best known authoresses in the country, and her fame as the writer of the "Elsie books" has spread to many foreign lands. 43

This sketch of Martha Finley's life shows that although she is known as the author of juvenile fiction, throughout her life she alternated the writing of books for girls with more pretentious adult fiction. To be recognized as

42 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Vacation (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1891), p. 139.

43 Letter from Miss Mary Post, South Bend, Indiana, December 7, 1939.

the author of adult fiction must have been her goal, as she consistently returned to it after unsuccessful efforts. But it was as the author of children's books that she won fame and fortune.

Her girls' fiction was of two types: the realistic Mildred series which was autobiographical in nature, and the idealistic Elsie Dinsmore series. The realistic works were unsuccessful, but the idealistic series met an imaginative public's approval. An obituary published in the New York Times stated tersely, "among her best known works were the ⁴⁴'Elsie Books'".

⁴⁴ Letter from Mr. Paul Rice, Librarian, New York City, December 11, 1939.

CHAPTER II

OUTLINE OF AMERICAN FICTION FOR GIRLS
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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This chapter gives a brief outline of the background and trends of the development of girls' fiction in America through the nineteenth century. It sketches, first, the development of girls' stories in England and America from 1722 to 1830, secondly, the influence of English trends upon American writers of girls' stories between the years 1830 and 1860, and last, the enlargement of the scope of girls' fiction after 1860. The historical development of American fiction for girls still awaits scholarly consideration. The material for this study is taken from secondary sources. Miss Halsey's Forgotten Books of the American Nursery¹ is the best guide for the development of children's fiction through 1850, and the one used by Mr. Tassin in his discussion of the early history of children's books² in the Cambridge History of American Literature. Biographies and books by individual authors piece out this picture after 1850.

¹ Halsey, Rosalie V., Forgotten Books of the American Nursery (Boston: Charles E. Goodspeed and Company, 1911).

² Tassin, Algernon, "Books for Children," The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. II, pp. 396-409.

Records of books written especially for girls are rare. In 1736 Thomas Fleet of Boston printed a chap-book, a religious tract intended to put the fear of the Lord in the hearts of girls, called The Prodigal Daughter.³

In 1745 John Newbery of London, England conceived the idea of writing stories for children intended for amusement as well as religious instruction. He placed his emphasis on worldly welfare; good was rewarded with power and wealth, and evil was punished with poverty and death. The books were popular in England and found their way to American bookshelves.

It became common practice to reprint the Newbery books in America. In 1762 Zecarial Towle printed a Newbery book called A New Gift for Children. In this book, which contained stories for both boys and girls, a story for girls called "The Generosity of Confessing a Fault" told of a father improving his little girl's mind and of the intense love he had for her:

Miss Fanny Goodwill was one of the prettiest children that was ever seen; her temper was as sweet as her looks. . . Her papa and her mama loved

³ This story, The Prodigal Daughter, written in Psalm meter, told of a proud, vain girl who planned to poison her parents, because they were unsympathetic with her extravagances. The parents were warned by the angels of her intentions, and the daughter, discovered in her intent, swooned and died. At her funeral a sermon was preached, All other wicked children for to teach. . . (Halsey, p.25.)

her dearly and took great care to improve her mind. . . her papa was sitting by the fire, he set her upon his knee, kiss'd her, and told her how very much he loved her. . . "You are very good, my little charmer," said her papa and kiss'd her again. 4

John Mein, a Boston bookseller, who started "the⁵ earliest circulating library" in 1767 and advertised with a list of children's books, the story of "Wrax, or the Fair Wanderer" - price eight pence lawful money. A very interesting tale in which the protection of the Almighty is proved to be the chief support of the Female Sex".⁶ The ideas in these⁷ stories were used by writers for many years.

The first stories for girls with elements of real plot were the abridged editions of the adult fiction Pamela and⁸ Clarissa Harlowe, "aimed to emphasize virtue in the end" published in England in 1772. The edition of Clarissa which found its way to American booksellers was a volume condensed from its original seven volumes to one hundred seventy-six pages with several illustrations. The influence of this story

4 Halsey, Op.Cit., p.75.

5 Ibid., p. 73.

6 Ibid., p. 74.

7 One hundred years later Martha Finley combined the ideas of earlier writers in her books, She rewarded the good and punished the bad. Her heroine's father "took great care to improve her mind" and "kiss'd her. . .and kiss'd her again", and the heroine often called upon the "protection of the Almighty " in her many hours of need.

8 Ibid., p. 78.

was felt in American fiction for girls for over a hundred
⁹ years. The death scene had particular appeal:

Clarissa. . . gave orders in relation to her body, directing her nurse and maid of the house as soon as she was cold to put her in her coffin, He saw the colonel kneeling by her bedside with the ladies right hand in both his, which his face covered bathing it in tears, though she had just been endeavoring to comfort him, in noble elevated strains. ¹⁰

During the Revolution, paper was scarce and people were too concerned with the actualities of war to be interested in fiction; hence little was written or printed. After the war Americans were prejudiced against British goods.

By 1790, however, new children's fiction designed to instruct both boys and girls was again coming from England. Mrs. Sarah Trimmer's works "were credited with much information they did not give".¹¹ Thomas Day's books must have been in Samuel Johnson's mind when he said, "the parents buy the books, but the children never read them",¹² and Mrs. Barbauld¹³ "was the object of Charles Lamb's particular detestations."

⁹ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰ Martha Finley uses the portrayal of a "lordly husband and father", and the death scene with the penitent father standing at the bedside of a dying heroine who had bequeathed all her belongings to her family.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 128.

¹² Ibid., p. 129.

¹³ Ibid., p. 141.

There was beginning in England a movement which was to influence American literature very greatly. Sabbath Schools were being established to provide instruction for child day laborers who could not otherwise attend school. In 1791 the first day School was opened in Philadelphia. Good Bishop White was disturbed by the children's noise during the church service on Sunday, so he opened two sessions of this school on Sunday to occupy the children's minds and to keep them from annoying his congregation. The Bible was used as a reader, and the teachers were regularly paid. The Sunday Schools in both America and England were designed to instruct, and books which would provide suitable reading were used in the libraries.

Fiction for girls began to develop in England and America. In the early part of the nineteenth century Miss Hannah More began to write stories to be used in the Sunday School. Her heroines were moral and very religious:

Miss More's influence upon the character of Sunday School books in England undoubtedly did much to incline many unknown American women of the nineteenth century to take up the class of books as their own field for religious effort and pecuniary profit. 14

Miss More's followers made a few excursions into a

14 Ibid., p. 153.

land of realism and the books of too didactic a nature were
¹⁵
soon forgotten.

Contemporary with Hannah More, Marie Edgeworth began writing in a more realistic vein. She combined the moral story with stories of children's real activities.

The first step toward girls' fiction in America was pioneered by the Sunday School Union, an outgrowth of several religious publication societies. Hundreds of stories were turned out. Two themes, one about the good Christian child
¹⁶
who died after converting his parents, and the other about a wicked unchristian child who found suitable punishment in the end, were used in all this material:

The one good child, a constant attendant upon Sabbath School and Divine Worship, but who died young after converting parents or worldly friend during a powerful illness; the other of unregenerate youth, who turned away from the godly admonition of mother and clergyman, refused to attend Sunday School and consequently fell into evil ways leading to the thief's or drunkard's grave. ¹⁷

American development followed the English pattern. By 1830 four American women had gained recognition as authors

¹⁵ The story written during this period which did live, but which did not influence development of children's fiction in America, was a rhymed tale entitled "A Visit from St. Nicholas" and composed by Clement Clarke Moore, son of the president of Columbia College, for the entertainment of his own family. (Halsey, pp. 147-148.)

¹⁶ Martha Finley used this theme with a slight deviation. Her heroine did not die.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 203.

of children's literature. Mrs. Samuel Hale wrote the poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb", Miss Eliza Leslie wrote American Girls Own Book which preserved early games, Mrs. Sherwood wrote Heston of Susan Gray, and Miss Catherine Sedgwick wrote The Fairchild Family. Writing had become a profitable occupation for American women. America no longer had to get literature for children from England.

In 1850 Susan Warner published her Wide Wide World in two volumes, a story often considered the best story for girls through that date. It was a didactic story, but the heroine was full of life and fun and sometimes even flirted, indicating a turn toward modernism. During the same year Miss Martha Finley began writing for the Sunday School publications.

During the years 1860 through 1900 American women began to enlarge the field of girls' fiction. The most famous author of the period was Miss Louisa May Alcott who contributed domestic realism to girls' stories. The realism was introduced through Miss Alcott's characters who were patterned after members of her own family and through the incidents which were happening in her own life:

Louisa put into it everything out of her own life and those of her sisters. . . Without her intending it, all the scenes which she described seemed to center about the brown hillside house where they had begun to live when

she was thirteen and where she had spent her happiest years. ¹⁸

Miss Alcott's contribution in popular realistic fiction for girls was so popular that she was urged to write sequels to the story. Little Men was published in 1871 and many years later Jo's Boys followed in 1886.

This success in realistic fiction for girls influenced ¹⁹ Miss Alcott's friend, Miss Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, who used the pen name "Susan Coolidge" to write a similar realistic series, the "What Katy Did" series, which were published ²⁰ during the years 1872 through 1875.

Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson made another type of contribution to American fiction for girls. She advanced the realistic story by making it one intended to help solve a national problem. During her residence in Colorado Springs she became incensed over the treatment of American Indians by Americans. In 1875 she wrote Ramona, an intensely sincere story intended to fictionize the Indian's plight.

Mary Mapes Dodge opened still another field for boys' and girls' fiction. She enlarged the scope of realism to

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 207

¹⁹ Woolsey, Sarah Chauncey (January 29, 1835-April 9, 1905).

²⁰ Kunitz, Stanley J. and Haycroft, Howard, American Authors. (New York: H.W. Wilson and Company, 1938), p. 836.

embrace a feeling of internationalism. Her Hans Brinker, published in 1863, was such a true picture of Holland that²¹ even the Dutch accepted it as authentic.

The author of Hans Brinker was one of the few American women to win the French Academy award of the Montyon literary prize. The book has been printed "in more than one hundred²² editions and a half dozen languages".

While these other women of her generation enlarged the scope of fiction for girls by going beyond the Sunday School story, Martha Finley made her contribution by enlarging the scope of the Sunday School story itself. She expanded an evangelical didactic story of a girl into a serial, even a number of serials, and added stories of travel, history, and current events. While she never abandoned the religious spirit in which her first stories were written, she placed a growing emphasis on worldly wisdom which prepared the way for a girls' classic of the next generation, Mrs. Annie Fellows Johnson's Little Colonel.

Martha Finley's contribution is analyzed in the next section.

²¹ Howard, Alice B., Mary Mapes Dodge of St. Nicholas (new York: Junior Literary Guild and Julian Messner Inc., 1943).

²² Howard, Op.Cit., p. 117.

SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE BASIC BOOKS

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ANALYSIS OF THE BASIC BOOKS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the basic books about Elsie, Elsie Dinsmore (1868) and Elsie's Holiday's at Roseland (1868), in terms of character structure and story movement.

Character Structure

An analysis of the character structure of these books shows that the characters are grouped according to their relationship with Elsie. They are presented as being either sympathetic or antagonistic toward Elsie's evangelical Christian principles.

Elsie, aged eight, Christlike proponent of goodness and the religious way of life is the central figure of the story. Bestowed upon this heroine is everything for which the author could have wished. Elsie had fabulous wealth, beauty, wisdom, and musical talent. Her home was Roselands, a palatial mansion of the "old fashioned days prior to the Revolution".¹ It was located in the South. Martha

¹ Finley, Martha, Elsie Dinsmore (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1868), p. 7.

