

A (Relatively) Brief Biographical Sketch of 19th-Century Author, Activist and Mystic Mathew Franklin Whittier

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As of this writing, my two e-books on Mathew Franklin Whittier—and on myself as his reincarnation—come in at roughly 2,290 pages and 800 pages, respectively. They were written, and continuously revised, for more than a decade, beginning from year 2010. Although they were conceived on a chronological basis, they quickly evolved into the *story of the research*, rather than of Mathew’s life and work, per se. Furthermore, they are designed to prove the reincarnation case, as well as Mathew’s authorship of various disputed works. One of these disputed works—the “Quails” travelogue in the 1849-52 Boston “Weekly Museum”—required examining so much evidence, that it stretched to the length of an exceptionally long book in its own right! But my philosophy of research, and the reporting of research, is that it takes whatever it takes.

In the biographical sketch that follows, I will stick to the chronological format, and I will assert conclusions about Mathew’s life which I will *not* attempt to prove. The evidence is in the aforementioned e-books, “Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words” (being “in his own words” because I am his reincarnation, as well as because the story is told with copious quotes from his own works), and “Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own world” (written after I had moved to Portland, Maine). Therefore, the reader can be assured that these claims are not made frivolously; and yet, I will be free to tell the story of Mathew’s life without the necessity of constantly proving every assertion to the skeptic. If “extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence,” then the corollary is that “extraordinary evidence takes time.” The *serious* skeptic is invited to take that time with my e-books.

Mathew Franklin Whittier was born on July 18, 1812 on a small farm in Haverhill, Mass. He had three siblings, being the younger brother of Fireside Poet John Greenleaf Whittier whose fame would entirely eclipse his own. This does not, however—as the official Whittier legacy would have you believe—infer that Mathew was a hack writer, responsible only for one satirical series concerning “Ethan Spike” from “Hornby,” plus certain unnamed “versifications” which had not been preserved. Mathew’s nominal reputation—or even poor reputation, where you can find anything at all about him in the Whittier lore—results from two factors. Firstly, unlike his famous brother, he published almost all of his work anonymously, under a great variety of pseudonyms. He does not appear to have even enlightened his family about his own literary accomplishments, so deeply did he bury his light under a bushel. Secondly, the official Whittier biographer, his son-in-law, Samuel Pickard, appears to have also been his personal nemesis. Thus, to this day, Mathew is painted as the “black sheep” of the Whittier family. Even his two-decades-long tenure with the Boston Custom House, from 1861 to his retirement in his final illness in 1882, has been truncated by Pickard to a mere 13 years, while his birthday is given incorrectly as July 4th.¹

Aside from remarks made by Pickard, chiefly in “The Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier” and “Whittier-Land,” the only full-length biography of Mathew is a student thesis by Lloyd Wilfred Griffin, entitled “The Life and Works of Matthew Franklin Whittier,” written for

the University of Maine, Orono in 1941. There is also a 1998 biographical sketch in the “Encyclopedia of American Humorists” (ed. Steven H. Gale), written by Daniel G. Royot. Both of these, however, rely heavily on Pickard; and as it turns out, not only are they drastically deficient in reporting Mathew’s literary accomplishments, they contain a number of factual errors. Speaking of factual errors, note that in this present work, I will be spelling Mathew’s first name with one letter “t,” as “Mathew.” This is based on a photocopy of a letter he wrote to Thomas Chandler on June 20, 1837—the only instance I have found in which he spelled out his first name. In all other instances throughout his life, he signed as “M.F. Whittier.” I will also spell his younger sister’s name as “Elisabeth” rather than “Elizabeth,” as it is found throughout the Whittier legacy, because I likewise have copies of correspondence, both by her and addressed to her, which indicate that this was the correct spelling.

Accordingly, I have used the official biographies, such as they are, only as a starting point. The bulk of what follows derives from primary sources—correspondence, a few personal descriptions, and a vast, hitherto unrecognized and untapped treasure house of published works. The latter includes travelogues, which amount to public diaries.

From the few snippets of information Mathew gives us about his childhood, it appears that he was active—if not hyperactive—inquisitive, and mischievous. His nickname appears, from a great many clues, to have been “Peter Pumpkin,” based on his love of pumpkin pies—but he was also referred to as “some pumpkins,” which is to say, what we would today call “a pistol.” Writing as “Quails” (which travelogue series historians have mistakenly attributed to Ossian Dodge), Mathew tells us in the March 27, 1852 edition of the “Weekly Museum”:

The eyes of the passengers were now bent, first upon the conductor, who was evidently highly excited with the responsibility that rested upon his shoulders for the first time during his public service, and then upon the traveler in tattered pants, who presented full as comical an appearance as we did, when a youngster, on an occasion when we attempted to climb over a high picket fence to see our little sweetheart, and our foot slipped, and we came down on the top of a pink bed minus one trousers’ leg and a part of our little linen roundabout.

Mathew wrote primarily from real life, and he secretly embedded a great deal of his personal biography in his various fictional works. In “The Cruise of the Cow-Catcher,” signed “by the Hon. Albert Fitzmortimer,” which appears in the first edition of the “Museum,” he seems to be hinting at a darker childhood:

‘T was morn, and as the gallant Cowcatcher skimmed the dancing waves, with a velocity which mocked the progress of the winds, or that of a deputy sheriff after the author, a sharp and awful cry of anguish was heard issuing from her decks, and then were heard stifled groans and shrieks and sobs, and broken exclamations of “It wasn’t me as upset the frying pan,” and the whizzing of the lash. Oh! Heavens! was there no thunderbolt left to fell the perpetrator of such barbarities to the earth?

This is a clear reference to being in trouble with the law, as well as to family corporal punishment (presumably, by his mother). Another such reference appears in a letter from one of

“Ethan Spike’s” brothers, “Parseverance W. Spike” (the “W.” presumably stands for “Whittier”), published in the Jan. 4, 1851 edition. The account, adjusting for exaggeration, is autobiographical for Mathew:

Mr. Editor—Gentlemen—Sir—Wal, ‘t would be kinder curos ef you should put this into the *Mewsyum*! ‘T would, I swaow! But I do n’t keer ef you do, on the hull. I wish you would; I should jest like to see haow I should look in print—leastways—not me, but my ideers; so put er threw—will yer, ‘Squire? Perhaps you do n’t know me—guess you do n’t, come to think on’t. I knows you do n’t. My name is Spike—Parseverance W. Spike! Yes, sir, them is my cognermin, and I haint ashamed on’t nyther! Trew, I haint egzactly Ethan Spike, but I’m a brother of hisn—leastways—not quite, as we had tew mothers, an’ I do n’t know haow many fathers. Howsever, I’m a Spike—thar’s no daout about that! I feel it in me, as the praoud blood of that anshunt an’ supernewmary race sarches an’ circumnavigates threw my vanes. I have had a good many literary attacks, but father’s most ginerally whopped me aout of ‘em—but this that’s onto me naow, is the hardest yet. My geenus must have vent, an’ I told father so, this morning. Father, says I, it’s no use, yer might jest as well try to stop the tongue of aant Jewdy Kyer, when it’s fairly sot in for a run—as attempt to stop the bilin’ over of raal, omittygated, natyve talent—says I! *Father, I will be a litterytoor, says I!* “You shan’t,” says he! I will says I! “Take that,” says he—an’ he fetched me a crack on the side of my head, that made me see more stars than is put down in the fundament.—But the permethian spark was lit in me. I was bold as a lyon! I clinched the old un—an’ though he is paowerful staout—natyve talent was staouter. I licked him! I did n’t let the old feller get up, till he promised I might rite one letter to the *Musyum*. I told Ethan about it, an’ he says I done jest right.—Says he—”yourn is a case of parseverance under difficulties,” says he. Says I—”if you’d sawn me given it to father, you’d a thought it was a case of *Parseverance atop* of difficulties,” says I. “That ere is a pun,” says he. “Show!” says I.

Pickard tells us that John Greenleaf’s older sister, Mary, submitted one of his poems to William Lloyd Garrison, who printed it in his newly-launched “Free Press” in 1826. Garrison then approached John’s father with the suggestion that John be permitted to pursue a higher education.² Though his father was reluctant, finally John was permitted to earn his tuition via shoemaking, and to attend the local Haverhill Academy. Mathew, however, was apparently not granted the same permission. Based on a great many clues, it appears that he ran away from home at age 12, probably in the spring of 1825. He had been successfully publishing in the Boston-based “New-England Galaxy” (i.e., *before* John’s work ever saw print). He went first to Boston, and then to New York City, where, among other quite sophisticated pieces, he published the first humorous series in America using Yankee dialect (as we see above), for the character, “Joe Strickland” (which was not published by the lottery shop owner, George W. Arnold, as Allen Walker Read has concluded).³ It appears that he returned home by age 14, and engaged, for a time, in shoemaking with his brother. However, when he was not permitted to attend school, he ran away again, this time permanently.

Based on various passing references and quotations, Mathew assiduously studied the prominent satirists of Europe; but this kind of work was not considered true literature by his mother, and

was not encouraged in the way that she encouraged John's poetry. The only piece of Mathew's poetry retained by the official Whittier legacy is a snippet concerning "Daniel in the Lions' Den," and the story is told by Griffin that Mathew's mother gave him the topic, requesting that he write serious poetry like his brother. The poem he responded with reads:

They took old Daniel by the heels,
And headlong thrust him in,
Then all the lions waiting there,
At him began to grin.

But Daniel mustered stoutly up,
His courage did not fail;
He boxed the lions on the ears,
And pulled them by the tail!

