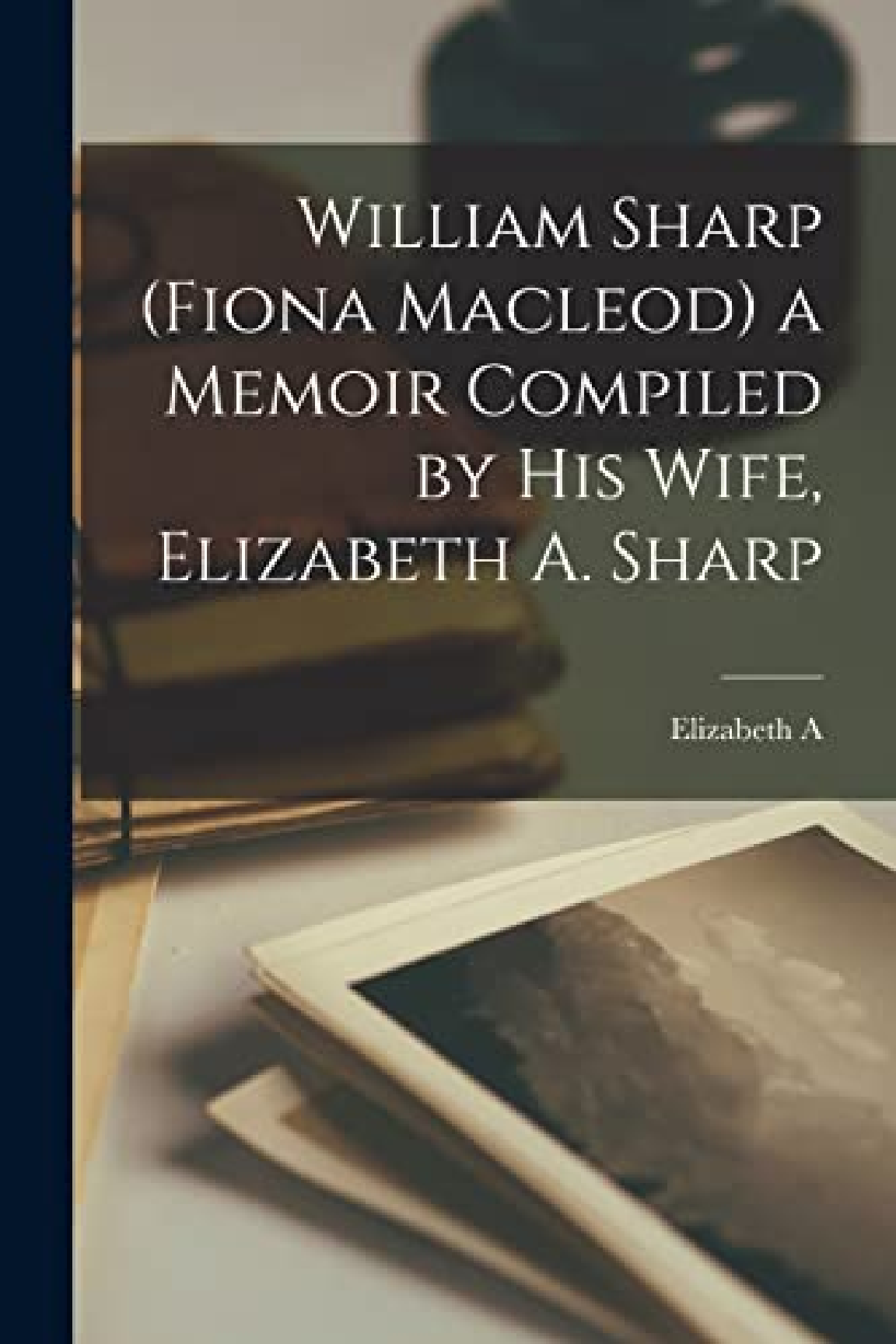


William Sharp (Fiona Macleod) a Memoir Compiled by His Wife, Elizabeth A. Sharp

Elizabeth A

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William Sharp
After an Etching by William Strang A.R.A.