Finley was never very definite about the location. Elsie was "extremely beautiful and heiress to such an immense fortune"² and wore a "miniature set in diamonds. . . suspended by a gold chain around her neck"³. She was "remarkably intelligent as well as remarkably pretty"⁴ and had a "natural talent for books. . . and had read more and with much more thought than had other children of her age"⁵. Her musical ability was unusual as "she had a very fine voice for a child of her age; its sweetness was remarkable".⁶

Elsie's most outstanding characteristic was her love for and obedience to the teachings of the Bible, which had been imbedded by a Scotch nurse. At every opportunity she "took out a small pocket Bible, which bore marks of frequent use":⁷

And young as Elsie was, she had already a very lovely and well developed Christian character. Though not a remarkably precocious child in other respects she seemed to have very clear and correct views on almost every subject connected with her duty to God and her neighbor; was very truthful, both in word

2 Ibid., p. 24.

3 Ibid., p. 21.

4 Ibid., p. 33.

5 Ibid., p. 73.

6 Ibid., p. 70.

7 Ibid., p. 17.

and deed, very strict in her observance of the Sabbath.⁸

Unfortunately, these very qualities which Elsie possessed, her worldly, physical, and spiritual endowments made her a very unpopular member of the family. Elsie's father had left for Europe before Elsie's birth, and a grief-stricken mother had died shortly after giving Elsie life. The little girl had been sent to live in her paternal grandfather's home where she was an unwelcome addition to the household. Jealousy of her wealth, misunderstanding of her faith in the words of the Bible, and misinterpretations of her acts caused the child many trying moments:

She had learned to yield readily to others, and when fretted or saddened by unjust or unkind treatment, a few moments alone with her precious Bible and her loved Saviour made all right again, "and she would come from these sweet communings looking as serenely happy as if she had never known annoyance".⁹

Elsie had two real friends, Rose and Chloe, who brightened her life. They sympathized with the lonely child and shared her love and understanding of the Bible. Miss Rose Allison, a guest from the North, offered Elsie understanding companionship.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

Chloe "was entirely Elsie's servant, having no other business than to wait upon her and take care of her clothing and her room".¹⁰ Chloe, "entirely uneducated, was a simple minded Christian"¹¹ who provided a haven for Elsie when conflicting forces seemed to close in. Chloe "was never willing to leave her nursling, but watched over her night and day with most devoted affection".¹²

No one member of Elsie's family was entirely sympathetic with her. There was a feeling or discordance in some way because of either her parentage, her wealth, or of her love of the Bible.

Grandfather, stern patriarchal head of the family, had banished Elsie's father to Europe when he heard of his marriage and, consequently, had no love for Elsie:

Mr. Dinsmore, though her own grandfather, treated her with entire neglect, seemed to have not the slightest affection for her, and usually spoke of her as "old Grayson's grandchild".¹³

Mr. Dinsmore excused his own children's disobedience as being the result of high spirits and condemned Elsie's

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 35

¹² Ibid., p. 33.

¹³ Ibid., p. 36.

meekness by saying, "There is always something mean and spirited and cowardly in always giving up to other people".¹⁴

Mrs. Dinsmore really disliked Elsie. She was Elsie's step-grandmother. When Elsie first came to her home she called Mrs. Dinsmore "Grandmother". But as Mrs. Dinsmore had never liked Elsie's father, she would not allow the child to address her so. She was quite resentful of Elsie as she knew "Elsie was extremely beautiful and heiress to a large fortune",¹⁵ and she felt that the child would "one of these days, quite eclipse her younger daughter".¹⁶ Her outspoken criticism was¹⁷ that "Elsie is a naughty, mean, stingy girl".

Miss Day, the governess of the Dinsmore children, caused Elsie many heartaches. She was a narrow-minded individual who reflected the antagonism that she felt Mr. and Mrs. Dinsmore showed Elsie. She was the overbearing tyrant of the schoolroom and exercised her authority relentlessly. Miss Day unjustly criticized and accused Elsie, boxed her ears, and saw that pleasures accorded the other children were denied Elsie.

14 Ibid., p. 36.

15 Ibid., p. 24.

16 Ibid., p. 24.

17 Ibid., p. 51.

She was always more severe with Elsie than any other of her pupils. . . and determined to vent her displeasure on her innocent victim. 18

Arthur, a young uncle, "who was not really very vicious", was a very undisciplined antagonist of Elsie. . . He gave numerous nefarious performances with his tormenting, lying, stealing, and cheating which were upheld by his parents. His activities supplied excellent opportunities for Elsie to display her qualities of goodness and forgiveness for "Elsie often bore the blame of his faults".²⁰

Second only to Arthur in vindictiveness stood Enna, a little younger than Elsie, and the spoiled baby of the Dinsmore family. She aided Arthur in keeping the action of the story going at a rapid pace. Enna was a completely selfish child greatly loved by her mother and father who considered her mischief-making ways bright and clever.

The four other children of the Dinsmore family, Louise, Lora, Walter, and Adelaide, played relatively minor roles in the story. None had any religious inclinations. Louise loved to threaten Elsie maliciously with such ideas

18 Ibid., pp. 13, 17.

19 Ibid., p. 11.

20 Ibid., p. 46.

as cutting off her hands. Lora and Walter Dinsmore, who were near Arthur's age, were not actively antagonistic. Lora defended Elsie when she was unjustly accused, and Walter never planned an escapade, merely followed Arthur's leadership. Adelaide Dinsmore, the eldest child of the family, often felt sympathetic toward Elsie when she was mistreated by other members of the family. Adelaide admired, but she did not understand Elsie's intense love of the Bible:

. . . Said Adelaide musingly, . . . "Elsie is certainly very different from the rest of us, and if it is piety that makes her what she is, I think piety is a very lovely thing". 21

Elsie was more popular with her neighbors than with members of her own family. Lucy Carrington, who lived on a nearby estate, was the antithesis of Elsie. When Elsie prayed and cried, Lucy played and laughed. There was much love and affection among the members of the Carrington family, but there was no religious training. Mrs. Travilla, a motherly neighbor, was kind and sympathetic to Elsie in every way:

Mrs. Travilla was an earnest Christian and the lady and the little girl were not long in discovering the tie which existed between them. 22

Mrs. Travilla's son, Edward, was a schoolmate of

21 Ibid., p. 46.

22 Ibid., p. 87.

Elsie's father, and a most sympathetic character. He had an understanding of Elsie's firm belief in the teachings of the Bible, and he and Elsie shared a common love of music. He found Elsie so attractive that he jokingly asked her to make her home with him and his mother:

"We both think there are children enough at Roselands without you; and so your papa has given you to me; and you are to be my little girl, and call me papa in the future." 23

Martha Finley's entire characterization of people who are near Elsie is a picture of balanced contrasts. In the home are two sympathetic friends, Rose and Chloe, who counter-balance the unsympathetic Mr. and Mrs. Dinsmore and Miss Day. Three antagonistic children, Arthur, Enna, and Louise, are offset by the friendlier Adelaide, Lora, and Walter. Lucy, the unchristian little neighbor, contrasts with the Christian spirited Mrs. Travilla and her son. Elsie's father, however, the person nearest and dearest to Elsie's heart, offers the greatest contrast.

Impulsive and headstrong, Mr. Horace Dinsmore had secretly married Elsie's mother when he was only seventeen. His disapproving father had sent him off to Europe where he had spent the last eight years. Much of this time had been

23 Ibid., p. 89.

spent in England where he had learned some of the newer trends in education.

Steeped with all this newer knowledge, and, through the medium of letters convinced that his early marriage was a shameful piece of boyish folly and that his little girl was a Christian hypocrite, proud and haughty Horace Dinsmore came home:

Years of study, travel, and worldly pleasures had almost banished his wife's image from his mind, and he seldom thought of her except in connection with the child for whom he felt a secret dislike. 24

THE STORY MOVEMENT

Elsie is engaged in two sets of conflicts, one with the unfriendly members of the family and the other with a father who is a stranger.

The incidents of the second conflict are more real than the stereotyped incidents of the first which concern mainly the activities of the schoolroom and of childish amusement. There is more intensity, suspense, and sense of the ominous in the second conflict which leads to the two climaxes.

The two climaxes, one at the end of each volume mark the movement of the story. In volume one the series of conflicts lead to Elsie's fall from the piano stool, and in the

24 Ibid., p. 61.

second volume continued complexities lead to Elsie's almost fatal illness.

The story opened with a lonely misunderstood Elsie anxiously awaiting the arrival of a father she had never seen, a father adversely prejudiced against his daughter by letters from his family. Word had finally come to Elsie that the long-awaited father had arrived:

She seemed wild with delight; but suddenly sobered down, and a look of care stole over the little figure as the torturing question recurred to her mind, "Will he love me?" . . . She leaned against the wall, her heart throbbing so wildly she could scarcely breathe. So overwrought were the child's feelings that she nearly fainted. . . . She saw a stranger standing before her. . . . Taking her hand, he stooped and coldly kissed her lips. He held her cold and clammy hand for an instant, at the same time gazing searchingly into her face, then dropped it and said in a tone of displeasure, "I am not an ogre that you need be afraid of me, but there, you may go; I will not keep you any longer".

She rushed away to her room and throwing herself upon the bed wept long and wildly . . .

"O mammy! ask Him to take me to Himself, and to Mamma-- for oh! I am very lonely and I want to die." 25

This minor drama occurred in chapter three, following conflicts with Arthur's and Miss Day's patriarchal ideas, and after Miss Rose, Elsie's kindred spirited friend, had left for her home in the North.

25 Ibid., pp. 62,63,65.

Tragically, the story continued. The next morning, in contrast with his lack of affection for his daughter, Mr. Dinsmore kissed Enna, a young sister whom he had never seen before, and hugged her in his arms. He looked at Elsie as she stood looking at them, her large soft eyes full of tears. She could not help feeling that Enna had her place and was receiving caresses that could be lavished on herself:

"Jealous", thought her father; "I cannot bear jealous people," and he gave her a look of displeasure that cut to the heart, and she turned away quickly to hide the tears she could no longer keep back. 26

Elsie's father noticed her only when he wanted to display his newly acquired worldly wisdom. He gave Elsie orders about eating proper foods, getting the right amount of rest, reading suitable books, and keeping an accurate account of her pocket money. He continued to lavish caresses upon Enna, and Elsie continued to "rush away to her room to weep and
27
mourn in secret". The constant crying greatly irritated Mr. Dinsmore.

If Elsie could have absorbed some of Chloe's comforting philosophy she would have been much happier:

"Don't appear so sorrowful, darling," Chloe sometimes said to Elsie, "try to be merry like Miss

26 Ibid., p. 68.

27 Ibid., p. 68.

Enna, and run and jump on Massa Horace's knee, and den I think he will like you better." 28

Finally, Elsie's unquestioned obedience to her father's commands about eating proper foods, getting the right amount of rest, learning her lessons, reading good books, and keeping her accounts coupled with Mr. Travilla's obvious admiration for the child began to have some favorable effect upon Mr. Dinsmore's opinion of Elsie.

Mr. Dinsmore demonstrated again and again that his worldly wisdom was important. He warned Elsie about the danger of playing in the meadow. But one day when she and her friend Lucy were "shooting arrows here and there" one flew out into the meadow. Elsie, not thinking, ran out to get it. She immediately confessed her wrong doing to her papa. When papa understood the circumstances he punished Elsie by sending her to bed and "kissing her brow and then her lips".³⁰ The next morning he showed the little girl a huge rattlesnake he had killed in the meadow, and emphasized that papa always knew best:

"Oh, papa!" she murmured, in a low tone of deep feeling, laying her cheek affectionately against his hand. "I might have lost my life

28 Ibid., p. 79.

29 Ibid., p. 99.

30 Ibid., p. 103.

by my disobedience. How good God was to take care of me! Oh, I hope I'll never be so naughty again".

"I hope not," said he gravely, but not unkindly, "and I hope that you will always, after this, believe that your father has some good reason for his commands, even though he may not choose to explain to you." 31

When Lucy asked Elsie where she had been the previous evening, Lucy criticized Mr. Dinsmore, and Elsie who now fully understood the value of her papa's wisdom reprimanded her. Unfortunately, no sooner was the father's affection apparent and the child had received a few kind words of commendation than some unforeseen and unintentional act would cause an unfavorable reaction. Elsie never complained, never blamed her father, even in her heart; but in deep humility thought it was all because she was so very naughty or careless; and she was continually making resolutions to be "Oh! so careful to do just right and please dear papa that he might some day learn to love me".³²

Martha Finley did not realize it, but she made Elsie a pre-devotee of that famous psychologist, Dr. Coué, who advocated that if one repeated a wishful thought often enough it would become a fact. Elsie's first question was, "Will

31 Ibid., p. 104.

32 Ibid., p. 149.

my papa love me?", and then, in the face of continued contrary acts, reiterated and answer constantly, "He loves me, I know my papa loves me", or "My papa loves me very dearly". Every ill adventure was climaxed by that comforting thought. No matter what Mr. Dinsmore's punishment might be, Elsie "longed to throw herself into his arms and tell him how very ³³ dearly she loved him".