Griffin indicates that his mother was "mildly displeased with Franklin's comic effusions" (he was referred to by his middle name in his family, but—contrary to the official Whittier lore—appears not to have used it, except for the occasional literary signature, once he was on his own). The inference is that the poem was entirely frivolous, and that unlike John, Mathew was not capable of serious work.

These lines, however, were veiled satire on his own dysfunctional family. Mathew, as the black sheep, was actually the truth-teller of the family, and the poem, itself, was a metaphor for his precarious position. The crucial detail, here, is that Mathew would *not* have been given the subject by his mother; rather, having been asked to draw from the Bible, he would have *chosen* the subject as a symbol. Clearly, if anyone in his family got the message, those carrying on the Whittier legacy did not.

I should note, here, that there are a couple of childhood accounts by Mathew which sound idyllic, rather than being satirical or indicative of abuse. One of these may have been a poem written specifically for his mother, i.e., for her to see in print, near the close of her life. Another speaks of his happy childhood—but when you examine the prose carefully, he speaks primarily of his experiences in Nature, rather than with his family. And there is one other clue—where John Greenleaf Whittier, in his flagship poem about his childhood, "Snow-Bound," describes each of his family members in turn, Mathew is entirely omitted! Historians have explained that Mathew is addressed directly in the poem, as the only surviving member at the time of the narration. However, this presupposes that John Greenleaf Whittier so lacked creativity, that he was unable to conceive a method of describing his brother while yet accommodating the premise that the poem is written, as it were, *to* his brother. Actually, it would have been a relatively simple task, as for example, "Brother, I remember you always into some mischief or other..." The conundrum with "Snow-Bound" is that it was an idealized poem, originally written for children, about an actual dysfunctional family; but the public took it literally. Therefore, for the remainder of his life, John Greenleaf—in order to profit from the popularity afforded by this big "hit" (and, to be fair, in order to protect his family)—had to pretend that this was literally his own family history. It is for this reason that everything in the Whittier legacy has been whitewashed as it has; and it is for this reason that Mathew, the truth-teller, has been expunged.

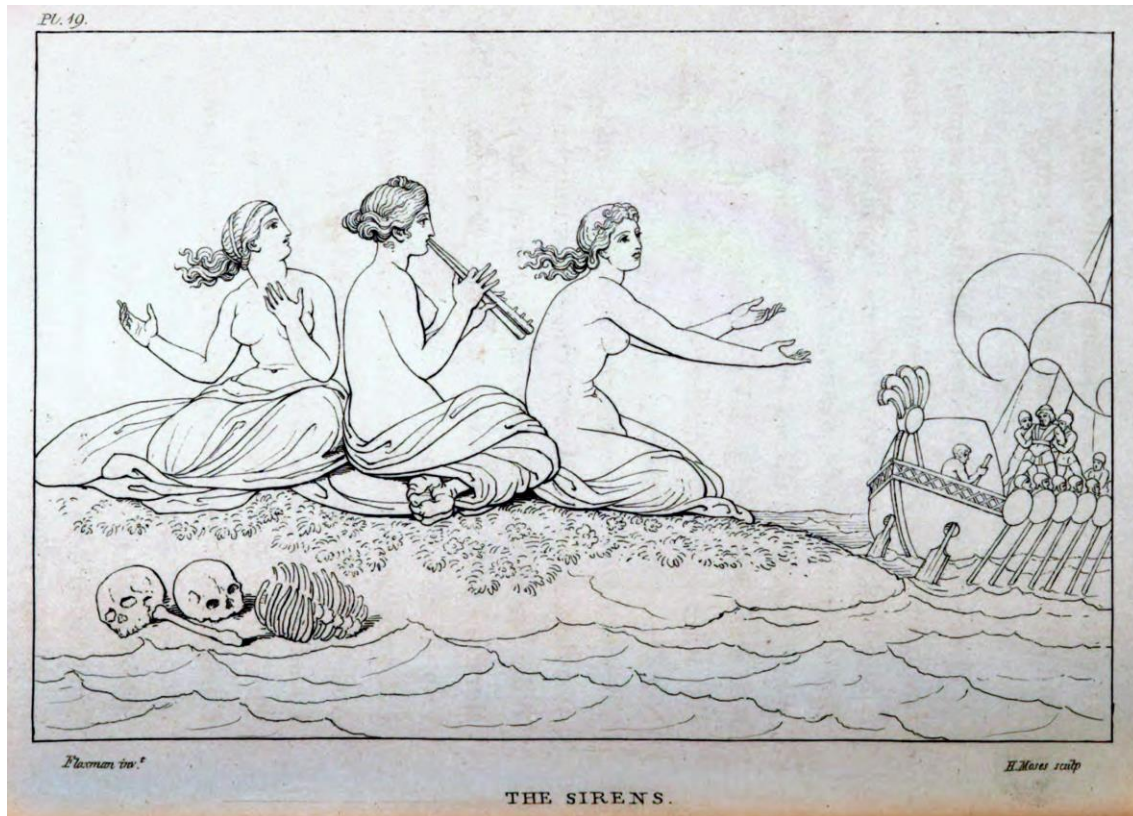
This, despite the fact that Mathew graciously refrained from publicly exposing the liberties which “Snow-Bound” had taken with the truth.

As we shall see, Mathew was the real author behind the star-signed reviews and essays written for the New York “Tribune” from the fall of 1844 until mid-1846, which historians have erroneously attributed to Margaret Fuller. In the Feb. 5, 1845 edition is a review of a children’s book entitled “The Child’s Friend.” Mathew (not Fuller) writes:

O that winter! freezing, snow-laden winter, which slowly ushered in our eighth birthday.—There, in the lonely farm-house, the day’s work done, and the bright wood fire a’ in a low, we were permitted to slide back the panel of the cupboard in the wall; most fascinating object still in our eyes, with which no stateliest alcoved library can vie; and there saw, neatly ranged on its two shelves, *not* praised be our natal star! Peter Parley nor “A history of the good little boy that never took any thing that did not belong to him;” but—the “Spectator,” “Telemachus,” “Goldsmith’s Animated Nature” and the “Illiad.”

Forms of gods and heroes more distinctly seen and with eyes of nearer love than now!—Our true Uncle, Sir Roger de Coverley, and ye, fair realms of Nature’s history whose pictures we tormented all grown persons to illustrate with more knowledge—still more, how we bless the chance that gave to us your great realities which life has daily helped us—helps us still, to interpret, instead of thin and baseless fictions that would, all this time, have hampered us although only with cobwebs.

Now, this cannot literally be Mathew’s birthday, any more than it can be Fuller’s, because both were born in the summer. Nor is Fuller, from an upper class background, likely to have done a “day’s work” on a farm, even if she were visiting! Technically, this could be the birthday of Horace Greeley, the editor of the Tribune, who was born in February—if one supposes that a busy editor would take time out to review a children’s book. However, Mathew was doing dangerous undercover work for the abolitionist cause, having deep connections to the Underground Railroad. In his personal references, he would occasionally insert a red herring, presumably to throw off his pro-slavery enemies. In any case, if we take Mathew to be the writer, we get a clear sense of him as an aspiring *scholar*, and we see some of his early influences. Other influences can be inferred from the sources he quotes in later life. Note, in the second paragraph, the tasteful reference to his questions, put to older persons (like his brother) about the nude figures—as, for example, the three sirens depicted in that edition of “The Illiad” which, as I have determined, was kept in the Whittier home. This, alone, would argue against Margaret Fuller’s authorship.



I distinctly recall that Mathew liked the one in the middle, playing the flute.

Beyond whatever he may have learned from his mother, from his older brother, and during the winter months at the local one-room schoolhouse, Mathew appears to have worked extremely hard to give himself a full liberal education. However, there were two other sources for him. Firstly, John Greenleaf Whittier is said to have had full access to the personal library of the local doctor, Elias Weld, in Rocks Village (East Haverhill). Mathew would have been 10 years old, and likely would have tagged along and made good use of his time there. Secondly, a great many clues indicate that Mathew's future wife, Abby Poyen, also of Rocks Village, acted as Mathew's tutor. Her father, being a marquis, raised his family in the French tradition, and no-doubt gave his daughters a full European-style education, which Abby then passed on to Mathew despite being four years younger. She, like Mathew, was a child prodigy (in her case, both literary and musical).

Mathew's life after running away from home can only be inferred from sparse clues. It appears that at age 12 he was mentored by at least three newspaper editors, who printed his early work: Joseph T. Buckingham, proprietor of the "New-England Galaxy" and the "Courier" in Boston; Asa Greene, who owned the "Berkshire American" in Pittsfield, Mass.; and Mordecai Noah, who edited for the "New York National Advocate," and then left that paper to found the New York "Enquirer." Mathew may have worked as a printer's apprentice for the "Courier" in Boston, while also pursuing the mercantile line, which dual career he continued to follow in New York City. When he ran away the second time at age 14, he may have attempted to go to sea, only to be thwarted by a weak stomach. Having been dropped off in Cuba, he apparently worked as a

clerk while awaiting the next ship back to the States. We see only a few veiled references to this period, in Mathew's various works, as for example in the "Quails" travelogue:

Having lead [sic] a public life since we were fourteen years of age, we have accustomed ourself, *from necessity*, to judge of men, manners, and incidents *at sight*, and consequently we should content (on the principal that experience strengthens every faculty) that we now stand a better chance of being a correct judge of human nature, than the majority of mankind, but with a frank avowal that "all men are liable to err," we will now give our brief criticism, or review, of the *Index*.—

While, in the April 19, 1851 "Carpet-Bag," in a story entitled "Foreordination"—the only piece Mathew wrote for that newspaper under the "Quails" signature—he tells the story of a 14-year-old boy working as a clerk, supposedly in Providence, Rhode Island:

In the city of Providence, there lived a few years since—and does yet, for ought I know—a garrulous old gentleman who was forever boring all who would listen to him, on the subject of foreordination.