WILLIAM SHARP

(FIONA MACLEOD)

A MEMOIR

COMPILED BY HIS WIFE

ELIZABETH A. SHARP



NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

1910

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WILLIAM SHARP

A MEMOIR

PREFACE

When the secret of the identity of Fiona Macleod —so loyally guarded by a number of friends for twelve years—was finally made known, much speculation arose as to the nature of the dual element that had found expression in the collective work of William Sharp. Many suggestions, wide of the mark, were advanced; among others, that the writer had assumed the pseudonym as a joke, and having assumed it found himself constrained to continue its use. A few of the critics understood. Prof. Patrick Geddes realised that the discussion was productive of further misunderstanding, and wrote to me: “Should you not explain that F. M. was not simply W. S., but that W. S. in his deepest moods became F. M., a sort of dual personality in short, not a mere nom-de-guerre?” It was not expedient for me at that moment to do so. I preferred to wait till I could prepare as adequate an explanation as possible. My chief aim, therefore, in writing about my husband and in giving a sketch of his life, has been to indicate, to the best of my ability, the growth and development in his work of the dual literary expression of himself.

The most carefully compiled record of a life can be but partially true, since much of necessity must be left unsaid. A biographer, moreover, can delineate another human being only to the extent of his understanding of that fellow being. In so far as he lacks, not only knowledge of facts, but also the illumination of intuition and sympathy, to that extent will he fail to present a finished study of his subject. And because no one can wholly know another: because one of necessity interprets another through the colour of his or her mind, I am very conscious of my own limitations in this respect. As, however, I have known William Sharp for more

consecutive years than any other of his intimate friends, I perhaps am able therefore to offer the fullest survey of the unfolding of his life; though I realise that others may have known him better than I on some sides of his nature: in particular as he impressed those who had not discovered, or were not in sympathy with, the “F. M.” phase in him.

The life of William Sharp divides itself naturally into two halves: the first ends with the publication by W. S. of *Vistas*, and the second begins with *Pharais*, the first book signed Fiona Macleod. It has been my endeavour to tell his story by means of letters and diaries; of letters written by him, and of others written to him, concerning his work and interests. To quote his own words: “A group of intimate letters, written with no foreseen or suspected secondary intention, will probably give us more insight into the inner nature of a man than any number of hypothetical pros and cons on the part of a biographer, or than reams of autobiography.... I know Keats for instance far better through his letters than by even the ablest and most intimate memoirs that have been written of him: the real man is revealed in them and is brought near to us till we seem to hear his voice and clasp his hand.”

The diaries are fragmentary. They were usually begun at each New Year, but were speedily discontinued; or noted down intermittently, during a sojourn abroad, as a record of work. He was a good correspondent, both as W. S. and F. M. I have thus tried to make the book as autobiographic as possible, by means of these letters and diaries, and I have added only what has seemed to me necessary to make the narrative sequent. Unfortunately, letters have not been available from several valuable sources; and I regret the absence of any written by

him to Walter Pater, George Meredith, Theodore Watts-Dunton, Arthur Symons, and to one or two of his most intimate friends.

I take this opportunity of expressing to many friends on both sides of the Atlantic my appreciation of their courtesy in placing letters at my disposal; also for permission accorded to me by Mr. Robert Ross for the use of letters from Oscar Wilde, and by Mr. Charles Baxter, for letters from Robert Louis Stevenson. Through the kindness of Mrs. Sturgis I have included among the illustrations a portrait of her father George Meredith (dated 1898). I am indebted to Miss Pater for the photograph of her brother Walter Pater; and to Mr. W. M. Rossetti for that of his brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Of the four portraits of William Sharp, herein reproduced, the earliest was taken about the time of the publication of his first volume of poems. The pastel by the Norwegian painter, Charles Ross, was executed in Rome in 1891, two years before *Pharais* was written; and the etching by our friend, Mr. William Strang A.R.A., who has kindly sanctioned my use of it, dates to 1896, in which year were published *The Washer of the Ford*, *Green Fire*, and *From the Hills of Dream*. The final portrait of my husband was taken in Sicily in 1903 by the Hon. Alexander Nelson Hood (Duke of Bronte), who also has permitted me to reproduce his photograph of Il Castello di Maniace, Bronte—on the inland shoulder of Etna—close to which, on a sloping hillside, in the little woodland burial ground, and within sound of rushing waters, stands the Iona cross erected to the memory of William Sharp and “Fiona Macleod.”

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PART I

WILLIAM SHARP

"*Praised be the fathomless universe,*
For life and joy ... and for love, sweet love."