Real trouble began to brew for Elsie one peaceful Sunday afternoon when papa was not at home. Troublesome little Enna demanded that Elsie tell her a fairy tale. A counter offer of a Bible story did not satisfy the fractious Enna, and Grandpa Dinsmore attempted to force Elsie to comply with Enna's will. Surprisingly, when Elsie's father heard her story and, coupled with the anger and resentment at having another correct his child, she won her father's favor, and he inflicted the delightful punishment of having her learn the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of John's gospel:

"O papa! what a nice lesson!" she exclaimed, looking up delightedly into his face; "but it won't be any punishment, because I love these chapters dearly, and have read them so often that I know every word already." ³⁴

³³ Ibid., p. 180.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 227.

Then papa further punished Elsie by sending to her room all previously forbidden food, hot buttered muffins, a cup of jelly, another of hot coffee, and a piece of boiled chicken. 35

Surely, thinks a reader of this story, all of Elsie's troubles are over, but Martha Finley preludes a climax by this artistic touch at the end of the ninth chapter:

A shadow had fallen on her pathway, faint but perceptible; a light fleecy cloud obscured the brightness of her sun; yet it was not for some weeks that even the most distant mutterings of the coming storm could be heard. 36

And the introductory quotation from the Bible hints of the nature of the forthcoming tragic event:

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable, and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own way, not finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. Isaiah LVIII, 37

Martha Finley's understanding of the psychology of human weakness is adequately demonstrated. Elsie's papa could forgive Elsie when she failed to comply with Enna's desire for a fairy story on the Sabbath, and this forgiveness was strengthened by opposition. Great anger, however, was the result of Elsie's religious beliefs interfering

35 Ibid., p. 228.

36 Ibid., p. 235.

37 Ibid., p. 236.

with Mr. Dinsmore's demand for Sunday entertainment. This anger was intensified by a remark from the malicious Mrs. Dinsmore who remembered Elsie's stand against Enna's wish:

"She will not sing. . . She will tell you she is wiser than her father and that it would be a sin to disobey him in this. Believe me, she will most assuredly defy your authority; so you had better take my advice and let her alone--thus sparing yourself the mortification of exhibiting before your guests your inability to govern your child." 38

This had the desired outcome of having Horace send at once for Elsie:

Outwardly calm and self-satisfied as his demeanor may have been, Horace Dinsmore was even now regretting the step he had taken; for remembering Elsie's conscientious scruples regarding the observance of the Sabbath--which he had for the moment forgotten--he foresaw that there would be a struggle, probably a severe one; and though always having found her docile and yielding he felt no doubt of the final result, he would willingly have avoided the contest, could he have done so without a sacrifice of pride; but as he said to himself, with a slight sigh, he had now gone too far to retreat; and then he had all along felt that this struggle must come some time and perhaps it was as well now as at any other. 39

Intuition told Elsie that her father was going to bid her to play and sing, and, before going to him, she knelt down and "prayed earnestly for strength to do right, however difficult it may be". 40

38 Ibid., p. 237.

39 Ibid., p. 238.

40 Ibid., p. 239.

Mr. Dinsmore was stimulated by Mrs. Dinsmore to enforce his will, and Elsie sought heavenly guidance to oppose it. Martha Finley set the stage for real action. To the great embarrassment of Mr. Travilla, who had unwittingly caused the trouble by asking for a song, there began the clash of wills. Mr. Dinsmore began by giving Elsie the order to play a song not in the hymnal:

"When I give my child a command, it is to be obeyed; I have said she must play it, and play it she must; she is not to suppose that she may set up her opinion of right and wrong against me."

Elsie sat with her little hands folded in her lap, the tears streaming from her downcast eyes over her pale cheeks. She was trembling, but there was no stubbornness in her countenance, the expression meek and humble, she made no movement toward obeying her father's order.

There was a moment of silent waiting; then he said in his severest tone, "Elsie, you shall sit there till you obey me, though it should be until tomorrow morning".

"Yes, papa," she said in a scarcely audible voice, and they all turned and left her. 41

Elsie was greatly distressed over her father's displeasure, and the sultry heat of the day caused her to have such a headache that she leaned on the piano for support.

40 Ibid., p. 239.

41 Ibid., p. 241.

For two long hours Elsie sat there. Mr. Travilla tried to reason with her by telling her that this was a minor thing, and it would be better to obey her father. Failing to persuade Elsie, Mr. Travilla tried reasoning with his friend, but met with no better response. Opposition served merely to strengthen their respective stands.

Another hour passed and even her father sought to gain Elsie's obedience by telling her how she grieved and mortified him.

The evening passed away, and the little girl grew more and more uncomfortable in the sultry air of the room, and as the pains in her head became more unbearable, she lost consciousness, fell, and hit her head on a piece of furniture.

A light showed Elsie's little face, ghastly as that of a corpse, while a stream of blood was flowing from a wound in the temple. . . . She was a pitiable sight indeed, with her fair face, her curls, and her white dress dabbled in blood. 42

Then Mr. Travilla uttered his heartfelt critical words,
 43
 "Dinsmore, you're a brute".

Mr. Dinsmore feared that he had been the cause of his daughter's death, and when he found she was alive, he forgave her stubbornness:

42 Ibid., p. 246.

43 Ibid., p. 246.

Yielding to her entreaties, he placed her on her knees, and stood beside her, listening to her murmured petitions in which he more than once heard his own name coupled with a request that he might be made to love Jesus.

"Dear, dear Papa," she cried throwing her arm round his neck, and drawing down his face close to hers, "I do love you so very, very much!"

"Better than anybody else?" he asked.

"No, Papa, I love Jesus best; you next." 44

With the final words of this scene, Martha Finley marks the artistic beginning of a far longer and greater conflict. Elsie struck the keynote of the whole following book when she said, "I love Jesus best?".

Mr. Dinsmore became ill, and faithful little Elsie was his constant companion by day except for an hour each afternoon, when he compelled her to go out for exercise in the open air. He was scarcely considered in danger, but his sickness was tedious and would have seemed to draw the ties of his affection more closely between them; yet, fond as he was of her, he ever made her feel that his will was always to be law to her; and while he required nothing contrary to her conscience, she submitted without a murmur, both because she loved him so well that it was a pleasure to obey him, and be-
45
cause she knew it was her duty to do so.

44 Ibid., p. 248.

45 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Holidays at Roselands (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1868), pp. 82-83.

Then the tragic blow was dealt. Mr. Dinsmore should have remembered how Elsie sat for hours on the piano stool one Sunday afternoon and profitably learned that Elsie was determined to do nothing secular on Sunday, but his long illness must have caused forgetfulness. He had become so accustomed to Elsie obeying his every command that one Sunday he commanded her to stop reading the Bible to him and to continue reading a "fictitious moral tale without a particle of truth to it, and Elsie's conscience told her, entirely unfit⁴⁶ for Sabbath reading":

"Elsie," he said, "I do not ask you to read that book, I command you to do it, and what is more, I intend to be obeyed. . ."

"Dear Papa," she answered in low pleading tones, "I cannot break the Sabbath-day. . ." 47

Mr. Dinsmore demanded that Elsie find a text which said she could not read a book on the Sabbath, and Elsie could not comply. She could answer with her own interpretation only. Elsie's father made it clear that until Elsie was ready to render unquestioned obedience, she was banished from his room.

All this excitement proved too much for Mr. Dinsmore, and he became very ill. Martha Finley's treatment of over-

46 Ibid., p. 84.

47 Ibid., p. 85.

wrought nerves stand psychological tests, but for the purpose of story telling, she exaggerates:

Toward evening they had given up almost all hope. He had ceased to recognize any one, and one after another, parents, brothers, sisters, and servants, had been permitted to take a last look--all but his little Elsie, his one and only child--the one nearest and dearest to him, and to whom he was all the world--she alone was forbidden to come. 48

Troubles multiplied rapidly for little Elsie, as Martha Finley worked up to her grand climax. When Mr. Dinsmore came out of his room, he deliberately refused to notice his daughter. Her heart was almost broken. She tried to gain his attention by the gift of a flower. He refused to take the flower from a disobedient child. Elsie grew pale and thin. Even Aunt Adelaide blamed her for her father's severe illness.

Finally, Horace Dinsmore became aware that the little girl was a mere shadow of her former self and sought to find a way to conquer her. Adelaide dissuaded her brother from applying the rod but suggested a greater punishment, that of separating Elsie from Chloe. Mr. Dinsmore said:

"I have sometimes felt sorry for having begun the struggle, and yet it is perhaps just as well, since it must come sooner or later. Ten years hence I shall want to take her occasionally to the theatre or opera, or perhaps now and then to a ball, and unless I can eradi-

cate these ridiculous strict notions she has got into her head she will be sure to rebel then, she will rather too old to punish, at least in the same way in which I might punish her now." 49

Elsie was deprived of her letters from Miss Rose Allison, and her father threatened to tell Miss Rose of her conduct. Still Elsie remained obdurate. She was forced to eat her meals alone, deprived of pocket money, allowed to receive no visitors, and could go from her room only to the schoolroom with a one hour walk permitted in the garden. All this punishment did not have the desired effect:

Debarred from all other pleasures, Elsie read her Bible more and more constantly, and with ever increasing delight; she found there consolation under every affliction, a solace for every sorrow. Her trial was a heavy one; her little heart often ached sadly with its intense longing for an earthly father's love and favor; yet in the midst of it all, she was conscious of a deep abiding peace, flowing from a sweet sense of pardoned sin, and a consciousness of a Saviour's love. 50

Mr. Dinsmore grew very impatient with Elsie's tears and punished her by denying her of her dinner and threatening to whip her if she cried again. This was his first threat of corporal punishment:

Poor little Elsie! she felt very much like a martyr in prospect of torture at the stake. For a time she was in deep distress; but she carried this trouble like all the rest to her Saviour, and

49 Ibid., p. 120.

50 Ibid., p. 136.

found relief in many precious comforting texts. 51

Mr. Dinsmore purchased an adjoining estate for his own home and took Chloe for his housekeeper. After furnishing a beautiful apartment for Elsie, he left on a business trip and sent word that Elsie should go to see the happiness she might enjoy if she would cease being so stubborn and rebellious. The inflexible Elsie was moved to tears by the beauty of the new home, but her determination was unaltered.

Father tried a new measure. His ingeniousness seemed unfailing. He sent a message that, if Elsie could not conform to his ideas, she would be sent to a convent to be educated. Elsie had read sensational pamphlets containing stories of horrible tortures inflicted by Rome on wretched nations and when she received this new ultimatum, she shrieked:

"Oh, tell Papa I would rather he would kill me at once than to send me to such a place. . . They will try to make me go to mass and pray to the Virgin, and bow to the crucifixes." 52

Martha Finley, true daughter of a physician, had laid the splendid background for an attack of brain fever caused by thwarted desires and unjust punishment combined with a very vivid imagination. This mental turmoil finally caused a complete physical breakdown. Elsie became very ill. Unsympa-

51 Ibid., p. 139.

52 Ibid., p. 196.

thetic Mrs. Dinsmore feared that the fever might be contagious and went off with all her family for a summer trip, leaving only Adelaide. Adelaide sent for Chloe. Elsie was "tossing about, moaning and talking incoherently" ⁵³ when Chloe and Mrs. Travilla came to help with the nursing:

Day after day fever raged in Elsie's veins and when at length it was subdued, it left her very weak indeed. . . but the little girl lay on her bed weak and languid, making no progress toward recovery, but neither losing strength. . .

"She seems to have no desire to recover: she needs something to arouse her, and revive her love of life. . . I should say she was dying of a broken heart." ⁵⁴

Adelaide had written to Elsie's father, and the doctor urged her to write again. It seemed that Horace was never coming. Adelaide wrung her hands in desperation as she listened to the child:

"He will not come in time. Oh, Papa, I want to hear you say you forgive all my naughtiness. I want one kiss before I go. . . He said he would never kiss me again until I submit; and you know I cannot do that, and Oh, Aunt Adelaide he never breaks his word!" ⁵⁵

Martha Finley left no stone unturned for the grand finale. Elsie requested her aunt to write her last will and testament. She asked that her money be used to support a

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 204-205.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 205.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

missionary to the heathen, that her father take care of Chloe, and she left every member of the family, the servants, and even Miss Day a gift. To her aunt she gave her papa's picture, a lock of hair, and her little testament. She gave Adelaide a packet and her Bible to be given to her father.