Among the *unbelievers*, to whom the old man was particularly annoying, was his youngest apprentice, a lad of about fourteen years of age, with cross eyes and a white head.

If the lad fell and hurt himself, he was pacified with the assurance that it was foreordained by the divine will of Providence, and that if all things could be seen, it would at once be discovered that everything had turned out for the best.

Having been joked pretty hard about his white head one morning, by some impudent boys in the street, the apprentice entered the office of the old gentleman, and between smothered sobs and a few trickling tears, gave vent to his annoying misfortune, and a determine to procure a bottle of some newly invented hair dye and give his head an appearance a little more resembling that of other boys.

In Cuba, what makes Mathew stand out, so that he is the butt of the other boys' jokes, is not really that he has "white hair" and "cross eyes"—it's that he is American and doesn't speak Spanish.

Then again, in the May 18, 1850 "Weekly Museum," when Mathew is protesting the critics' reviews of his anonymously published book, "The Mistake of a Lifetime," he returns to his original "Joe Strickland" style. Here, he drops the hint:

Most of mi tyme has been spent in the survis of govomment, it is tru, but I have traviled konsiderable. I hav been to Kuby.

There are many other references to Mathew having trouble with his digestion, even from an early age. However, an unsigned piece which Mathew wrote, when he was editing the New York "Constellation" for Asa Greene, found in the Aug. 27, 1831 edition, specifically parodies ship

fare. Entitled “Living At Sea,” the premise is that a boy who has seafaring experience attempts to dissuade one Mrs. Marvel from encouraging her nephew to go to sea, by painting a dismal picture of the food on-board ship:

It is sometimes desput hard living at sea as I’ve understood,” said Mrs. Marvel, who had been attentively listening to some of the long yarns of her nephew, Jack Tafrail.

“Not so very hard neither,” replied Jack; “we can generally get a supply of good sound beef-barrels.”

“Beef-barrels!” exclaimed the old lady—“is it possible the poor cretures have to live on beef barrels?”

“They are very fine eating, ma’am, I can assure you,” said Jack with a very grave face—“the only difficulty is to keep the sailors from eating up the barrels before the beef is gone.”

“Are they so ravenous,” asked Mrs. Marvel, “that they cant wait—”

“Ravenous! by the Lord Harry, if you’d only seen them, as I have, eating a hand-spike without pepper or salt, you’d think nothing at all of their eating a beef-barrel.”

There are other references, as for example in Abby Poyen’s short stories, too numerous to cite here. This is just one example of how I have confirmed obscure facts about Mathew’s personal history from a great many clues embedded in over 2,500 of his identified published works, plus a few other sources like personal correspondence. Hereafter, I won’t provide my sources in so much detail.

Mathew appears to have had a long-standing crush on a girl from at least age 14. A number of clues point to Evelina Bray, who was older than Mathew but younger than his brother John, and who attended Haverhill Academy with John. Mathew was handsome, tall for his age and popular—but in her mid-teens, a girl would not take a boy two years younger seriously as a beau. Actually, I gather that Evelina was something of a flirt, and didn’t take *any* of the boys seriously (she married late in life). The Whittier legacy describes a lukewarm romance between her and John—but I think it was lukewarm firstly because Evelina wasn’t serious about anyone, and secondly, because while Mathew was at sea, John may have visited her with the express purpose of determining what her interest was in his younger brother, i.e., not to court her himself, as the Whittier historians suggest. This would explain why he reportedly didn’t recognize her in later years, on one occasion when they happened to attend the same church service.

Mathew tells us, through anonymous, ostensibly humorous letters published in the “New-England Galaxy,” that he went through a period of near-insanity while attempting to adjust to this romantic rejection. The letters are signed as “RIP Sneezer,” being a self-deprecating reference to his long nose, where “RIP” doubles as “Rest In Peace.” Emerging from this crisis, he not surprisingly adopted the stance of a committed bachelor. However, gradually his young tutor, Abby, who had secretly fallen in love with him, won his heart. In the New York

“Constellation,” Mathew wrote yet another humorous series of letters from a country bumpkin in the big city (as he had done with “Joe Strickland”), this time as “Enoch Timbertoes.” The letters are ostensibly written to his friend “Tim” back home, and he frequently mentions “your Sally,” i.e., Tim’s younger sister. These are thinly-veiled references to Abby’s older brother, Francis Louis, and Abby, herself. Clearly, in the “Enoch Timbertoes” letters, Sally has a crush on Enoch; and he reassures her that he remains a bachelor, and that he has no interest in the “city gals.” She, in turn, complains about being neglected. It is not entirely clear who wrote the following poem, but I think it was probably Abby, joining in the fun but, at the same time, expressing her real feelings. As I read the historical references, “trot” was a colloquialism for a little girl, but it could also mean an old woman—inferring that Sally Trot, a.k.a. Abby, was physically a young girl, but actually an old soul. The poem, found in the April 23, 1831 edition, begins:

A POETICAL EPISTLE,
From Sally Trot to Enoch Timbertoes.

Dear Enoch, ‘tis a mortal while
Since I have heard from you,—
Why can't you, when you write to Tim,
Send me a letter too?
I've been hoping every mail,
That's come since you left home,
Had got so *many* letters in,
That it would bring me *some*.

But I suppose the city gals
Have turned your head around,
And that you'd be ashamed to see
Me hoe the 'tater ground:
Yet many's the day that you and I
Have tended hay together,
and hand in hand have scampered home
In sudden rainy weather.

When did I ever yet refuse
To have you for my beau?
When did I ever to the ball
With any other go?
You know I always loved you more
Than any other man,
You know I love you *now*, as much
As any woman can.

And, Enoch, not to write a word—
I say it is too bad:
You ought to know a single line
Would make your Sally glad:

I've half a mind to let it drop—
The tear that's in my eye:—
But no—I wont—it shant be said
You ever made me cry.

In reality, Mathew may have been prevented from writing to Abby directly, or it may have been too awkward, given that she was only 14 going on 15. So in order to communicate with her, he had to write to her brother, who would then share the letters with her. Meanwhile, reassuring her that he was a committed bachelor was the best he could do, under the circumstances, to assure her of his fidelity.

That Mathew did, indeed, have developing feelings for her, is clearly indicated in his poem, thanking her for the birthday present of a nightcap. Mathew's 19th birthday fell on July 18, 1831. Two days earlier, "Lines, *Addressed to a Lady, on being presented by her with a night-cap fantastically decorated*," appears in the "Constellation," signed "P.P." (ostensibly for "Peter Pumpkin"). It opens:

I took a short nap,
Dear girl, in thy cap,
And dreamt of each hieroglyphic,
As black as the ace
Of spades was its face,
An omen to me quite terrific.

I feared that a frown
On that brow of thine own,
Might gather in anger or gloom,
And cloud the warm sky
That smiles in thine eye,
And destroy all my hopes in the bloom.

Abby had only recently turned 15. By February of the following year, he had openly declared his love to her with another poem printed in the "Constellation," though at least until her 16th birthday it remained a chaste relationship (as humorously inferred in yet a third poem).

Regarding Mathew's literary history, in December of 1829 he left Boston and Joseph T. Buckingham's "New-England Galaxy," to join Asa Greene (former owner of the "Berkshire American") in New York City, where Greene had recently established the "Constellation." Greene also owned a bookstore there, and must have been splitting his time between both of these ventures. When it became apparent that Mathew, even in his late teens, was fully competent to edit the newspaper, Greene turned it over to him and Mathew became the functioning editor. He, himself, was splitting his energies between the paper and his mercantile career. He continued as the editor until the fall of 1832.⁴ In 1833, he began writing a series of five novels: "A Yankee Among the Nullifiers: An Auto-Biography," signed "Elnathan Elmwood, Esq." (1833); "The Life and Adventures of Dr. Dodimus Duckworth....," signed "By the Author of 'A Yankee Among the Nullifiers'" (1833); "Travels in America," signed "By George

Fibbleton, Esq..." (1833); "The Perils of Pearl Street, Including a Taste of the Dangers of Wall Street," signed "By a Late Merchant" (1834); and "The Debtors' Prison: A Tale of a Revolutionary Soldier," unsigned (1834). Some of these books indicate Asa Greene as the person registering the book, or as the printer, but none represent him as the author. Clearly, Greene—Mathew's former editor—merely helped him get them published.

During this same period, Mathew must have been visiting Abby in Rocks Village, or perhaps meeting with her in Boston, because they collaborated on a book which was primarily written by herself (being chiefly in her style): "Chanticleer: A Thanksgiving Story of the Peabody Family." This book didn't appear until 1850, when it was published anonymously, presumably by Mathew. Somehow, the name of author Cornelius Mathews became associated with it in later printings. Cornelius Mathews had been Mathew's editor in 1847 for "Yankee Doodle." However, the two men had had a falling out because when the paper was failing, Cornelius Mathews failed to pay Mathew for a lengthy series about yet another country bumpkin in the big city, entitled "Attempts to See the Elephant." I can only extrapolate that in 1850, Mathew, attempting to be generous, offered Cornelius the deal that if he would publish this book for him in New York, Mathew would forgive him the debt. Of course, per Mathew's usual *modus operandi*, he would have to keep Mathew's own name out of it. But as typically happened, the book itself was so good, that it garnered acclaim and attention—from people who traced it to Cornelius Mathews, assuming him to be the editor. At some point, he must have given in to the temptation to claim it as his own. Greene, however, never seems to have done this—historians have simply made their own conclusions, and repeated the mistake amongst themselves, without Greene ever having asserted his authorship of those five novels.