W. WHITMAN.

"*But one to whom life appeals by myriad avenues, all alluring and full of wonder and mystery, cannot always abide where the heart most longs to be. It is well to remember that there are Shadowy Waters, even in the cities, and that the Fount of Youth is discoverable in the dreariest towns as well as in Hy Brasil: a truth apt to be forgotten by those of us who dwell with ever-wondering delight in that land of lost romance which had its own day, as this epoch of a still stranger, if less obvious, romance has its passing hour.*"

F. M.

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

> "Childhood, when the child is as a flower of wilding growth, and when it is at one with nature, fellow with the winds and birds."
>
> W. S.

"That man is fortunate who has half his desires gratified, who lives to see half his desires accomplished," says Schopenhauer, and taking the axiom to be true I am not going back on it, for certainly more than half of the desires of my boyhood and youth have been fulfilled. I come of a West of Scotland stock which—perhaps in part because of its Scandinavian admixture—has always had in it 'the wandering blood': and from my early days, when at the mature age of three I escaped one night from the nursery and was found in the garden at midnight, a huddled little white heap at the foot of a great poplar that was at once my ceaseless delight and wonder and a fascination that was almost terror, a desire of roaming possessed me."

That William Sharp should be one of the fortunates who, toward the end of life, could say he had fulfilled more than half of his early desires, was due mainly to a ceaseless curiosity and love of adventure, to a happy fearlessness of disposition that prompted him when starting on any quest to seize the propitious moment, and if necessary to burn his boats behind him. He believed himself to have been born under a lucky star. Notwithstanding the great hardships and difficulties that sometimes barred his way, his vivid imagination, aided by a strong will

and untiring perseverance, opened to him many doors of the wonderland of life that lured him in his dreams. The adventurous and the romantic were to him as beacons; and though their lights were at times overshadowed by the tragedy of human life, his natural buoyancy of disposition, his power of whole-hearted enjoyment in things large and small, his ready intuitive sympathy, preserved in him a spirit of fine optimism to the end.

The conditions of his early boyhood were favourable to the development of his natural inclination.

He was born on the 12th of September, 1855, at 4 Garthland Place, Paisley, on a day when the bells were ringing for the fall of Sebastopol. He was the eldest of a family of three sons and five daughters. His father, David Galbreath Sharp, a partner in an old-established mercantile house, was the youngest son of William Sharp, whose family originally came from near Dunblane. His mother was a Miss Katherine Brooks, the eldest daughter of William Brooks, Swedish Vice-Consul at Glasgow, and of Swedish descent, whose wife was a Miss Agnes Henderson, related to the Stewarts of Shambellie and the Murrays of Philiphaugh.

Mr. David Sharp was a genial, observant man, humourous, and a finished mimic. Though much of his life was of necessity spent in a city, he had a keen love of the country, and especially of the West Highlands. Every summer he took a house for three or four months on the shores of the Clyde, or on one of the beautiful sea lochs, or on the island of Arran, now so exploited, but then relatively secluded. Very early he initiated his son in the arts of swimming, rowing, and line fishing; sailed with him along the beautiful shores of the Western Highlands and the

Inner Hebrides.

Mrs. David Sharp had been brought up by her father to read seriously, and to take an interest in his favourite study of Geology. It was she who watched over her son's work at college, and made facilities for him to follow his special pursuits at home. But the boy was never urged to distinguish himself at college. He was considered too delicate to be subjected to severe mental pressure; and he met with no encouragement from either parent in his wish to throw himself into the study of science or literature as a profession, for such a course seemed to them to offer no prospects for his future. It was from Mrs. Sharp that her son inherited his Scandinavian physique and high colouring; for in appearance he resembled his fair-complexioned, tall maternal grandfather. The blend of nationalities in him, slight though the Swedish strain was, produced a double strain. He was, in the words of a friend, a Viking in build, a Scandinavian in cast of mind, a Celt in heart and spirit.

As a little child he was very delicate.

The long months each year by mountain and sea, and the devotion of his Highland nurse Barbara, and his delight in open-air life, were the most potent factors in the inward growth of his mind and spirit. From his earliest days he was a passionate lover of nature, a tireless observer of her moods and changes, for he had always felt himself to be "at one with nature, fellow with the winds and birds." And Barbara, the Highland woman, it was she who told him stories of Faerie, crooned to him old Gaelic songs, and made his childish mind familiar with the heroes of the old Celtic Sagas, with the daring exploits of the Viking rovers and Highland chieftains. It was she who sowed the seeds in his mind of much

that he afterward retold under the pseudonym of Fiona Macleod.