After this, Elsie pointed out the spot where she was to be buried, and "ended that she did not want any monument, but just a plain white stone with her name and age, and a text of scripture."⁵⁶

Elsie's fever returned, and the doctor shook his head as he took her pulse. He gave orders to cut off the curls, and this threw the child into wild delirium.

Mr. Dinsmore had not promptly received Adelaide's letters because he had left the place where they were addressed, but as soon as he heard of Elsie's illness, he hurried home.

"Doctor," said Mr. Dinsmore hoarsely, "if that child dies, I must go to my grave with the brand of Cain upon me, for I have killed her by my cruelty. . ."

"There is life yet, Mr. Dinsmore," remarked the doctor compassionately, "and though human skill can do no more, He who raised the dead child of the widow Nain to her arms, can give back your child to your embrace; let me entreat you to go to Him, my dear sir." ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 223.

Mr. Dinsmore realized that little Elsie had given up all worldly pleasures and was willing to give up life itself rather than disobey God's law, so he uttered his first prayer, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner".⁵⁸ Then he took Elsie's little Bible and read the many texts marked with her little pencil.

Chloe and Mrs. Travilla were attending "the last sad offices of love to the remains of the dear departed one"⁵⁹ when Mrs. Travilla saw a fluttering eyelid. The doctor was summoned and administered "every few minutes a little stimulant, for Elsie was weak as a new-born infant, and only in this way could they keep the flickering flame of life from dying out again".⁶⁰

Elsie recovered, and her father begged her forgiveness. After this, he knelt in prayer to thank God for the recovery of his loved one. "Elsie's heart swelled with emotion, and glad tears rained down her cheeks, as thus for the first time, she heard her father's voice in prayer. It was the happiest hour she had ever known".⁶¹

Elsie and her father moved to their new home where the

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 230.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 236.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 252.

pious Mrs. Murray, Elsie's early religious teacher, came as housekeeper. Happiness without further differences of philosophical beliefs was in store for them. The father's worldly knowledge and their shared continuous study and observance of the commandments of the Bible left no place for misunderstandings.

The characters in these books, are grouped to develop two conflicts with Elsie. The conflicts between Elsie and the traditional patriarchy of the Dinsmores are unusually concerned with physical activities and have no lasting effect upon Elsie, but the conflicts between the worldly moral educational system of the father and Elsie's evangelical training produce a mental strain which had psychological reactions.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE SEQUELS

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Chapter Four is an analysis of the three sequels which developed from the ideas and incidents presented in the basic books. The first sequel presents the story of Elsie's life augmented by a continued development of Martha Finley's conception of her philosophy and enlivened by the use of current topics. The second sequel, the Lulu sequel, repeats these ideas by imposing them upon another little girl character and continues with the life story of Elsie and Elsie's children. The third sequel, an historical sequel, goes on with the life stories of Elsie, Elsie's family, and Lulu as background material and uses travel and American stories in relation to Elsie's philosophy.

A. ELSIE'S LIFE SEQUEL

This chapter is an analysis of the five books which present the story of Elsie's life in relation to current problems. Elsie's Girlhood (1872) covers Elsie's life from the age of ten until she is twenty. This story exploits Elsie's continued need of her father's worldly wisdom in connection with the proposals of marriage made to her.

Elsie's Womanhood (1875) which covers a period of about ten years tells of Elsie's marriage and brings in Martha Finley's treatment of the problem concerning slavery and the Civil War. Elsie's Motherhood (1876) covers a shorter period of time, a year or two, and the story concerns the atrocities of the Ku Klux Klan. Elsie's Children (1877) again covers a period of about ten years and much of the story is about how Elsie's philosophy makes of death a beautiful thing. Elsie's Widowhood (1880) continues the beauty-of-death theme and covers another decade wherein Elsie's children grow up and marry. The stories are here analyzed according to character structures and story movement.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The characters in this sequel are again presented according to their relation with Elsie. They are sympathetic if they are in accord with Elsie's point of view or antagonistic if they are unsympathetic. They are good or evil according to their relationship.

Poetic justice is a device used in this sequel. Not only were the new characters punished or rewarded according to their merits, but characters from the basic series are similarly treated.

In Elsie's Girlhood, the first volume of this sequel,

those characters who continued to be outstandingly sympathetic toward Elsie were her father, Mr. Horace Dinsmore, and Mr. Traville.

Miss Wealthy Stanhope, an elderly great aunt of Elsie's, was a new sympathetic character, and she was also one of the two characters of all the volumes to afford comedy. "She has an odd way of transposing her sentences and the names of those she addresses or introduces, or calling them by some other name suggested by some association with the real name. Miss Bell, for instance, she would probably call Miss Ring, Mr. Foot, Mr. Shoe, and so on."¹

The most maliciously antagonistic character of the entire sequel appeared in this book. He was a gambling companion of Elsie's young uncle, Arthur. His real name was Tom Jackson, but to Elsie he used the alias, Bromly Egerton:²

¹ Finley, Martha, *Elsie's Girlhood* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1872), p. 159.

² Tom Jackson died in the Andersonville Prison. . . . Jackson had indeed thrown away his last chance; rejected the last offer of salvation; for, ere morning, life had fled. Starved to death and gone to eternity without God and without hope; his bitterest foe could not have desired for him a more terrible fate. (Elsie's Womanhood, p. 329).

He was a man who lived by his wits, or more correctly speaking, his rascalities, of whose antecedents Arthur knew nothing and with his haughty Southern pride he thoroughly despised. 3

In Elsie's Womanhood the story was carried on with the same fundamental characters. A few new characters of minor importance were introduced to carry on the story. Elsie married and her children began to arrive.

Elsie's Motherhood brought the second sympathetic character to afford comic relief; a cousin of Elsie's, Mr. Ronald Lilburn, from Scotland, arrives. He provided amusement because he was a ventriloquist with most unusual ability. He could imitate not only the barking of dogs, the squeaking of mice, the prancing of horses, talk like a lady, imitate accents of a Dutchman, and when the home of the Travilla's was attacked by the Ku Klux Klan, was able to imitate the silvery notes of a bugle advancing in the distance and thus help frighten off the Klnasmen:

Mr. Lilburn was evidently a gentleman of intelligence, polish and refinement; seemed to be an earnest Christian, too, and in easy circumstances. 4

Mr. and Mrs. Leland were introduced as necessary sympathetic characters for the plot of this story which told

3 Finley, Op.Cit., p. 183.

4 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Motherhood (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1876), p. 200.

of the Ku Klux Klan:

The purchaser of Fairview was a Mr. Leland, a northern man who had been an officer in the Union Army. . .

They were people of refinement and culture; quiet and peaceable, steady attainments upon Mr. Wood's ministry, and in every way conducted themselves as good citizens. 5

George Boyd, a nephew of Mrs. Carrington, Lucy's mother, and Wilkins Foster, the leaders of the Ku Klux Klan were representatives of the antagonistic group of characters which include the entire membership of the Klan, and the justice meted to them was characteristic. 6

In Elsie's Children, Elsie and Mr. Travilla had seven children; Elsie, Edward, Violet, Herbert, Harold, Lily, and Walter.

Lester Leland, an artist nephew of the neighbors, became engaged to young Elsie.

Elsie's Widowhood introduced no new characters of

5 Ibid., p. 40.

6 George spent the rest of his life ill and running from the law. When he was found dying he cried, "Too late, too late the door is shut. . . Oh, God, be merciful to me a sinner". And with the last word his spirit took flight. (Elsie's Widowhood, p. 119.)

When Wilkins Foster died the minister said, "A death-bed repentance is poor ground for hope. . . Bloody and deceitful men shall live out half their days. 'The wages of sin is death'." (Elsie's Motherhood, p. 279)

importance. The children were all about grown and were becoming of increasing importance as a story interest. It is necessary that this entire sequence be read in order; otherwise the use of family names would cause confusion. As one character dies or grows older, a younger character with the same name takes his place in the story. Mr. Edward Travilla was Elsie's friend and husband in the first seven volumes, but after his death Edward Travilla, the son, became an important character.

Characters who had been introduced in the basic books were rewarded or punished in the sequel according to their merits.

In Elsie's Girlhood, Mr. Dinsmore married Miss Rose Allison. She was the Mrs. Dinsmore referred to in this sequence.

In Elsie's Womanhood, Mrs. Travilla, Elsie's friend, journeyed to "her heavenly home, 'the land of the leal', the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God".⁷

During the Civil War Arthur joined the army of the South under Davis and was killed in battle. His mother died of shock when she heard the news.

In Elsie's Motherhood Elsie rewarded Chloe for her unflinching goodness by buying Jim, Chloe's husband, and Dinah,

⁷ Finley, Martha, Elsie's Womanhood (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1875), p. 238.

her grandchild.

Elsie's Children told how Enna was injured in a carriage accident and was ill for many weeks. Her bodily health returned, but her intellect was gone. She had the mentality of a child of six. In this same accident Grandfather Dinsmore was permanently crippled. Miss Day was found a poverty-stricken widow dependent upon the earnings of a half-blind daughter for her support.

STORY MOVEMENT

These books give the story of Elsie's life from the age of ten until she is about fifty. It concerns events of her girlhood, her proposals, her marriage, the birth of her children, death of her child, and finally, the death of her husband. The stories are enlivened by discussions of social and current happenings.

Elsie's Girlhood began with the story of Elsie's life when she was ten years old and continued it until she was twenty. Mr. Horace Dinsmore married Miss Rose Allison and they had two children, Rosebud and Horace, Jr. Elsie grew up radiantly healthy and beautiful under the wise protection and care of her father. Mr. Dinsmore prevented Elsie from making foolish matrimonial mistakes. He

refused to allow her to marry Herbert Carrington who suffered from a hip disease, and exposed the evil ways of Tom Jackson, a gambler, who had won Elsie's heart by becoming converted. He then took her to Europe and brought her safely back even though "more than one coronet had been laid at her feet".⁸ Finally, Mr. Travilla, Mr. Dinsmore's friend and Elsie's elderly admirer, proposed and was accepted by both Elsie and her papa.

The real interest of this book lies in the story which shows the need of worldly wisdom as supplement to evangelical philosophy.

Elsie, who was about sixteen years old, was invited to spend the summer with Great Aunt Wealthy in Lansdale, Ohio. This was the first time she had ever been left without the guiding hand and advice of her father since they had moved to their own home. Elsie promised to abide by her father's known wishes and she did. She retired early and when she was invited to parties, refused to eat the hostess' refreshment or candy, but she was unprepared to cope with the deceitful trick planned by her young uncle, Arthur. As Elsie had refused to lend him money to pay his gambling debts, Arthur sent Tom Jackson, a gambler, under the name of Bromley Egerton with false credentials to win Elsie and

⁸ Finley, Martha, Elsie's Girlhood, p. 396.

her money.

Elsie and her Aunt Wealthy were both attracted by the charming gay deceiver. Elsie's heart was entirely won when Jackson, after listening to Elsie's eloquent plea that he accept Jesus, pretended to believe and accept salvation.

Mr. Travilla paid Elsie an unexpected visit and recognized Tom as a gambler he had seen in a "gambling hell" in Cincinnati while he was searching for an arrant son of a friend. He wrote Mr. Dinsmore an urgent letter. Papa came at once and was convinced that Tom would be an unfit husband. Elsie obeyed her father's wish not to see or correspond with the scoundrel again:

"Papa," Elsie murmured winding her arms about his neck and laying her head on his breast. "If I may have but one of you, I could never hesitate for a moment to cling here where I have been so long and tenderly cherished. I know what your love is; I might be mistaken and deceived in another. And besides God commands me to love and obey you." 9

Elsie was never left alone again. The embodiment of worldly wisdom in the form of either Mr. Dinsmore or Mr. Travilla was always present.

Martha Finley contrasts the reward of the good who are obedient, with the fate of the bad who disobey. The story of Enna, Horace Dinsmore's fractious sister, was a

9 Ibid., p. 346.

contrast to Elsie. Enna Dinsmore, who was never given any profitable worldly advice, married a husband who wasted his patrimony in rioting and drunkenness. Enna returned to her father's home destitute and with an infant son.

Elsie heard that Tom Jackson had been arrested, tried, and convicted of manslaughter and had been sent to prison. She saw Enna's fate, a fate which might have been hers, and saw how wise and necessary was worldly wisdom and spoke again the words, "Thank God for a father's protecting love
10
and care".