Returning to Mathew and Abby's courtship, the course of true love—and they were true soul-mates—certainly did not "run smooth" for them. Abby's father, Joseph Poyen, was a marquis with ties to the French royal crown. Clearly, he was hoping she would marry well, and his investment in her education had been geared toward this end. In any case, he was not about to permit her to marry beneath her class, even if he *was* in America. Mathew, meanwhile, was desperately attempting to succeed in business, so that he would, as he imagined, have a better chance for Abby's hand in marriage. The third love poem alluded to above, "My Love and I," indicates that when she was 15 and he was 19, they were permitted to walk out at night, unchaperoned. But when she reached 16, it appears that they became intimate (this being the age at which such things were considered appropriate), and, being discovered, Mathew was banned from seeing or communicating with her at all. Probably her father, as an upper class Frenchman, was not as shocked as he pretended to be. A little experience would actually make her a better partner for a suitable husband. What concerned him was that Abby was getting serious, which he could not allow to continue. All of this, of course, went right over Mathew's head. He was now only able to communicate to Abby *through his published works*, and this situation must have continued for some time. Each remained faithful to the other, despite her father attempting to provide a suitable upper class boy, who lied to Abby about Mathew's character and fidelity, pretended to be her consoling friend, and finally, when all else failed, may have attempted to rape her, at which time he was driven out of the house as the scoundrel he truly was.

Eventually, Mathew was permitted to visit with Abby, again, but he was never able to achieve financial success (being too honest and gullible, and having a penchant for forming unwise

partnerships when he, himself, did not have the funds to launch them on his own). When he asked for Abby's hand, her father refused him, and the couple was finally forced to elope from Haverhill to nearby Dover, New Hampshire on Aug. 2, 1836. There, they lived happily while Mathew launched a dry goods shop. Her father, however, was not yet ready to admit defeat. When Abby went home to visit and to make peace with him, he must have charged her with having stolen her own jewelry, and had her placed under arrest, such that she was prohibited from leaving Rocks Village and ordered to have no contact with Mathew. This would have been legally possible because a woman's property actually belonged either to her father, or to her husband. If the marriage was null and void, then she could be construed as having absconded with *his own property*. Abby's greatest fear, at this time, would be that her father would make good on his long-time threat to send her to a finishing school in Paris. If I am not mistaken, she hatched a scheme—with the help of her sisters—to arrange a lovemaking rendezvous with Mathew, whereby she got pregnant. A pregnant girl would not be admitted to a finishing school, and thus her father was checkmated.

The circumstances of Mathew and Abby's elopement are very interesting, if I have extrapolated them correctly. The official date of their marriage, in the historical records, is August 4. However, I believe that they had, together, ghost written an abolitionist sermon for Rev. David Root, the pastor of the First Parish Church in Dover. On August 2nd, he gave that sermon in Mathew and Abby's hometown of Haverhill, Mass. The couple would have attended the meeting, and then immediately fled, under cover of darkness, to Dover. Attending the meeting would have doubled as their excuse to be out that evening, and to have a horse and carriage at their disposal. I would guess that, glancing back over their shoulders nervously the entire time, they proceeded to the home of Mathew's first cousin, Moses, where they knew they would be both welcome and safe. Soon, they were established in a boarding house run by a mixed couple like themselves, one Quaker and one not, on Franklin Square in Dover.

By this time Abby had converted Mathew to abolitionism, and they began answering a 10-part anti-abolition series of letters in the local newspaper, the Dover "Enquirer," with a 10-part rebuttal of their own. The original series was signed "Alpha & Beta," whereas Mathew and Abby signed as "Kappa, Lambda & Mu." "Kappa" symbolized Abby (as a Japanese river sprite), "Lambda" represented Mathew (being the symbol on Spartan shields, indicating his guarded emotional temperament), and "Mu" symbolized their son Joseph, as yet unborn when the series commenced.⁵ Unfortunately, the signature afforded too many clues to their identity in this small town—and Dover's economy being centered around its cotton mill, abolitionists were not looked upon kindly by the local elite. It appears that when a memorial was held for the recently martyred abolitionist from Illinois, Rev. Elijah Lovejoy, in Rev. David Root's church, Mathew and Abby ghost wrote the eulogy (and Abby may have contributed music). But as soon as the service was over, they fled to Amesbury, Mass., where Mathew's family now resided. There, they may have lived among the millworkers in poor housing, while Mathew clerked for a local paper, the "News and Courier." He also launched an evening penmanship class, but this failed when the mills lengthened their hours, so that half the students, being millworkers, had to drop out. This may have been intentional, inasmuch as Mathew and Abby probably provided sample materials which were incendiary, advocating both abolition and workers' rights (including shorter hours). The mill owners may have incited the workers against the couple; in any case, there is a record of Mathew protesting that local girls were throwing rocks at the windows

(presumably, their own windows). Abby was also being persecuted as a witch, because of her long-time interest in paranormal subjects.

Mathew had not long been working as a clerk for the “News and Courier” when, inspired by the biography of his namesake, Benjamin Franklin, he quit to launch his own paper, the “Monitor,” which he published from the nearby town of Salisbury. As of this writing there is only one known volume of this paper in existence, and the owner has not seen fit to share it publicly. However, I was able to access it, to a limited extent, via the two front pages shown as samples by the auction house that sold it; as well as by reprints from it in other contemporary newspapers (most especially, William Lloyd Garrison’s paper, “The Liberator”). One person who had looked through the volume personally, wrote me that Mathew’s writing was “quite sophisticated for the time.” The pieces I was able to access, plus the auction house description, indicate that it contained progressive material concerning spiritualism, dueling, and slavery. Very likely it offended on a number of counts, and being a personal venture (probably unfunded), it survived only a few months, from February to May of 1838.

Meanwhile, Mathew was desperately trying to move his little family out of harm’s way. His brother recommended him to an anti-slavery friend, Thomas Chandler, in Michigan. Mathew wrote Chandler a series of letters exploring the possibility of moving there, requesting help finding work beyond simple farm labor—but none was to be had. In these letters, Mathew makes no mention whatsoever of having run away from home at an early age, nor of any of his literary accomplishments. He only describes his efforts along the mercantile line, but makes it sound as though these began later than they actually did. There are a number of reasons why his hands might have been tied in this regard, including whatever his brother might have previously told Chandler. Mathew, however, is honest about his business failures, including the most recent one in Dover. (Elsewhere, he hints that Abby’s father may have used his influence to maliciously turn his creditors against him, in Dover.)

Finally, in late July of 1838, Mathew traveled to Michigan to meet with Chandler. However, upon his return he found that their 11-month-old son, Joseph, had died in a local scarlet fever epidemic. He refers to this event in the first stanza of a poem-in-progress, plagiarized from him by one Robert Johnson, and published in the June 8, 1850 edition of the Boston “Weekly Museum” (a week after Abby’s birthday):

Now we see the infant sleeping
In his wicker cradle bed;
Then, we find the mother weeping,
Like a Rachel, for the dead.

Three weeks later, Abby’s brother, Louis Francis, died of unknown causes. I feel that the two deaths are related; that Louis may have failed somehow in his childcare duties while Mathew was away, and subsequently committed suicide. There is one hint that Louis may have had a drinking problem, which Abby’s first cousin, Mesmerist Charles Poyen, was attempting to help him with. If Louis had lapsed, and taken little Joseph to a tavern, Joseph could have caught scarlet fever there. Mathew’s cutting remarks, at discovering this cause of his son’s death, may

have driven Louis to kill himself in shame. All of this is speculation, with a certain amount of educated guessing and past-life memory thrown in.

It appears from several clues that Mathew and Abby were invited by Mathew's second cousin, Richard Whittier, to stay at Richard's farmhouse in nearby Methuen, Mass. This building, now called the "Tenney Gatehouse," is the site of the local historical society. Mathew and Abby would have been given the smaller of the two upstairs bedrooms. Abby was so devastated by the loss of their son, Joseph, that Mathew feared for her life. Perhaps she wouldn't eat; perhaps he was afraid that, on one of her long walks by the river, she would throw herself in. So he couldn't leave her side, and hence was unable to help with the farm chores. Some of the townspeople, seeing this, spread the rumor that they were lazy. Many years later, Mathew got back at them with an ostensibly humorous sketch in the "Weekly Museum" entitled "How the Cows Were Won," where the local laziness champion in the town of "M——," named "P——" (for "Poyen"), is challenged by a champion from another county named "W——" (for "Whittier"), and there is a contest (the prize being the two cows which each has put up for the occasion).