At the beginning of Elsie's Womanhood (1875), Elsie, twenty-one years old, went with her father to New Orleans to inspect property which she had inherited from her mother. She came home to marry Mr. Travilla. Chapter Twelve was headed:

Bring flowers, fresh flowers for the bride to wear;
They were born to blush in her shining hair;
She's leaving the home of her childhood's mirth;
She hath bid farewell to her father's hearth;
Her place is now by another's side;
Bring flowers for the locks of the fair young bride. 11

The young couple went to New Orleans for a honeymoon. During her stay there Elsie had an almost tragic experience with Tom Jackson who had escaped from prison and had

10 Ibid., p. 400.

11 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Womanhood (New York: Doda, Mead and Company, 1875), p. 145.

"been bailed out: perhaps by one of his own gang; for so are
¹²
 the ends of justice often defeated."

Elsie heard the noise of someone getting into her house and roused her husband:

A heavy rolling crash of thunder followed close upon the sharp crack of the revolver; the robber's pistol fell with a loud thump upon the floor and he turned and fled along the veranda. . .

At the instant of discharging his revolver, Jackson felt a sharp stinging pain in his right arm, and it dropped useless at his side. He hoped he had killed both Mr. Travilla and Elsie; but an arrant coward and thus disabled did not dare to remain a moment to learn with certainty the effect of his shot. . . The wily burglar had made his steed travel the bed of the stream. . . for he had joined himself to a gang of villians who infested that part of the country. 13

Martha Finley ended the chapter with her forewarning of the thought which foretold her customary punishment of the wicked:

But "though hand join hand the wicked shall not be unpunished": Few if any of them would escape a violent and terrible death at the last, and - "After that the judgment", from which none may be excused. 14

In 1860 the Travilla and Dinsmore families went to Europe. During their stay the Civil War was fought, but Martha Finley protected her characters so they need have no

12 Ibid., p. 172.

13 Ibid., pp. 172,178,204.

14 Ibid., p. 204.

part in the controversy. The families returned home in 1865, after the war was over.

With this volume Martha Finley dated her work, which up until this time gave no indication that the story date differed, from the publication date. She discussed two problems of social interest in this volume, slavery and the Civil War. At the time her book was published in 1875, feeling on both subjects was still high, and she handled them in a way intended to be inoffensive to the reader. She was herself a Northern woman and she had placed her scene in the South. She attempted to be fair to both sides.

When Elsie visited New Orleans, Martha Finley used this opportunity to present two problems of slavery. First, the separation of families, and second, the treatment of the slaves by the overseer.

The first problem was met in story fashion with no discussion. During the trip to New Orleans, Chloe, Elsie's nurse, discovered her husband working on a boat. Elsie bought him and reunited the old couple. Later, she purchased their grandchild, Dinah. The family had been separated when Chloe's own daughter was four. Elsie was presented as the slave owner who has inherited responsibility and made the

best of it.

When Elsie arrived at her estate, the problem of humane treatment of the slaves by the overseer was discussed:

Entering the grounds of the plantation "something rose in the air and descended again, and a wild shriek, a woman's wail of agony, rent the air. . . A middle-aged negress stripped to the waist and tied to a whipping post, writhing and sobbing with pain and terror, while a white man stood over her with a horse whip in his uplifted hand, stayed in mid-air by the sudden appearance of those in authority over him". 15

Later Martha Finley gave her explanation. The overseer was not a native of the south and was unaccustomed to the indolent ways of the negro:

. . . a New Englander, used to see everyone about him working with steady persevering industry, and the indolent, dawdling ways of blacks which we take as a matter of course, are exceedingly trying to him. I think he has been faithful to your interests and that probably his desire and determination to see them advanced to the utmost led, more than anything else, to the act which seems to us so cruel. 16

Martha Finley's attitude seemed to be that slavery might be justified in the South, but that it must be humanely treated. Elsie told the overseer that he must be kind, and she established a church for her slaves so that they might receive divine guidance.

Martha Finley very cleverly evaded the controversial

15 Ibid., p. 62.

16 Ibid., p. 66.

issues of the Civil War. Her treatment was most cautious. She sent her family to Europe in 1860 and kept them there until 1865. Her characters represented the sympathies of both the North and the South. Rose, Mr. Dinsmore's wife, was from the North and was able to present her views in contrast with the Southern views of the Dinsmore's and Travilla's. Rose and Horace both had brothers who were wounded or killed on opposite sides of the conflict.

The only realistic and definite discussion of any phase of the Civil War came with a description of the Andersonville Prison. Even with this Martha Finley tried to rationalize and give viewpoints of both North and South:

But powder and shot, famine, exposure, for the prisoners have no shelter except as they burrow in the earth, malaria from that sluggish, filthy stream, and the marshy ground on either side of it, are doing fearful work; every morning a wagon drawn by four mules is driven in, and the corpses — scattered here and there to the number of from eighty-five to a hundred gathered up, and tossed into it like sticks of wood, taken away and thrown promiscuously into a hole dug for the corpses, and earth shoveled over them.

Others there are, wasted and worn till scarce more than living skeletons, creeping about on hands and feet, lying or sitting in every attitude of despair and suffering; a dull, hopeless misery in their sunken eyes, a pathetic patience fit to touch a heart of stone; while others still have grown frantic with that terrible pain, the hunger gnawing at their very vitals, and go staggering about wildly raving in their helpless agony.

And on them all the scorching sun beats piteously down. Hard cruel fate! scorched with heat, with the cool shelter of the pine forests on every side; perishing with hunger in a land of plenty. 17

The horrors of this prison were excused to some extent. After Rose Dinsmore's brother had escaped from the prison and had come home to die he was asked about how he felt:

"Do your feelings arouse no bitterness toward the South?"

"Oh, no!" he answered earnestly, "Why should they? The people of the South were not responsible for what was done at Andersonville; perhaps the confederate government was so only in a measure; and Wertz was a foreigner. Besides a great deal was endured by rebel prisoners in some of our Northern prisons." 18

To be fair Martha Finley recounted what had been suffered in the South, but her picture was vague. When the Travilla's returned home, they were told of the looting of some of the residences near the home place. The Oaks had¹⁹ "escaped because it was not visible from the road":

"Sherman's soldiers were very lawless-- some of them, I mean; and they were not all Americans--and inflicted much injury. Enna was very rude and exasperating to the party who visited Roselands, and was roughly handled in consequence; robbed of her watch and jewelry.

17 Ibid., pp. 317-318.

18 Ibid., p. 356.

19 Ibid., p. 356.

They treated our poor father with great indignity also; dragged him down the steps of the veranda, took his watch, rifled his pockets, plundered the house, then set it on fire and burned it to the ground." 20

Similarly this action is partly excused by Rose, the Northern wife:

"Dreadful! I could not have believed that any of our officers would allow such things. But war is very cruel and gives opportunity to wicked cruel men on both sides to indulge their evil propensities and passions." 21

Martha Finley explained in part her rather impartial attitude during a period when feeling was often at a boiling point by saying that her interest was with the country as a whole.

There is an interesting note of antipathy in these stories in that not an American element is blamed for wrong doing. At Andersonville, Wertz was a foreigner, and the soldiers of Sherman who were lawless "were not all Americans". Theoretically, Martha Finley must have believed that the true American felt as she felt and could not harm any part or person in his country.

Elsie's Motherhood (1876) began with Elsie celebrating her tenth wedding anniversary. The Travilla's acquired new neighbors, the Lelands, from the North. Mr. Ronald

20 Ibid., p. 399.

21 Ibid., p. 400.

Lilburn, a ventroquillist, Elsie's cousin from Scotland, came to pay an extended visit. The Travilla and Leland families were targets of assault by the Ku Klux Klan and caused the Klan to disperse. The Travilla's and all their friends and relatives visited the New Orleans home. Elsie devoted a great deal of time to her children's religious instruction. The story ended with a typical scene between little Elsie and mother Elsie:

Returning from the nursery to the drawing room, Elsie found her namesake daughter sitting apart in a bay window, silently gazing out over the beautiful landscape sleeping in the moonlight.

She looked up with a smile as her mother took a seat by her side and passed an arm about her waist.

"Isn't it lovely, mamma? See how the waters of our lake let shine in the moonbeams like molten silver! and the fields, the groves, the hills! how charming they look in the soft light!"

"Yes, darling; and that is what you were thinking of, sitting here alone?"

"Yes, mamma; and of how good God is to give us this lovely home and kind father and mother to care for us. It is always so sweet to come back to my home when I've been away. I was enjoying it all coming in the boat to-night; that and thinking of the glad time when we shall be gathered into the lovelier home Jesus is preparing for us." 22

22 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Motherhood (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1876), pp. 375, 376.

This set the stage for the next volume Elsie's Children.

The bulk of the story, Elsie's Motherhood, concerns the atrocities of the Ku Klux Klan. Martha Finley gives the source of her material in the preface along with her philosophical comments:

When about to undertake its preparation the suggestion was made to the author that to bring in the doings of the Ku Klux would add interest to the story, and at the same time give a truer picture in the South during the years 1867-68 in which events take place.

The published reports of the Congressional Committee of Investigation were reported as to the most reliable source of information, diligently examined, and care taken not to go beyond the facts there given as regards the proceedings of the Klan, the clemency and paternal acts of the government, or the kindly, fraternal feelings and deeds of the people of the North toward their impoverished and suffering brethern of the South.

These things have become matters of history; vice and crime should be condemned wherever found; and naught has been set down in malice; for the author has a warm love for the South as part and parcel of the dear land of her birth.

May this child of her brain give pain to none, but prove pleasant and profitable to all who pursue its pages and especially helpful to young parents. 23

Martha Finley followed very closely the events in the Congressional account and placed in the situation her own

characters with the addition of a Northern family, the Lelands, who had bought an adjoining estate. The most striking and dramatic event was the Klan's placing of a coffin at Mr. Leland's door. This frightened him so that he stayed with the Travilla's. The major attack was directed on the Travilla home.

Martha Finley in no way excused the actions of the Klan and saw to it in her text that the leaders, George Boyd and Wilkin Collins, were punished.

A minor topic brought up for discussion in this volume was the evils of tobacco smoking. Mr. Dinsmore explained that he had missed by his abstinence a terrible dyspepsia which would have put him in his grave in the prime of life or cancer of the lips which would have caused years of horrible suffering. Martha Finley copied most of her discussion from an article by J. E. Vose in "The Family Almanac for 1876".²⁴

A hint of the impending disaster had been given in Elsie's Children, and now it struck, for into Elsie's well-filled nursery came death. Little Lily became ill and died:

"Lily was never spoken of as lost or as dead; she had only gone before to the happy land whither they were all journeying, and where they should find her again blooming and cheerful; they spoke of her often and with cheerfulness, though tears would sometimes fall at the thought that the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

separation must be so long". 25

Elsie continued the religious training of her children. An unusually good opportunity was made by having a cousin come home from boarding school a confirmed Catholic, and having Elsie show her the error of her ways. The older children began to grow up and Elsie added her worldly advice to her instruction and prepared them to meet life:

Elsie was not bringing up her daughters to consider marriage the chief end of woman; she had indeed, said scarcely anything of the subject till her eldest was of age to mix a little in general society; then she talked quietly and seriously to them of the duties and responsibilities of the married state and the vast importance of making a wise choice in selecting a partner for life. 26

Elsie, the oldest daughter, fell in love with Lester Leland, an artist, who was a cousin of her neighbor. Mother Elsie and Mr. Travilla approved of his plan to marry their daughter.

The family story was the central theme in Elsie's Children. There was no discussion of current events.

Elsie's Widowhood, Martha Finley called the sequel to Elsie's Children. Martha Finley makes her apology for continuing the sequence:

It was not in my heart to give to my favorite child, Elsie, the sorrows of widow-

25 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Children (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1877), p. 218.

26 Ibid., p. 228.

hood. But the public made the title and demanded the book; and the public I am told is autocratic. So what could I do but write the story and try to show how the love of Christ in the heart can make life happy even under sore bereavement? The apostle says, "I am filled with comfort; I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation; and since trouble, trial, and affliction are the lot of all the world of sin and sorrow, what greater kindness could I do you dear reader, than to show you where to go for relief and consolation? That this little book may teach the sweet lesson to many a tried and burdened soul, is the earnest prayer of your friend. 27

The story told again about the beauty of death, and life went on without Mr. Travilla. Mr. Dinsmore stepped in to guide Elsie's children in worldly affairs. The story concerned only minor events of the family and their many relatives.

In this "life" sequel Martha Finley continues to add scope to Elsie's philosophy. The evangelical faith gives peace and calmness of spirit in the presence of death, but it requires worldly wisdom in addition to detect hypocrisy and to interpret national affairs.

There are five new elements in this sequel, continuation of the life story of Elsie, introduction of comic characters, repetition of incidents of Elsie's childhood with her own children, augmentation of the story by the use of

27 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Widowhood (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1880), Preface.

social and current events, and interpretation of poetic justice by rewarding the sympathetic characters created in the basic books and punishing the antagonistic.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE LULU SEQUELS
AND OF THE HISTORICAL SEQUELS

The twenty-one remaining volumes of the Elsie books are divided into two sequels, the Lulu sequels and the historical sequels.

The Lulu sequels of seven volumes presents the life story of Lulu with Grandmother Elsie in the background. Martha Finley was able to repeat much of the material of earlier books. Martha Finley's philosophy remains unchanged, but in this sequel the conflict is between a high tempered unchristian girl and her worldly-wise Christian father. The conflict reaches two climaxes, when Lulu kicks her sister and almost kills her and when the father becomes seriously ill. A villain threatened Lulu in much the same manner that Elsie in the earlier story was threatened.

In the fourteen volumes of the historical sequels the life interest of Lulu becomes background material. The characters are merely a listening audience for the retelling of stories from history, and the exploitation of the history and heroes of our country becomes the theme.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

An analysis of the characters in Grandmother Elsie (1882), Elsie's New Relations (1883), Elsie at Nantucket (1884), The Two Elsies (1885), Elsie's Friends at Woodburn (1887), and Christmas with Grandmother Elsie (1888) reveal few character changes. The greatest change comes with the re-
gation of Elsie and her family to background characters and the bringing into the foreground the characters related by marriage. As the philosophy of the story remains the same, the characters are still classified as either sympathetic or antagonistic according to their adherence to the philosophy of Elsie.

Captain Levis Raymond had the honor of being the only sympathetic character. Mr. Dinsmore immediately placed him in the proper relationship:

"Raymond is one in a thousand. I've known him for years, and he has been a good and valuable friend to me.

He is a brave man and a good Christian and can endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 28

Mrs. Beulah Scrimp had been caring for Captain Raymond's children since their mother's death.

28 Finley, Martha, Grandmother Elsie (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1882), p. 105.

Mrs. Scrimp was a woman of economics, keeping vigilant watch over all expenditures, great and small, and employing one servant only who was cook, housemaid, and laundress. . .

Mrs. Scrimp was a woman of theories also, and her pet one accorded well with the aforementioned characteristic. It was that two meals a day were sufficient for any one, and that none but the very vigorous and hardworking ought to eat anything between three o'clock in the afternoon and breakfast time the next morning. 29

Max, Lulu, and Grace, the captain's three children, were subjected to this Mrs. Scrimp's regime. As a result, Max was forced to steal and lie to get enough to eat, Grace grew sick and weak, and Lulu developed an ungovernable temper.

Zoe Love, a young girl whom Edward Travilla married, had lost her mother at an early age and an indulgent father had exacted no obedience of her.

STORY MOVEMENT

This story movement follows a similar pattern to the story of Elsie and continues the exploitation of Martha Finley's philosophy which is now stressed by Captain Raymond who has a fractious daughter to educate. Elsie aids in her education. After the daughter has been made fully aware of

29 Ibid., pp. 115-116.

the value of both worldly and evangelical wisdom ~~her~~ education is continued by travel enhanced by historical stories of the places visited.

Grandmother Elsie was a continuation of the story of Elsie's Children. Elsie's daughter married Leslie Lester and Edward married Zoe Love, the artist's daughter. At the end of the volume a third Elsie was born. These activities took place in the background and the new major story interest stepped forward. This concerned the little girl Lulu and will be analyzed in detail.

Captian Levis Raymond was introduced to the Dinsmore and Travilla families. A cousin brought him to visit in their home. That night a fire broke out in a cottage down by the road and Captain Raymond was seriously hurt when he fell off a ladder while rescuing an old negro woman. This made it necessary for him to stay at the Dinsmore home for a long time. He fell in love with Violet, Elsie's second daughter, and married her. At Elsie's invitation he brought his children to her home and when he was ordered back to sea, he made arrangements for them to stay there.

The Raymond children were left in a home to have the same training that Elsie and the Travilla children had received, but the result of an undesirable background had to be fought.

With Lulu, a little girl with a temper very much like Enna's in Elsie Dinsmore, Martha Finley gave an example of what the proper training given by Mr. Horace Dinsmore and the evangelical teaching given by Elsie could do for a fractious individual.

Elsie at Nantucket continued with little tales of Lulu's misdoings along with a description of life on Nantucket Island. In this volume Martha Finley also supplemented the story by filling thirteen pages with an historical story, a device which she used increasingly in succeeding volumes.

The Two Elsie's bring continued incidents of displays of Lulu's temper and Elsie's patient attempts to control it. Elsie's family increased.

With the story Elsie's Kith and Kin came the climactic action which is the only part of the entire series which could begin to equal the dramatic presentation of Elsie at the piano in Elsie Dinsmore. Chapter Eleven is simply headed, "How
30
Terrible is Passion!" The poetic quotations used as chapter headings had been discontinued. Lulu had been annoyed all day by the pet dog who had chewed her gloves, torn her

30 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Kith and Kin (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1886), p. 141.

garden hat into shreds, upset her inkstand, tangled her thread,
³¹
 and soiled her dress with his muddy paws. In anger she had
 kicked the dog until he howled.

Lulu, further angered because Max, her brother, and
 Rosie, the youngest Travilla child, had gone off riding with-
 out her, felt something tugging at her skirts and "gave a
³²
 vicious backward kick without turning her head":

Instantly the sound of something falling
 accompanied by a faint, frightened little cry
 and a chorus of shrieks of dismay from older
 voices, flashed upon her the terrible knowledge
 that she had sent her baby sister rolling down
 the steps to the hard gravel walk below. . .

Moments passed that seemed like hours;
 faint sounds came up from below. She heard steps
 and voices, and "Was that mamma Vi crying,--
 crying as if her heart would break? saying over
 and over again, 'My baby's dead! My baby's dead!
 killed by her sister, her cruel passionate sister!'
 Would they come and take her (Lulu) to jail? Would
 they try her for murder, and hang her? Oh! then
 papa's heart would break, losing two of his children
 in such dreadful ways. ³³

The little sister did not die. Lulu was most repentant
 and the whole family prayed for her salvation, but she needed
 a lesson that involved a person nearer her heart than a half
 sister to bring her all the way to Jesus.

³¹ Ibid., p. 143.

³² Ibid., p. 149.

³³ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

In Elsie's Friends at Woodburn Captain Raymond became seriously ill, and Lulu, like the little Elsie of another volume, nursed him back to health. Her papa praised Lulu and prayed for her.

"And you will be but giving of his own;
you are his child because he made you. . . Do
not refuse him his own, my child!" 34

Then Lulu prayed with her father and asked Jesus to forgive her. She finally lifted her head and said, "Papa, I think he has heard out prayers. I do begin to love him
35
in my heart and want to be his."

Christmas with Grandmother Elsie emphasized what a fine girl Lulu had become under the guidance of her papa and Grandmother Elsie. The book contained a discussion of the missions supported by these wealthy people. Because of Lulu's and her father's splendid example of giving thousands of dollars to support missions, Grandmother Elsie sold most of her expensive jewelry and contributed the money for this worthy cause.

Drama, similar to the Tom Jackson story in Elsie's Girlhood, entered the story. Lulu and Max were out riding

34 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Friends at Woodburn (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1887), p. 291.

35 Ibid., p. 293.

when a tramp grabbed the bridle of Lulu's horse. Max called their dog Prince who chased the intruder. That night Lulu discovered burglars in the house and locked them in the strong room:

Trembling like a leaf she put her hand up and cautiously felt for the bolt. . . She heard the villains drop their tools, spring forward, and try the door with muttered oaths and curses. . . 36

Lulu recognized one of the burglars as the man who had detained her in the afternoon. She was the chief witness at the trial where they were convicted for burglary and sent³⁷ "to the penitentiary for a term of years".

Nine volumes later the story was continued. In Elsie on the Hudson, Lulu, then nineteen years old and called Lucilla, was out riding with one of Elsie's cousins, Chester Dinsmore:

. . . a man suddenly arose from behind a bush, pistol in hand, and fired, taking aim at Lucilla. But Chester had seized her bridle at the instant of the rising of the figure, and backed both her horse and his just in time to escape the shot which whizzed past them over the horses' heads. Chester instantly snatched a pistol from his pocket, took aim at the miscreant, and fired at the same instant that the scoundrel sent a second shot in their direction. Then the wounded murderer dropped and lay still as death, while Chester dismounted from his horse

³⁶ Finley, Martha, Christmas with Grandmother Elsie (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1888), p. 235.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 251.

and fell by the roadside. 38

Captain Raymond gave Chester his permission to marry Lucilla as a reward for his brave deed, just as Mr. Dinsmore gave the Elsie of an earlier volume to Mr. Travilla as a reward for saving her from a rascal:

I am too grateful to him to refuse him anything he may ask for - even to the daughter who is so dear to me that I can scarcely bear the thought of resigning her to another. 39

A thread of the Lulu story runs through all the rest of the series, but it ceased to be the main interest after Christmas with Grandmother Elsie. Lulu's admirable control of temper and her strict adherence to the worldly and evangelical teachings prevented any exciting incidents. Her attitude was in perfect accord with that of Elsie. Lulu and her father had the same devoted relationship as Elsie and her father:

"Good morning, daughter mine," he said in tender tones as he bent down and bestowed upon her the caress she never failed to receive from him when first they met at the beginning of the day.

"Good morning, dear, dear, papa". . . she returned in moved tones, putting her arms about his neck and pressing her lips to his again and again. 40

38 Finley, Martha, Elsie on the Hudson (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1898), pp. 317-318.

39 Ibid., p. 325.

40 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Journey (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1894), p. 148.

With Elsie and the Raymonds published in 1889 Martha Finley began a series of fourteen volumes relating historical events.⁴¹

An analysis of the books in the historical series shows them to be mainly stories of conflicts and heroes of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, and the Spanish-American War. Martha Finley gave credit for much of her material to the histories of Bancroft and Lossing.

Elements of her idealistic philosophy were present, but are no longer a part of the fabric of the story. The Evangelical doctrine was present, but it was artificially applied in three ways. The first, and the method used once or twice in every volume, was to introduce a Sunday on board the yacht where it was impossible to attend church. Captain Raymond preached a sermon and the other characters discussed its merit in detail:

Sunday morning dawned clear and beautiful. . .

An hour or so after breakfast, captain, passengers, and crew, except the man at the helm, gathered on deck everyone in neat and appropriate dress. The ladies, gentlemen, and children sat

⁴¹ This was followed by Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds (1890), Elsie's Vacation (1891), Elsie at Viernede (1892), Elsie at Ton (1893), Elsie at the World's Fair (1894), Elsie at Home (1897), Elsie on the Hudson (1898), Elsie in the South (1899), Elsie's Young Folks (1900), Elsie's Winter Trip (1902), Elsie and Her Loved Ones (1903), and Elsie and Her Namesake (1905).

on one side, the crew on the other, Captain Raymond standing between. A Bible and a pile of hymn books lay on a stand before him. . . 42

After the service it was customary to convert one of the crew. This gave Elsie an opportunity to review and discuss the sermon:

Then she spoke of the service of the morning and asked him in kindest tones and words if he, like herself, was one who loved Jesus, and trusted Him for salvation from sin and death. 43

The second method of enforcing the philosophy was the discussion of the preparation for death of a distant relative or a servant, or the conjecturing of the preparation made by an historical character.

As an example, the family were sightseeing at Narragansett Bay:

All having looked their fill, they returned to their carriages and drove to other points of interest, one of them Whitehall, the old residence of Bishop Berkeley. . .

"And Bishop Berkeley is no doubt spending his eternity in a far lovelier paradise than that with which he was familiar in this world," remarked Mrs. Travilla. 44

42 Finley, Martha, Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889), pp. 122, 123.

43 Ibid., p. 125

44 Finley, Martha, Elsie's Journey on Island Waters (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1894), p. 250.

The third method of artificially applying the evangelical doctrine was to moralize at the end of an historical story:

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," quoted Walter, "and we need to be careful to exercise that, don't we, grandpa?"