In late 1838, John Greenleaf Whittier arranged for Mathew to take a position in a stove company in Portland, Maine, run by a fellow-Quaker named Nathan Winslow. Life seemed to be picking up for the couple. They rented, as I believe, in a nice neighborhood not far from Winslow's own ancestral home, and Abby could even have a piano (or, possibly, to the piano at the Congregationalist meeting house across the street). But back in Dover, Abby had, as I believe, tended one of Mathew's in-laws—Sarah Hacker Jones Whittier, the second wife of his first cousin, Moses. Sarah died of "consumption," i.e., tuberculosis, having been placed in the local "pest house." Abby would not have been willing to abandon her there, and so tended her. Tuberculosis has a long incubation period of several months to several years. Thus, it was in Portland, after things were finally improving, that Abby would have displayed the first symptoms of the disease. Meanwhile, not long after Mathew went to work for Nathan Winslow's business, it folded. Mathew was forced (he called it "Hobson's choice") to either go in with a partner to purchase the firm, or seek for other employment in a bad economy. The partner, one Hugh Montgomery, probably had the money, having emigrated from Ireland. (Historians assume that this Hugh Montgomery had already been involved with the firm, but I have determined there may have been two with the same name—and the one with whom Mathew partnered had emigrated more recently.) This was yet another of Mathew's unwise choice of partners (he may have influenced Mathew to drink), and what with attempting to sell high-ticket items (stoves) in a poor economy, the business foundered. By late fall or early winter of 1839, Abby appears to have been sent to a warmer clime to convalesce for several months—probably, to her family's native Guadeloupe, where she may have been treated by her cousin, Charles Poyen. (Poyen, himself, although training to be a doctor, succumbed to the same disease a few years later.)

Abby returned to Portland in July of 1840, just in time to give birth to their second child, Sarah. Again, things seemed to be looking up. However, the stress of financial difficulties, and perhaps even the insidious effects of lead poisoning from pipes, cheap wine and cheap pewter ware, may have led to mental instability and unnecessary jealousy squabbles. The business was failing, and they were forced to live in what I take to have been a drafty hotel room—probably family charity from Mathew's distant relatives. Finally, Abby was taken by her sisters—the same two who had

earlier stayed with her after Sarah's birth—back to her father's house. Inasmuch as Joseph Poyen may have vowed not to help Abby unless she left Mathew, this was a supremely humiliating step for him to take, and was probably done in utter desperation. Sarah had died of unknown causes a week or so earlier (death by fire, when she was being cared for at someone else's house, is a possibility), and Abby seems to have given up the will to live. Mathew may have hoped that if he couldn't encourage her to eat, perhaps she would benefit from being with her mother and sisters, especially since her mother knew herbal healing. But for Abby, it may simply have meant that she could die peacefully, without Mathew's constant urging for her to rally.

Abby passed away at her family home only a few days later. I seem to have remembered a scenario in which Mathew, receiving the news (and a clipped out obituary) in the mail, almost committed suicide. Abby died on March 27, 1841. Mathew couldn't write for some months—finally, he began penning tributes to Abby.

A black-humor poem was rejected by Charles Ilsley, editor of the Portland "Transcript" (also Mathew's friend). However, Ilsley did see fit to publish one stanza by way of example. It appears to have been Mathew's own epic describing Abby's life; or, at least, the circumstances around her death, being signed "St. Bernard" (the historical Bernard of Clairvaux, a French monk of the 12th century who was politically active and supported the Knights Templar). The stanza reads:

A few evenings after she went up to bed,
And early next morning poor Sally was dead,
And when they looked arter the Leftenant's darter
They found a dead gall.

Some of Mathew's tributes to Abby, having been inadvisably shared with various unscrupulous literati, made their plagiarists famous. "The Raven," falsely claimed by Edgar Allan Poe in 1845, was written by Mathew, presumably soon after the events it describes in December of 1841. Likewise "Annabel Lee," which I believe may have been composed by Mathew originally to "Abigail P——," would never have been intended for publication. We see in this poem a reference to the unique circumstances surrounding Abby's death:

A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,

"Lady Geraldine's Courtship" and "Wine of Cyprus," plagiarized and published by the future Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1844, describes Mathew and Abby's courtship, as well as their mentoring relationship, when Abby was 15 and 16 years old. "A Child Asleep," also published by Barrett (first in 1840, and then in 1844), concerns their son, Joseph. Even "The Cry of the Children" may have originally been written by Abby, expressing her deep concern for the less fortunate. These latter poems would have been sent by both Mathew and Abby in 1838, while Joseph was still alive.

The other tribute poems and stories written by Mathew remained hidden by his various secret pseudonyms, and have only been uncovered recently in the course of my research. One, for example, signed with his long-time “star” pseudonym, appears in the Jan. 17, 1846 Portland “Transcript,” having been reprinted from the New York “New Mirror” (perhaps, actually, the “Evening Mirror”—I have not yet found the original). I reproduce it here in its entirety, as it provides a number of clues about the historical Abby Poyen Whittier:

To A Bright Lady.

Smile thy sweetest smile, lady,
Let its glances be
Soft as summer sun-set
On a summer sea.

Laugh thy gayest laugh, lady,
Let its clear notes ring
Like the fairy echo
Of the lute’s light string.

Speak thy glowing words, lady,
Full of poet fire,
Smother not the gladness
Spirit dreams inspire.

Trip thy lightest step, lady,
Let thy foot-fall be
Light as idle breezes
Wandering wildly free.

Dance thy gayest dance, lady,
Move in airy motion
As the dreaming sea-bird moves
With the swelling ocean.

Wear thy brightest pearl, lady,
On that breast of thine—
And thy freshest garlands
Mid thy tresses twine.

Play thy golden harp, lady,
Let its thrilling tone
Echo every heart-throb—
Echoing thine own.

But list thee—list thee—lady,
Wear thy richest gem,

As the rose the dew drop wears
For its diadem.

And thy beaming smile, lady—
Let it shine for heaven—
Lighting earth—as do the stars
Mid the hush of even.

Oh! List thee—list thee—lady,
Breathe thy deepest prayer;
Heaven may give thee grace, lady,
All its gifts to bear. *

Here we see that Abby was an inspired poet, and that she comes to him in visitation dreams. She was also a dancer, though she danced free-form in nature, rather than formally. She was a nature mystic, and loved to wander in the countryside. Furthermore, she was a musician (here represented playing a harp, but in other sources excelling in piano and voice); and we see that Mathew deeply appreciated her music. Her aristocratic heritage is hinted at with the suggestion that she retained two French heirlooms—a pearl (i.e., a brooch with a pearl), and a tiara—when she eloped with Mathew. The brooch appears in the one historical portrait of Abby that I have found. Finally, Mathew indicates that she was deeply spiritual, which is borne out by her poetry and short stories.

In fact, all of this can be seen in other sources as well, so that they can be cross-referenced. For example, in the following passage from “Lady Geraldine’s Courtship,” we see Lady Geraldine, the daughter of an earl, and Bertram, the poor poet, out in nature reading literature together:

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making:
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest,
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune,
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the notes are finest,
’Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them on.

All of this is a quite literal description, except that Barrett—wishing to conceal the reference to Abby’s young age—has flipped the phrase “Like a child’s emotion in a god.” The original would have read, “Like a god’s emotion in a child.” The former, obviously, makes no sense. It would render Lady Geraldine as a childish woman! But Abby was literally a child who, being an “old

soul,” had the inner power of a god. Possibly, the word was not “emotion,” but something more along the lines of “vision,” “fire,” “power,” or “wisdom.” Thus, the original stanza might have read:

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland singing,
Like a god’s fire in a child—a naiad tired of rest.

Here we also see Abby as a river sprite, i.e., a “naiad” or—as we have seen in their joint letters to the Dover “Enquirer—a “kappa.” There are other such references, so this must have been one of Mathew’s pet names for her—perhaps, because she liked to swim in the Merrimack River near her family’s home in Rocks Village.

Mathew and Abby must have begun work on what was to become “A Christmas Carol” in that little bedroom, upstairs in Richard Whittier’s farmhouse, in Methuen. Mathew would have suggested it to try to bring Abby out of herself, by appealing to her desire to help the world, spiritually. They would have drawn from a number of their previous works (especially one, “The New Year’s Bells,” which served as a template, and was later plagiarized by Francis A. Durivage). They would have completed the story the following year, after moving to Portland. Essentially, the division of labor would have been that Mathew wrote Scrooge, while Abby wrote the spirits and the various spirit journeys. The spirituality, and the deep, precocious understanding of psychology which are evident in that story, were Abby’s; while the humor was Mathew’s.

I have gone over in some depth the means by which their manuscript ended up in the hands of Charles Dickens, in my books and in a paper on this subject. The gist is that Mathew was already a fan of Dickens when the latter arrived in Boston in January of 1842. Mathew was also long-time friends with Oliver Wendell Holmes (moving, however peripherally, in the same literary circles as his brother). Holmes would inevitably have introduced Mathew to Dickens, personally, at the dinner held in Dickens’ honor, which Holmes was instrumental in arranging. Mathew would have handed the manuscript to Dickens, perhaps even instructing him to “do with it as he wished.” This would have been done in admiration, as well as in grief—both of which clouded his judgment. He had severely misread Dickens’ character; and the numbness of grief made him insensible to the blunder he was committing. He believed he was putting his house back in order; he was giving away Abby’s things, being a practicing Stoic and still in the state of emotional shock; and he thought he was fulfilling their shared ambition of uplifting the world spiritually, by giving the manuscript to a famous author who was in a position to spread it to the widest possible audience. Nonetheless, from Dickens’ point of view, it was like taking candy from a baby. He never did admit that he, himself, had not originated the work. Mathew, seeing how much Dickens had watered down Abby’s original spiritually, remained ambivalent about the matter all his life; but he *did* leave clues to posterity that he and Abby had been the original authors.

From mid-1840, about the time that Abby returned from her convalescence in Guadeloupe, Mathew began writing reviews for the Transcendentalist magazine, “The Dial.” He had filled that role a decade earlier, for a Boston young man’s magazine called “The Essayist,” signing

with his “star” signature. Now, he signed with his middle initial, “F.,” which work historians have mistakenly attributed to the editor, Margaret Fuller (even though Fuller, per standard protocol for an editor, didn’t sign her own contributions). This quarterly publication was launched in July of 1840, for which edition Mathew penned, by way of introduction, an excellent essay on literary criticism entitled “Essay on Critics.” However, by October of that year, things had become extremely difficult for Mathew and Abby, and none of his pieces appear in that edition; nor is the “F.”-signing author seen in the following edition of Jan. 1841. Abby died on March 27, 1841. The following month, in the April 1841 edition, the only indication of “F.” is a three-page dialogue between a Poet and a Critic. This appears to have been originally written by Mathew for “The Essayist” roughly a decade earlier, inasmuch as it is very similar to one found in that magazine signed with another of Mathew’s pseudonyms, “Franklin, Jr.” Not being able to write, he must have simply sent Fuller something from his portfolio, which had not appeared in that earlier publication. For the July 1841 edition there is an “F.”-signed essay on “Goethe.” but when next we see him, in the Oct. 1841 edition, he has written a review of the poem “Festus,” splitting himself into two characters. It is as though the only way he can write, is to imagine himself discussing the poem with Abby, as they once did. All of the reviews which Mathew wrote for this journal subsequent to her death, clearly—at least to my eyes—reflect his mighty struggle with grief.

As early as three months after Abby had passed on, Mathew’s correspondence with his brother sounds as though he is more-or-less back to normal, although his jokes are somewhat on the darker side. In one letter, he even speaks with seeming enthusiasm about meeting with a group of girls from their hometown of Haverhill. However, he carefully avoids expressing any *personal* interest in them, referring them, instead, to his brother! It is almost as though someone has sent the girls on a mission, and he has deftly side-stepped the attempt. At any rate, a great many clues suggest the following scenario. As Abby’s end approached, she began broaching the subject of whether Mathew might marry after her passing. The conversation then turned to whether Abby would wish to remarry if *he* should die first, and in an argumentative mood, she must have indicated that she *might*. This inflamed Mathew’s jealousy, and stuck a hot brand, as it were, into his previous understanding, from her, that they were “twin stars” and eternal soul-mates. All Abby had wanted to do, was to be unselfish. But he had taken it as a change in her own commitment, not being able to even consider the possibility of her death. This misunderstanding was never resolved, leaving Mathew confused as to whether he should wait to rejoin her in heaven, or to remarry. Further complicating this issue seems to have been the theological misconception that after a wife dies, she somehow becomes the “bride of Christ” (a phrase I have only heard applied to nuns). Mathew would never really recover from his grief for Abby; but this left the door open for remarriage.

Meanwhile, his mother was scheming to act as a matchmaker, and to see her problematic son remarried to someone sensible who could keep him in line—and prevent him from tarnishing the Whittier name. Which is to say, from tarnishing it any more than he had already done by his unconventional behavior, a tendency (not uncommon in this era) to indulge in alcohol, and by marrying Abby outside the Quaker faith. So she reached out through the Whittier extended family grapevine, and learned from the Nova Scotia branch of the Whittier’s that there was a girl in St. John named Jane Vaughan who would be suitable. But how to convince Mathew to marry this girl of his mother’s choosing, sight-unseen? There is only one way it could have been

accomplished, and that is if Mathew believed that Abby, herself, had instructed him to do so. It so happens the Whittier legacy tells us that in 1842, Mathew's mother was attending séances with a friend, Mary Esther Carter.⁶ She must have told Mathew—honestly or dishonestly, we don't know—that Abby had come through in one of these séances, expressing her wish that Mathew marry this Canadian girl. Mathew and Jane were married, in Portland, not quite a year after Abby's death.⁷

Not too surprisingly, Jane was a rather masculine-looking woman, stocky where Abby had been lithe, earthy where Abby had been ethereal, practical where Abby had been mystical, and unappreciative of Mathew's literary talents where Abby had collaborated with him. In humorously describing the events of this marriage to a friend, Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber, Mathew would style himself as "Blifkins the Martyr." If we go by that series, even allowing for embellishment, Jane was both controlling and disrespectful, to the point that after two years of marriage, Mathew decided he couldn't live with her. He moved to New York City in the fall of 1844, when he began freelancing for the New York "Tribune" with his former signature, the "star." This body of work, also, has been mistakenly attributed to Margaret Fuller, who was now that paper's literary editor.

Mathew also wrote for the New York "Yankee Doodle," the first American magazine patterned after Britain's "Punch." And, during the summers of 1846 and 1847, he worked as a reporter of arraignment hearings, in the "Safety Office," for the New Orleans "Daily Delta." There, he was under cover as an agent for the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad, contacting its Southern sympathizers and operatives. He also attended Northern anti-slavery conventions, and wrote scathing satires against both slavery, and the Mexican-American War, for the radical Boston "Chronotype" which was edited by his friend Elizur Wright. While living in New York City in 1847, he wrote frequent letters to Wright for the "Chronotype," over the barely-disguised pseudonym of "X.F.W."

Mathew lived for a few months in Philadelphia, in mid 1849—and around this time, or shortly thereafter, he appears to have formally broken off his relationship with Jane. There may have been a brief, unfortunate affair either before, or after, the breakup. He did, however, continue to support Jane and their three children, the youngest of whom had recently been born. He also continued to visit his children as he had done, before. It is not clear whether Mathew's own family, i.e. his mother and siblings in Amesbury, Mass. were aware of this situation until the actual breakup in 1849. Seemingly, based on the correspondence, he let them think that he was still living with Jane in Portland. This suggests that Mathew and John were estranged by this time, rarely corresponding and never visiting in person. The only alternative explanation I can see, is that Mathew was deliberately lying to his brother, fearing that their correspondence could be intercepted by pro-slavery operatives who might learn that his family remained unprotected in Portland. But in general, it seems that Mathew did not share much about his personal life—nor his literary accomplishments—with his brother, who remained in the dark about these things even after Mathew's death. In fact, there is a reference that John was quite surprised to receive so many glowing letters of condolence from people whose lives Mathew had touched. Hidden between the lines of this brief historical reference, may be the fact that John was surprised to learn just how much Mathew had *written*, as well.

In mid-1848, Mathew began writing for the newly-launched Boston “Weekly Museum” (formerly the “Literary Museum”). He was simpatico with the initial owners and editors, but the paper soon changed hands to a worldly conservative and racist named Charles A.V. Putnam, who was friends with a similarly-minded con-artist entertainer named Ossian Dodge. Mathew, however, was using the paper to promote his liberal ideas, and in the fall of 1849 he began writing a travelogue over the signature of “Quails.” This may have been a veiled reference to Mathew’s Quaker upbringing (though he had not been formally affiliated with that faith since the Friends “disowned” him for marrying Abby). Quakers were disparagingly called “shakin’ Quakers” because of their anti-war stance. “Quails,” as a character (all of Mathew’s literary personas were, to some extent, characters) was an elderly man traveling in some unspecified capacity for the government. Actually, inasmuch as he frequently met with small-town postmasters, it appears Mathew was working for the post office, on a contractual basis, as a traveling postal inspector. But he was actually using this public column to report his contacts as an undercover agent for the abolitionist cause—probably acting as a liaison for William Lloyd Garrison. He would report, in this column, only his itinerary and contacts—there was no mention of the work, per se. It simply appeared to be conversational, if more deeply philosophical than most. This travelogue became so popular that it was driving up subscriptions to the paper—hence, Mathew, despite his liberal leanings, was indispensable. Actually, he appears to have run several travelogues—as different personas, and over different signatures—concurrently in this paper. At various times, he signed as “B.” (probably for “Bertram,” the protagonist in “Lady Geraldine’s Courtship”); as “A.B.D.” (which possibly stood for “All But Degree,” meaning that Mathew was self-educated), “Down East” (signifying Portland), and, briefly, as “Rusticus.” Later, for the Portland “Transcript,” he would write in an identical style as “J.O.B.”

“Quails” went on a European tour from July 2nd through Oct. 15th, 1851. It featured participation, as a reporter, in the World Peace Congress in London, visits to the World’s Fair in the “Crystal Palace,” a trip through several countries, and personal meetings with such notables as Victor Hugo. While back in the States, Mathew had unwisely become friends with Ossian Dodge, the entertainer, and even traveled with him—probably ghost writing some of his humorous concert routines. Presumably for this reason, one of the other contributors to the paper, comparing the respective itineraries of “Quails” and Dodge, wrongly concluded that Dodge was the hidden author of “Quails.” By the time Mathew was in Europe, sending back installments of this travelogue, the rumor had grown that Dodge—who was also in London, attempting to restart his career after recently “bombing” in New York City—was, in fact, writing the “Quails” letters. The editor encouraged this belief, by printing hints—and later, outright assertions—that Dodge was “Quails.” Mathew, himself, played along with what he apparently perceived as a joke, so that historians have concluded that this absurd claim was historical fact. Still, even in these instances he left posterity hints embedded with his own unique type of literary “code.” I have proved beyond any reasonable doubt that Dodge could not possibly have been “Quails,” and that Mathew was writing the series.

Since 1835, Mathew had been ghost writing for one Francis A. Durivage of Boston. The first project was an historical encyclopedia, for which Mathew appears to have written at least a significant portion of the entries. Probably, it was drawn from Abby’s tutoring curriculum—a way to convert some of that work into cash. Also derived from Mathew’s “homework” was a book of La Fontaine’s Fables (which were, themselves, taken from Aesop’s Fables), translated

from French into English verse. These would have been written by Mathew—an experienced humorous poet—and corrected by Abby, a literary prodigy and a native French speaker. Mathew and Abby appear to have anonymously published some of this material in 1839, as a children's book entitled "La Fontaine for the Young." After Abby's death in 1841, during that same year, Elizur Wright published a two-volume set for adults, claiming (despite having a sparse track record as a poet, and not being a native French speaker) to have been the translator. Inasmuch as Mathew continued to be Wright's friend and to speak very highly of him, Mathew must have actually requested that Wright claim the authorship, presumably because Abby had been adamant about remaining anonymous.