"Certainly we do," was the reply, "toward foes within and foes without; and that especially by diffusing knowledge and teaching Gospel truth." 45

There were few character innovations in the historical section. Mrs. McAlpine and her daughter Marian, who proved to be distant Scotch relations of Elsie, were the most important. The family continued to increase and was now so large that outside additions were necessary, even for matrimonial purposes. Cousin Ronald Lilburn continued to provide fun for the family with his ventriloquism. His chief method was to give the cries and splashing of a drowning man and have everyone run to the side of the yacht. His silver bugle calls could be augmented by the sound of marching feet and the beating of a drum as he had taught his sons and Max his art.

Elsie and the Raymonds (1889) opened the historical stories by taking Captain Raymond with his two older children, Max and Lulu, on a trip West. The stories were brought about in a very artificial way. They were told to an English boy

45 Ibid., p. 185.

whom the Raymonds met on the train. Lulu met Albert, an English boy, by the simple expedient of dropping her handkerchief:

As Albert stepped in at the car door his eyes fell upon a dainty white pocket handkerchief lying on the floor. He stooped and picked it up, glancing around the car in search of the owner. 46

Captain Raymond, his children, the English boy, and his father stopped at the boarding-house of Mrs. McAlpine, a Scotchwoman:

The children started an argument; "Britannia rules the waves," quoted Albert in an exultant tone. "Yes, when Columbia isn't there to interfere with her," retorted Max. 47

Albert admitted that he knew nothing of the history of the United States so Max volunteered to enlighten him:

"I've studied the history of the United States, my native land, a great deal, especially in the last year or two, and have had many talks with papa about events, and especially the doings of the navy; they interested me more than any other part; first because papa was a naval officer, and then because I'm hoping to go into the navy myself." 48

Albert was told stories of Commodore McDonough and Commodore Perry. During the stay in Utah, the Fourth of July was celebrated, so this holiday was explained by stories

46 Finley, Martha, Elsie and the Raymonds (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889), p. 133.

47 Ibid., p. 197.

48 Ibid., p. 200.

of the "Signing of the Declaration of Independence" and the "Boston Tea Party".

The Raymonds discovered that Mrs. McAlpine was very unhappy because her husband had embraced the Mormon religion.

"I stood out against it for a time--in the old home in Scotland--but the man--a Mormon missionary--was very plausible and seemed very devout, quoted scripture, won Willie, my husband, over first, and both kept at me till I grew fairly bewildered and half crazed, and at last, when Willie told me he was bound to come to America and join the Latter-Day Saints, I gave up and agreed to do the same; for how could I part with him? and no word at all had been breathed to either of us about polygamy; we had not thought that was one of their doctrines." 49

A history of the Mormon religion was given and Captain Raymond proved from the Bible that the Mormon interpretation was wrong and this comforted the woman.

Martha Finley was familiar with the doctrines and practises of polygamy and mentioned in her text the Edmund's Bill which was instrumental in making polygamy illegal.

In the preface of Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds Martha Finley gave credit to the source of her material:

The author desires to freely acknowledge indebtedness for much information regarding Revolutionary times and incidents, to Bancroft and Lossing; and for routine at West Point, to an article in Harper's Magazine for July, 1887, entitled "Cadet Life at West Point", by Charles

49 Ibid., p. 190.

King, U. S. A." 50

Although in this and in following articles, Bancroft was occasionally quoted, Lossing was the authority most frequently used. "Lossing tells us" was the byword of the series and prefaces the majority of the stories.

As the Raymonds returned from the West through New York state they stopped at Saratoga. Stories were told of Arnold, and Burgoyne. Points of interest were visited. The family moved on to West Point and spent a day there watching the activities.

Captain Raymond bought a yacht, the Dolphin, and this boat was the expedient used to further the rest of this series. The family met the captain and they sailed to Boston where they visited Christ Church, Faneuil Hall, and Bunker Hill. Mrs. Raymond had been reading Bancroft's History so she was able to tell her family all about the "Battle of Lexington", the "Battle of Bunker Hill", and the story of "Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys".

The story ended with the whole family going with Max to Annapolis where he was to become a cadet.

Elsie's Vacation (1891) left Max at Annapolis and the family began their pleasant trip home. As the yacht steamed

50 Finley, Martha, Elsie Yachting with the Raymonds (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1890), Preface.

past a point of interest Lossing was quoted in detail. The places told about were Fortress Moore, Old Point Comfort, Hampton Roads, and forts along the Delaware River.

Elsie at Viamede (1892) took the family down to New Orleans. Stories were told of New Orleans' part in the Civil War, Revolutionary battles near Fort Schuyler, and the writing of the "Star Spangled Banner".

As the family returned home they cruised along the coast of Florida and told stories of the attack by the British in 1814. They planned to go back to Annapolis, and as they approached Norfolk, they told stories of Admiral Farragut.

At Annapolis in Elsie at Ion (1893), the history of the academy was given and the story of Betsy Ross was reviewed. From there the family went up to Cape Ann, Massachusetts, and many stories were related about the Shenandoah Valley.

Martha Finley made this note at the beginning of Elsie at the World's Fair (1894):

The author desires to acknowledge her indebtedness to the "Chicago Record's History of the World's Fair", "The Historical Fine Arts Series", published by H. S. Smith and C. R. Graham for Historical Publishing Co., Philadelphia, and the "World's Fine Arts Series," published by N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., St. Louis, Mo., for descriptions and statistics in regard to the White City and its ex-

hibits.

The book not only described the exhibits of the Fair, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, but the exhibits called to mind historical incidents. For example, Spain's exhibit brought forth a review of the story of Columbus, the military exhibit showing relics of battles, called forth stories of wars, and the exhibit of ships at the Transportation Building produced stories of naval engagements.

Elsie's Journey on Inland Waters (1894) continued the visit at the Fair and the same type of recitation was continued, as an example, a picture of Joan of Arc instigated the story of Joan of Arc.

The family visited Chicago and Detroit, and the histories of these cities were narrated. Then they turned homeward. The trip took them through the Welland Canal to Lake Ontario. They stopped to visit points of historical interest at Montreal and Quebec, steamed into the St. Lawrence, then past Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Each place was rich in historical lore and "Lossing told us" many stories.

"I think we would all enjoy visiting any and every place occupied by, or visited by our Washington," ⁵² said a

⁵¹ Finley, Martha, Elsie at the World's Fair (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1894), Prefatory note.

⁵² Finley, Martha, Elsie on the Hudson (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1898), p. 10.

character in Elsie on the Hudson (1898), and Martha Finley⁵³ with the aid of Mr. Lossing gratified this wish.

Martha Finley felt she had not exhausted the historical possibilities of the South, so the family cruise again to their New Orleans home in Elsie in the South (1899). As they neared Florida such stories of the early explorers as Ponce de Leon were related.

Elsie Young Folks (1900) started with historical tales about the history of Maine. Then Martha Finley changed her historical procedure. As the news of the Spanish-American War was then current, and as she had so well prepared one character for participation in the event, she was able to give a very realistic account.

She placed Max, who had been trained at Annapolis, aboard a boat with Commodore Dewey. When war was declared they were stationed off the coast of China but left at once for the Philippines. The Battle of Manila and the victories at Cavité and Corregidor were well described. Martha Finley sent two other characters who were physicians to Cuba and gave an account of conditions there. As a result, Martha Finley has a very good child's history of this war.

53 Prefactory note: For information in regard to the events of our two wars with England, the author is largely indebted to Lossing's historical works, "The Field Book of the Revolution and of the War of 1812". (Elsie on the Hudson, 1898).

In her last book, Elsie and Her Namesake (1905), Martha Finley used three new sources of material. She gave an account of the life of the artist, Thomas Nast, and described in detail several of his pictures of the Civil War, devoted several chapters to an account of the sponge industry in Florida and Key West, and related the histories of the early development of the states, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

Martha Finley's story of Lulu does not equal the story of Elsie in plot or structure. The freshness and originality of the Elsie story is missing. The characterization is routine and her plot structure mechanical. Martha Finley took seven volumes to retell a similar story to the one she had first presented in two volumes. Entire volumes had no events of particular interest in contrast with one or more exciting event in every chapter of the basic books. The psychological study of Lulu's reaction to thwarted desires in the tragic incident of Lulu kicking her sister is the best of the section and is perhaps equal to the event of Elsie's falling from the piano stool.

In the historical section, Martha Finley shows her pride in her country's achievement by her appreciative stories of its history, its art, its industry, and its territorial development. The stories are interesting and the inci-

dents well chosen, but Martha Finley often makes the mistake of trying to say too much about one thing. As an historical place was visited Martha Finley relates all of the events and battles in all of the wars. These stories are designed to instruct the reader, but conversely leave a hazy impression. Even the story of the World's Fair grows vague as French, Spanish, and American history are retold. Elsie's Young Folks is by far the best in this historical series because Martha Finley devoted most of her attention to relating the events of the Spanish-American War without digression or moralizing, and as a result presented a clear picture. Martha Finley temporarily relinquished the articial application of her philosophy to the complete interest in national patriotism.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Carl Van Doren says of our early American writers, "American novelists came forth late and apologetically, armed for the most part with the plea that they told the truth, pointed to heaven, or devoutly believed in the new republic".¹ Current criticism of Martha Finley's work does not take this historical point of view into account. This description aptly characterizes her writing which was begun during the romantic didactic period and continued into a more realistic era.

Martha Finley's contribution to the development of American fiction for girls is slight but definite. While her contemporaries, Louisa May Alcott, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Mary Mapes Dodge, were enlarging the scope of girls fiction, Martha Finley continued and developed the tradition of the Sunday School story by the use of the sequel and the inclusion of patriotic and historic material, and within this tradition created the character of Elsie.

A study of Martha Finley's life reveals factors which serve to explain her contribution. Her strict Scotch Presbyterian training and her real faith in the value of the religious message in the Sunday School fiction made it im-

¹ Van Doren, Carl, The American Novel (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1929), p. 3.

possible for her to relinquish the evangelical theme. This evangelical doctrine is augmented by her belief in the value of modern trends of education. An evangelical-worldly philosophy is advanced through story material which is partly wish dream and partly autobiography.

Martha Finley's wishful imagination supplied a story of grandiose setting in the mythical "South" and gave Elsie social and financial success. Actual childhood experiences helped Martha Finley to create a motherless little girl character who possessively loved her father. Additional factual story material is developed by telling of trips and places visited. Martha Finley's family tradition of distinguished service in public affairs unquestionably contributed to her interest in including current affairs and historical and cultural elements in her portrayal of life from an evangelical, unrealistic point of view.

The first two volumes reach a dramatic intensity not found in the sequels. The nervous excitement of increasing magnitude which reaches the climaxes in the piano stool scene and the death bed scene are not equalled in the later volumes.

The sequels are of historical interest only. They are a rather mechanical exploitation of the success of the character and the situation of Elsie established in the first two volumes.

Historically, their interest is three-fold. First, they contribute to the establishment of the sequel as a device in girls' fiction. Secondly, they mix worldly wisdom and patriotic material with the evangelical sentiments of Elsie. Finally, they show a trend from the intensely religious outlook of the first two volumes toward the more purely moral and worldly outlook of the Little Colonel series of the next generation.

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1 See complete list of Martha Finley's fiction, pp. 115-117.