In any case, Mathew continued to ghost write for Durivage, with a series of swashbuckling adventure novels published in the mid-1840's. But then, as I have extrapolated (once again) from a great many clues, early in 1848 Durivage must have approached Mathew with a partner, George P. Burnham, with an offer to purchase pieces from Mathew's portfolio of unpublished work. This portfolio shows evidence of going back to the early 1830's, when Mathew was writing for the New York "Constellation." Mathew would have agreed, in principle, to permit them to publish certain pieces he would choose, under their own signatures. But the pair swindled him, by inducing him to sign a bogus contract that gave them carte blanche rights to the entire portfolio. This portfolio contained both a series of humorous anecdotes based on real life, and a series of lavish foreign adventure tales. Durivage took, as his pseudonym, one of Mathew's own favorite expressions, the "Old 'Un," while Burnham, posing as Durivage's prodigy (to explain why their styles were so similar), took the "Young 'Un." Mathew had thought of an "old 'un" as a wise old man, or an old soul—but Durivage, a sociopath, reinterpreted it to mean the Devil! Mathew was helpless to stop the scam, and had to watch as Durivage and Burnham proceed to publish, both piecemeal and then in books, every single scrap from Mathew's portfolio—even the earliest pieces which reflected young Mathew's more racist views, and practice pieces he had probably never intended to publish. Some of these bore almost the same title, being different treatments of the same concept—but none of this troubled Durivage, so long as he got paid for the submissions. However, it turned out to be very fortunate for posterity, as some few of these pieces—no-doubt written in the early 1830's—bear an uncanny resemblance to "A Christmas Carol." Clearly, these were the precursor works that Mathew and Abby drew from in 1838, when they began working on that story in Richard Whittier's farmhouse, in Methuen.

Ironically, had Durivage and Burnham (who thankfully didn't seem to bother much with modifying the work) not stolen the rights to this portfolio, we might not have it, today—nor would we have these precursor works, one of which, "The New Year's Bells," is very compelling evidence.

In 1850, Mathew must have decided—perhaps in consultation with a wise friend or two—that "success is the sweetest revenge." He decided to write an adventure novel which would outdo all of the adventure stories Durivage had stolen from him. He completed "The Mistake of a Lifetime: Or, the Robber of the Rhine Valley" in 1850, and, probably through an agent, approached Frederick Gleason, owner of "Gleason's Pictorial" and "The Flag of Our Union" in Boston—the same publications in which Durivage and Burnham had been publishing Mathew's stories. A critic's account tells us that Gleason, becoming more and more impressed as he read

more and more of the book, offered increasing amounts for it, until they settled on the unheard of sum of \$3,000 (in 1850 money) plus a percentage of royalties! Gleason may never have known who had actually written the book. It was assumed, by critics, to have been written by a fledgling young author whose name was literally “Waldo Howard,” and all they could do was to mock the amount that Gleason had foolishly paid for it. However, it apparently sold very well, indeed. Mathew was able to finance some portion of his European tour (also paid for by writing the “Quails” travelogue), and then, back in the States, he invested as a silent partner in a new humor magazine, the Boston “Carpet-Bag,” edited by his friend Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber—the same who later wrote of Mathew’s marital adventures in “Blifkins the Martyr.” Mathew basically dedicated the entire front page of the first edition of the “Carpet-Bag” to Abby’s memory, including a story that he and Abby had clearly collaborated on about a family named “The Wags.” He also included a poem by Coleridge which echoes (or is echoed by) the love poem Mathew had written for Abby the first year of their formal courtship, “My Love and I”; and an essay by N.P. Willis about women proposing marriage (Abby had known they would marry long before Mathew did).

Mathew continued to be a very strong presence in the “Carpet-Bag,” writing as many as eight pieces for each weekly edition, under various pseudonyms and as various characters. Internal politics—and Mathew’s nemesis, Samuel Pickard—eventually forced him out, and the paper died after two years. Historians believe it was due to some of the politically edgy humor (which, unbeknownst to them, was originated by Mathew); but I believe it was because Mathew’s many imitators in this paper couldn’t write at the same level of creative inspiration that he could, and the paper sunk into mediocrity after he dissociated from it.

Among the many characters written by Mathew, he initiated the series which derived from the pseudonym, “Trismegistus,” which signature Mathew had used in the “New-England Galaxy” many years earlier. Branching off from “Trismegistus” were two very popular characters: “Ensign Jehiel Stebbings,” a jingoistic caricature of military heroes, and Dr. E. Goethe Digg, a caricature of academic philosophers and of academia in general. In his memoirs, Shillaber inextricably assigned this entire series to a career educator and part-time contributor to the Boston “Post” named Benjamin Drew, but I have proven that all of these were Mathew Franklin Whittier’s work.

The “Carpet-Bag” made a valiant effort to continue as a pocket-sized monthly during 1853. The first two editions contain nothing of Mathew’s work, whatsoever. However, a later edition contains some of what I take to be his cartoons, reproduced from previous editions. This edition was printed for a trade convention. Then, there was a “holiday gift edition” printed in December—the very last one. It contains an unsigned story of Christmas written by Abby, previously published in the Jan. 1, 1853 edition of the full-sized “Carpet-Bag.” Perhaps Mathew paid for this last one with his own funds, as a tribute. To my knowledge, only one copy exists, today, housed at the American Antiquarian Society. It is missing the back page, and is shorter than the previous ones. What else it might have contained is unknown, but this copy contains only the story by Abby.

The failure of this venture, coupled with the internal politics which forced him out plus Shillaber’s practical decision to turn a blind eye to literary imitation, broke Mathew’s spirit as far

as ever attempting to own or edit a newspaper again was concerned. However, he continued to contribute to the Portland “Transcript” at least until 1875. Mathew was publicly exposed as the author of the anti-slavery “Ethan Spike” series in 1857, and was apparently blacklisted, in Portland, as a result. In 1861, in desperation, he took a government-appointed “office” in the Boston Custom House—a practice he had always criticized in the past—which was arranged, through letters of recommendation, by his brother. There he remained until retiring due to ill health near the end of his life.

For the “Transcript,” Mathew continued to cover the lyceum series hosted by the Mercantile Library Association, something he had done, as a reporter, since the early 1850’s. He also continued to write “Ethan Spike,” as well as book reviews signed “M.D.W.,” plus occasional offerings signed with his “star.” Mathew retired “Spike” from 1863 to 1868, evidently due to pressure connected with the Civil War. By the time he resumed writing the series, however, new copyright laws had come into effect which prevented editors, across the country, from reprinting it free of charge. Of course, instead of paying Mathew for the rights, most of them simply quoted an occasional snippet. For this reason, outside of Portland, Maine, people got the mistaken impression that Mathew had retired the series permanently. (Griffin also reports that “Spike” ended in 1863.)

I have identified two more novels written by Mathew after the demise of the “Carpet-Bag” in 1853. The first, entitled “The Rag-Picker: Or, Bound and Free,” was published anonymously in October of 1855. A glowing review appeared soon afterwards in William Lloyd Garrison’s “The Liberator,” comparing it favorably to “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” and indicating that the reviewer (presumably, Garrison himself) had read this 431-page book *in a single sitting*. The book opens with a moving (albeit anonymous) dedication to Mathew’s younger sister, Elisabeth. The narration begins as a masterfully-crafted social commentary on such ills as poverty, alcoholism and child abuse. Then, the author turns specifically to the question of slavery. About two months after its publication in New York, George Burnham—who was manifestly a racist and a con-artist (and hence who could not possibly have written the book)—dishonestly attempted to associate his name with it by purchasing a book selling company, and then advertising the book through that company as his own production. The ruse seems have failed, because there are only a few references to it in two Boston papers—but historians got hold of the reference, repeated it as fact, George Burnham was officially listed by libraries and booksellers as the author.⁸

The second of Mathew’s later novels which I have discovered, was a Christian story for boys entitled “Harrie Lee: The Tempter and the Tempted.” It is signed, uncharacteristically, with Mathew’s own actual initials, “M.F.W.,” and is clearly written in his own style. It even borrows, in its plot, an element found in one of Abby’s short stories (presumably they had that standing agreement, or he felt that she would approve). The obvious theme is to warn boys against the weakness which had so often plagued Mathew, himself, throughout his life—the tendency to yield to peer pressure, and to associate with the wrong persons. The authorship of this book is, of course, uncontested. But because Christianity has fallen so much out of favor with the general population (which, in 1863, mostly identified itself as Christian), it has been banished to obscurity. I was able to obtain two antiquarian copies. Among other interesting elements, it contains a very thinly-veiled description of a near-death experience, couched as a dream, which

shows that the writer also had a background in authentic Spiritualism. Here, Harrie relates his experience when he was close to death, as a result of a fall, to his sister, May:

“I dreamed I was dying, May; pain and weariness I knew no more; even the echoes of their receding footsteps brought only the consciousness that they *had* been visions such as mortals see but in the land of dreams, encompassed me about in the new sphere to which I now had gained admittance. How bright and beautiful was all around me; the very air was loaded with a fragrance not of earth, and all around, smiling angels clad in snowy vestments, and glittering in jeweled raiment, floated past on wings ethereal, intent, fulfilling each his mission of holy, of love and mercy. As they passed, each gazed upon me with the same look of pitying tenderness, yet none came to help me. In the distance, gleamed the gold light of the ‘celestial city; no light of the sun to lighten it, neither of the moon to shine there, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.’ How I longed for angels wings that I too might enter the pearly gates, through which in the distance I saw the swift-winged messengers continually entering and departing, whence songs of love and praise, whose wondrous melody came floating on the perfumed air, and I stood as one entranced. Suddenly a bright and glorious form came forth from out this pearly gate; on her head was a crown of gold, and in her hand a harp of sweetest sound, her long white garments floating on the air, radiant with light; hence she came, and with a cry of glad surprise I clung to her, wrapped in her fond embrace. Our mother. ‘It was a weary way without thee, mother,’ I whispered, but she only pressed me closer to her bosom.

Regarding Mathew’s own beliefs, he was of course raised Quaker, and always considered himself a Christian. However, he was skeptical, as a young man, of anything in the paranormal line—partly, perhaps, because his mother was so uncritically open to such things, being, as I gather, quite superstitious. Abby, on the other hand, had been taught the authentic teachings—both regarding the paranormal (palm reading, astrology, fairies, etc.) as well as higher mysticism (the Catholic saints, Eastern philosophy, the ancient Greek philosophers, the German philosophers, etc.). Mathew, for many years, expressed skepticism about what Abby was attempting to slip into her curriculum concerning the paranormal (we see it in some of his published parodies). His skepticism, and his sharp analytical mind, were even enough to temporarily cause young Abby to disavow astrology! But gradually, she brought him around, so that by the time she died in 1841, he had embraced the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. He then moved into Spiritualism in the 1850’s, being one of the 13,000 signers on the 1854 Spiritualist petition to Congress. In later years he may have become somewhat disillusioned with the Spiritualist movement, itself, but never lost his belief in the afterlife or the principles he had learned.

What else Mathew may have written in Boston, during his later years, is unknown as of this writing. In 1854, Shillaber had published “The Life and Sayings of Mrs. Partington” (which volume he signs, not as the author, but as the editor). It contains a reprint of the biography of his flagship character, “Mrs. Partington,” which was actually written by Mathew.

Then again in 1872, Shillaber published “Partingtonian Patchwork.” It contains the “Blifkins Papers” featuring “Blifkins the Martyr,” which as I gather were republished from their

appearance in newspapers, in the late 1850's. These appear to be an admixture or collaboration, such that most (not all) are stories which Mathew told Shillaber, in a humorous vein, about his marriage to Jane Vaughan. Thus, the events depicted would have actually taken place in 1842-44, while Mathew was still living with her; and then again, in 1852-57, when he was living in Portland so as to participate in the raising of his third child, his daughter Alice. Some of this material appears to have been actually written by Mathew; all was revised by Shillaber, including to bring it up to date for 1872.

Perhaps most startling, in this latter book, is an epic humorous poem entitled "The Modern Syntax. Dr. Spooner in Search of the Delectable." This is definitely Mathew's own work, although it bears no formal indication of separate authorship. Whether Mathew agreed to this arrangement in 1872 is unknown. Given that Shillaber's memoirs were published in 1893, ten years after Mathew's death, and that Mathew is mentioned only very briefly in the context of "Ethan Spike" (albeit in a positive vein), it's possible they had a falling out over this question. Shillaber never seems to have fully appreciated Mathew's talents, viewing him as an amusing eccentric given to telling tall tales. For example, in the "Blifkins Papers" there is evidence which I interpret to mean that Mathew confided in Shillaber that he had been the real author of "The Raven," but Shillaber didn't believe him. Mathew seems to have convinced Shillaber of the truth of Spiritualism—perhaps, by taking him to a séance—but Shillaber evidently didn't embrace it as deeply as Mathew did. Thus, in the "Blifkins Papers" he lightly ridicules Mathew's claim to be communicating with Abby in the spirit realm, through the bust of Pallas which looks substantially like her.

The poem featuring "Dr. Spooner" and his adventures in search of the "Delectable," i.e., real happiness and fulfillment, is, in my estimation, a true masterpiece. It has been ignored because scholars assume it was written by Shillaber, and they expect nothing much better from him than "Mrs. Partington." This poem is the culmination of Mathew's life-long pursuit of the perfect humorous poem, and the perfect expression of all he had learned as a Stoic philosopher. In an ironic sense, the poem, itself, is Mathew's *magnum opus*, or "Delectable"—only to be shelved away in Shillaber's book, like the Ark of the Covenant in that vast warehouse at the conclusion of "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

On the personal side, Mathew married a younger woman named Mary Waite Tolman, who may have been related, by marriage, to his long time Portland friend Charles P. Ilsley, near Toledo, Ohio (where she had family) in the fall of 1858. This was a period in Mathew's life when he was deeply depressed about his career and the blacklisting he had suffered in Portland. Although there is scant evidence, I get the impression he agreed to marry her on the spur of the moment, while visiting during his travels. The couple does not seem to have been together afterwards until 1864. At that time, three years after Mathew had relocated to Boston to take his job at the Custom House, he presumably moved in with her into her mother's house, for which he had signed as witness to the mortgage. From that point until his death, Mathew and Mary lived as man and wife—but it strikes me as more of an "arrangement" than a marriage. There's also an indication that she may have been cruel to him, or perhaps betrayed him, in some way while he was on his deathbed. My personal suspicion is that she was so intensely practical, that she was husband-hunting in the bar downstairs, while Mathew lay dying in the hotel room upstairs—and that word of this got back to him. In any case, there is a note on a cut-out piece of paper from this

period, in John Greenleaf Whittier's handwriting, indicating that Mary was "cruel" to Mathew. It's a fragment which the person or persons who donated it probably meant to keep *out* of the collection, but accidentally included *in it*.

Mathew had a few close friends among his co-workers at the Custom House, including fellow-abolitionist George Bradburn, who had once edited for the Boston "Chronotype," and Frank Harriman, who I believe went out of his way to take Mathew to medical specialists. Still, between his "non-marriage" at home, his dead-end job, and his literary legacy irretrievably lost and falsely attributed to so many others, he turned to drink during his last decade or two, only to quit again, as I believe, during the last two or three years. Mathew had embraced Temperance during most of his adult life, relapsing occasionally, as I feel, only when Jane had attempted to turn his children against him, or to prevent him from seeing them. I also suspect, but cannot prove, that in later life he fell under the influence of Western author Bret Harte when Harte moved to Boston in 1871, which may have instigated a more protracted relapse.

Mathew died in the Maverick House hotel in East Boston on Jan. 7, 1883, ostensibly of cystitis, but also, I believe, of a bleeding ulcer—a condition he may have had for many years. It was a slow and exceedingly painful death, which his brother said he faced bravely. His brother, and some of his brother's young literary friends, attended the funeral, which was officiated by Rev. James Freeman Clarke—who, (probably unknown to John Greenleaf Whittier), may have been one of Mathew's antagonists—and who almost certainly didn't understand him. So far as I can tell none of his children came to his deathbed, though it appears that his older daughter Lizzie had wanted to be there, and arrived the day after his death. I found no indication that his wife, Mary, attended. It's unknown what, if anything, may have happened to any physical remnants of Mathew's literary legacy, correspondence, personal diary or papers. A psychic medium told me she thought he destroyed them in a fireplace. If he did secretly pass them on to anyone, they appear to have been lost as of this writing. Mathew's legacy, excepting his "Ethan Spike" series, remained almost entirely forgotten (with what remained being badly distorted), until I spent twelve years painstakingly retrieving and reconstructing it from 2009 to 2021.

Of the roughly 2,500 published works I have identified as Mathew Franklin Whittier's productions—representing practically every known genre—I have barely scratched the surface in this paper. Just his work for the New Orleans "Daily Delta," in which he took that lowliest of newspaper assignments, the "blotter," and made of it deeply human literature, would be worth a book in itself. This biographical sketch, in short, should function merely as an *invitation* to read my more complete treatments of Mathew's life and work.

Footnotes:

1) Pickard, Samuel T., "Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier," 1894, Vol. I, pp. 32-32.

2) *Ibid.* pp. 50-52.

3) Read, Allen Walker, "The World of Joe Strickland, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 76, No. 302 (Oct.-Dec., 1863).

4) I would later discover that during the years 1830 through 1833, Mathew was also writing reviews for the New York “American,” signing as a star, which body of work has been erroneously attributed to Charles Fenno Hoffman. See my papers, “The ‘Star’-Signed Reviews, Essays and Reports in the New York ‘American,’ from 1831-33; Or, how the ‘Tribune’s’ ‘star,’ which was never Margaret Fuller in the first place, turns up in New York City more than a decade earlier, looking very much the same,” and “Disputing an Historical Authorship for the ‘Star’ in the 1830-34 New York ‘American.’”

5) Mathew and Abby had named their first-born son after her father, “Joseph Poyen Whittier,” presumably in an attempt to appease him. It didn’t work because they had wrongly perceived the real underlying bases of his objections, which had to do with class and, perhaps, financial gain.

6) Pickard, John B., ed., “The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier,” Vol. II, pg. 338, footnote.

7) At least one historian has the date of this marriage wrong by one year, indicating it was 1841 instead of 1842. It creates the monstrous timing that Mathew would have been remarrying while Abby lay dying! One source reports it with a question mark in parentheses, presumably for this reason—but it is a testament to the aggressive treatment of Mathew in the Whittier lore, that anyone would even seriously *suspect* that such a thing could be true. (A marriage certificate proves that the 1842 date is correct.)

8) As of Dec., 2021, WorldCat/OCLC has revised their listing to indicate that the authorship of this book is contested, and that Mathew Franklin Whittier is an alternative possibility.