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A. Fiction for Girls

(Publishers, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company)

<u>Elsie Dinsmore</u>	1868
<u>Elsie's Holidays at Roselands</u>	1868
<u>Elsie's Girlhood</u>	1872
<u>Elsie's Womanhood</u>	1875
<u>Elsie's Motherhood</u>	1876
<u>Elsie's Children</u>	1877
<u>Elsie's Widowhood</u>	1880
<u>Grandmother Elsie</u>	1882
<u>Elsie's New Relations</u>	1883
<u>Elsie at Nantucket</u>	1884
<u>The Two Elsie</u> s	1885
<u>Elsie's Kith and Kin</u>	1886
<u>Elsie's Friends at Woodburn</u>	1887
<u>Christmas With Grandmother Elsie</u>	1888
<u>Elsie and the Raymonds</u>	1889
<u>Elsie Yachting With the Raymonds</u>	1890
<u>Elsie's Vacation</u>	1891
<u>Elsie at Viamede</u>	1892
<u>Elsie at Ion</u>	1893
<u>Elsie at the World's Fair</u>	1894

<u>Elsie's Journey in Inland Waters</u>	1894
<u>Elsie at Home</u>	1897
<u>Elsie on the Hudson</u>	1898
<u>Elsie in the South</u>	1899
<u>Elsie's Young Folks</u>	1900
<u>Elsie's Winter Trip</u>	1902
<u>Elsie and Her Loved Ones</u>	1903
<u>Elsie and Her Namesakes</u>	1905
 <u>Mildred Keith</u>	1878
<u>Mildred at Roselands</u>	1879
<u>Mildred and Elsie</u>	1881
<u>Mildred's Married Life</u>	1882
<u>Mildred at Home</u>	1884
<u>Mildred's Boys and Girls</u>	1886
<u>Mildred's New Daughter</u>	1894

B. Fiction for Children

<u>Cassella, or Children of the Village</u>	1867
<u>An Old Fashioned Boy</u>	1870
<u>Our Fred, or Seminary Life at Thurston</u>	1874
<u>Twiddledewit</u>	1889

C. Fiction for Adults

<u>Signing the Contract and What It Cost</u>	1878
<u>The Thorn in the Nest</u>	1880
<u>The Tragedy of Wild River Valley</u>	1893
<u>Wanted: A Pedigree</u>	1870

APPENDIX

CECIL COUNTY LIBRARY

Elkton, Md.

January 22, 1939.

Mrs. F. E. Rost,
223 South 43rd Street,
Louisville, Kentucky.

Dear Mrs. Rost:

In reply to your letter regarding Martha Finley, we have located the following:

Miss Martha Finley: That women, girls, and children throughout the length and breadth of the land should be interested in Miss Finley is not to be wondered at when it is known that she is the authoress of the "Elsie Books", for while there are books and books, there are few that have, as do hers, the interesting situations, the pleasing romance, the wise religious suggestion, the pure lovemaking, and better than all, the pure womanly tone. But few of the people of eastern Maryland, while they know of her and have read her books, know that most of them were written in the quiet village of Elkton, Maryland, where her home has been for many years. Miss Finley comes of illustrious Irish ancestry. Her grandfather, General Samuel Finley, was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania in 1752. He was graduated from Princeton College, under his uncle, Dr. Samuel Finley, and upon the opening of the Revolutionary War, espoused the cause of the colonists, and rose to the rank of major. He was captured at Fort Washington and held a prisoner by the British for three years. During the War of 1812 he again entered the army, in which he distinguished himself and attained the rank of general. He was a warm personal friend of General Washington, and served under him as receiver of public money at Chillicothe, Ohio. His uncle, James Finley, was the first Presbyterian minister at Elkton, Maryland.

Miss Finley's father was Dr. James Brown Finley who was born in Pennsylvania June 7, 1794. At the age of eighteen he enlisted in the War of 1812 with his father, served until the surrender of Detroit, was paroled, and then returned home. Later he was graduated from Dickinson College, of

Carlisle, Pennsylvania, after which he studied medicine. He married his first cousin, Maria Theresa Brown, at Chillicothe, Ohio. Martha Finley was born on April 26, 1828. In 1836 her parents moved to South Bend, Indiana where the father practiced medicine until his death in 1852. The girlhood of Miss Finley was spent in South Bend, and there she received an excellent education in private schools. She then taught for a time in a private school for small children, and she frequently entertained the little pupils with stories which were doubtless the nucleus of tales published in later years. Her first effort, in a literary way, was a writer of short stories for religious papers, which were under the direction of the Presbyterian Publishing Company. The manuscript of her first story was taken to the Baptist Board, was accepted and published, and upon its appearance was well received.

After the death of her father, Miss Finley had come east, and her early articles were written in New York and Philadelphia. In 1876 she made a visit to Elkton, Maryland, and finally decided to make this place her home. She has a beautiful residence in the most aristocratic part of the village, surrounded by extensive grounds and a neat hedge fence. In this place much of her best work has been done. She has written more than one hundred books, all for children (with the exception of the Finley series). To anyone who has read her books her love for young girls and her strong religious feeling are most evident. No writer of the 19th century was better loved. Her great aim has been to interest the little ones and in this she has succeeded far beyond her expectations. While all her works have attracted wide attention, her Elsie books are without doubt the most popular. The principal ones are as follows: Elsie Dinsmore, Elsie's Holidays at Roselands, Elsie's Girlhood, Elsie's Womanhood, Elsie's Children, Elsie's Widowhood, Grandmother Elsie, Elsie's New Relations, Elsie at Nantucket, The Two Elsie's, Elsie's Kith and Kin, Elsie's Friends at Woodburn, and others of the Elsie series. Some of her other works are Signing the Contract, Wanted, a Pedigree, The Mildred Series, The Finley Series, and the Tragedy of Wild River Valley.

It can be truly said that Miss Finley's Elsie books made her famous, although all have been well received. At one time some of the newspapers of the country made an effort to stop the publication of any more Elsie books, saying that "they had enough of Elsie", and one editor of a large daily remarked in the column of his paper,

"For God's sake, give us something besides Elsie". Notwithstanding this, Miss Finley "pursued the even tenor of her way" and continued to write Elsie books. She was not writing to please the editors or publishers, but her little friends, and as long as they were pleased and satisfied she was content to give them Elsie in every phase. When she first began writing her publishers refused to let her get her books copyrighted and paid her only what they saw fit for her manuscript, but when fame came to her, she determined that she, instead of the publishing houses, would copyright her books and that royalty must be paid for them. Her publishers were Dodd, Mead and Company of New York.

Miss Finley talked freely of her early struggles for fame and fortune. She was a member of the Authors' Club of New York City.

This was taken from a reference book in our library and is the only information we have regarding Miss Finley's life. Possibly Dodd, Mead and Company could give you further information and also the Authors' Club of New York, which I think is still in existence.

Hoping this will be of value in writing your thesis,
I am

Very truly yours,

(signed) Phillis R. Constable

(Mrs. Albert Constable, Director)

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK

December 5, 1939

Miss Virginia Haggard Rost,
223 South 43rd Street,
Louisville, Ky.

Dear Miss Rost:

We have very little specific information about Martha Finley. Our relations with her were always close, but unfortunately all the people in Dodd, Mead and Company who knew her have since passed away. We do not keep clippings for more than a few years; consequently, we have no reviews. You could find them, however, in the periodicals of the times.

The original volume of Elsie Dinsmore was twice as long as the one that was first published. My great-grandfather, Mr. Moses Dodd, advised the author to cut it in half and publish the first half as Elsie Dinsmore and the latter half as the second volume in the series. This was done, and, as you know, the two were followed by twenty-six additional volumes. Other series were issued under pseudonyms, but none of them were as successful as the Elsie books. The total sales of all the books have been somewhat over 5,000,000 copies. It would be impossible to figure the number exactly, but I think you are safe enough in using this.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) E.H.Dodd, Jr.

EHD jr/0

PUBLIC LIBRARY
South Main Street at Wayne
SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

December 7, 1939.

Miss Virginia Haggard Rost,
223 South 43rd Street,
Louisville, Kentucky.

Dear Miss Rost:

Your letter of December first to the
Northern Indiana Historical Society was sent to us
yesterday.

Enclosed is a copy of the material which
we have in our local history file. I hope it may be of
some help.

The book Mildred Keith is thought by some
to be of autobiographical nature. Some of the characters
and incidents are said to be South Bend characters and
incidents.

Very truly yours,

(signed) Mary M. Post

Local History Department

Copied from the South Bend Daily Times January 30, 1909

Elkton, Maryland, January 30. After a lingering illness, Miss Martha Finley died at her home here today, aged 80 years. She was one of the best known authoresses in this country, and her fame as the writer of the Elsie books has spread to many foreign lands.

Miss Finley was the daughter of the late Dr. James B. Finley and was born at Chillicothe, Ohio, but later moved to South Bend, Indiana. After her early education at South Bend she went to New York and Philadelphia.

* * *

Literary fame came to Miss Martha Finley after she left South Bend, fifty years ago or more. Her father, the late James Finley, was a prominent local pioneer physician and resided in one of the houses just south of the Sheridan Hotel where Miss Finley taught a private school. After the death of her father, the family, including the son Dr. Sanford Finley, a gifted musician, moved to Philadelphia.

Copied from the biography in front of Elsie Dinsmore, 1910 edition, New York Company.

Martha Finley, American author (pen name, Martha Farquaharson), was born in Chillicothe, Ohio in 1828. She was educated in Philadelphia and was a school teacher in South Bend, Indiana; from there she moved to Philadelphia in 1853, where she engaged in newspaper work and writing Sunday School stories.

The first volume of her Elsie books, was entitled Elsie Dinsmore, and was issued in 1868. This book was an immediate success. It was followed by twenty-seven more books in which Elsie Dinsmore was the heroine. The last of the series, Elsie's Winter Trip, was published in 1902.

Most of the school girls for two generations past have followed the activities and achievements of Elsie from her school days until she figured as Grandmother Elsie.

The Elsie books are not only the "best sellers", but perpetual best sellers. More of them were sold in 1909 than in any year since their publication.

Miss Finley also wrote another series of novels of which the first book was Mildred Keith followed by six more volumes known as the Mildred books, but they did not attain anywhere near the popularity of the Elsie books.

Miss Finley was also the author of the following books: Signing the Contract and What It Cost, The Tragedy of Wild River Valley, Our Fred, An Old Fashioned Boy, Wanted: A Pedigree, and The Thorn in the Nest.

Miss Finley lived in Elkton, Maryland, for thirty years until her death in 1909.

Copied from St. Joseph Valley Register (Weekly), May 22, 1851.

DIED--At midnight, Wednesday the fourteenth, of Erysipelas. Dr. James B. Finley in the 57th year of his age. Dr. Finley, whose sudden death, for he was in health and strength less than a week previously, we are called upon to record was one of the old citizens of the town, born in Carlisle County, Pennsylvania in 1794 and removed with his family in his early years to Ohio, from which state he emigrated hither in 1836.

Since his residence here, he has filled various offices of trust both in civil and ecclesiastical life. For many years school commissioner of the county and at a later period, and until his death notary public, he performed well all the duties devolving upon him. For thirty years a professor of religion, he was always active in religious labors and has been an elder in the Presbyterian Church of this place during the whole term of his residence, holding also at his death the additional office of Superintendent of the Sabbath School connected with the church.

As a citizen, the influence of the deceased was steadily cast in favor of morality and order. In his family and social relations he as affectionate and kind, and wherever he thought duty led, stern and unyielding.

But the silver cord has been loosed and the golden bowl broken at the fountain. Our graveyard has received another tenant and this spirit has rejoined those of his friends whom death had taken before. But it is a joyful consolation to the large family whom he has left behind that his eye of faith was undimmed to the last and his hope as steadfast as the firm anchor which no tempest can effect.

His remains were accompanied to the grave by a large number of sympathizing friends, the remaining elders with other members of his church, acting as pall bearers.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

126

New York, December 11, 1939.

Miss Virginia Haggard Rost,
223 S. 43rd Street,
Louisville, Kentucky.

Dear Madam:

In reply to your letter of December 1:

Our Information Division reports that appended to the articles on Martha Finley in the Dictionary of American Biography, and in American Authors, 1800-1900 by S. J. Kunitz and H. Haycroft, you will find short bibliographies of material about Miss Finley. They note the obituary in the Baltimore Sun of January 31, 1909.

The New Yorker, March 14, 1936, pp. 51-56, has an article called "Onward and Upward with the Arts - Elsie Reread", by G. B. Stern.

We have looked through the six Presbyterian papers which we have, in the issues just after Miss Finley's death, but find no obituary articles. The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature has from time to time listed articles about her.

The only obituary notice our Newspaper Room could find was the following, which appeared in the New York Times for January 31, 1909:

Elkton, Md. Jan. 30 - After a long illness, Miss Martha Finley, the author, died today at her home, in Elkton. She was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, April 26, 1828. Among her best known works were the Elsie books.

Very truly yours,

(signed) Paul North Rice
Chief of the Reference Department

PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE
PHOENIXVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PHOENIXVILLE, PA.

December 19, 1939.

Mrs. Virginia Haggard Rost,
223 South 43rd Street,
Louisville, Kentucky.

Dear Mrs. Rost:

I have searched through all the local material that we have in the library, but I have not been able to find anything about Miss Martha Finley. In fact, I could not even find her name mentioned. I am sorry that I cannot be of some help to you, but Phoenixville just doesn't seem to have realized that Miss Finley once lived here.

Very truly yours,
(signed) Alta Kriebel
Librarian