There are two stories of his childhood I have heard him tell, which seem to me to show that from earliest years the distinctive characteristics of his markedly dual nature existed and swayed him. From babyhood his mind had been filled with stories of old heroic times, and in his play he delighted in being the adventurous warrior or marauding Viking. In the gray, inclement days of winter when he was shut up in his nursery away from the green life in the garden and the busy wee birds in the trees, he was thrown on the resources of his imagination to fill the long hours. One snowy day, when he was five years old, and he was tired of playing with his baby sisters, who could not sufficiently rise to the occasion and play the distressed damsels to his deeds of knightly chivalry, he determined to sally forth in search of adventure. He buckled his sword above his kilt—it was afternoon and the light was waning—stole downstairs and out of the house, hatless, with flying curls, and marched down the street to lay siege to the nearest castle. A short distance away stood the house of a friend of his father, and upon that the besieger turned his attack. It loomed in his mind as the castle of his desire. He strode resolutely up to the door, with great difficulty, on tiptoe, reached the handle of the bell, pulled a long peal, and then demanded of the maid that she and all within should surrender to him and deliver up the keys of the castle. The maid fell in with his humour, was properly frightened, and begged to be allowed to summon her mistress, who at once promised submission, led the victor into her room, and by a blazing fire gave him the keys in the form of much coveted sweets, held him in her lap till in the

warmth he fell asleep, rolled him up in a blanket, and carried him home.

The other story is indicative not of the restless adventure-loving side of him, but of the poet dreamer.

During the child's sixth year his father had taken a house for the summer months on the shores of Loch Long; the great heather-clad hills, peak behind peak, the deep waters of the winding loch, were a ceaseless delight to the boy. But above all else there lay an undefined attraction in a little wood, a little pine belt nestling on the hillside above the house. It was an enchanted land to him, away from the everyday world, where human beings never came, but where he met his invisible playmates, visible to him. "I went there very often," he wrote later. "I thought that belt of firs had a personality as individual as that of any human being, a sanctity not to be disturbed by sport or play." It was a holy place to him. The sense of the Infinite touched him there. He had heard of God in the church, and as described from the pulpit that Being was to him remote and forbidding. But here he seemed conscious of a Presence that was benign, beautiful. He felt there was some great power (he could not define the feeling to himself) behind the beauty he saw; behind the wind he did not see, but heard; behind the wonder of the sunshine and sunset and in the silences he loved, that awoke in him a desire to belong to it. And so, moved to express his desire in some way, he built a little altar of stones, rough stones, put together under a swaying pine, and on it he laid white flowers in offering.

The three influences that taught him most in childhood were the wind, the woods, and the sea. Water throughout his life had an irresistible charm

for him—the sea, the mountain-loch, or the rushing headlong waters of the hill-burns. To watch the play of moving waters was an absorbing fascination, and he has told me how one bright night he had crept on to a ledge of wet rocks behind a hill water-fall and had lain there so that he might watch the play of moonlight through the shimmering veil of waters.

"When I was a child," he wrote later, "I used to throw offerings—small coins, flowers, shells, even a newly caught trout, once a treasured flint arrow-head—into the sea-loch by which we lived. My Hebridean nurse had often told me of Shony, a mysterious sea-god, and I know I spent much time in wasted adoration: a fearful worship, not unmixed with disappointment and some anger. Not once did I see him. I was frightened time after time, but the sudden cry of a heron, or the snort of a pollack chasing the mackerel, or the abrupt uplifting of a seal's head became over-familiar, and I desired terror, and could not find it by the shore. Inland, after dusk, there was always the mysterious multitude of shadow. There, too, I could hear the wind leaping and growling. But by the shore I never knew any dread, even in the darkest night. The sound and company of the sea washed away all fears."

But the child was not a dreamer only. He was a high-spirited little chap, who loved swimming and fishing and climbing; and learned at an early age to handle the oar and the tiller, and to understand the ways and moods of a sailing boat; afraid of nothing and ready for any adventure that offered.

My first recollections of him go back to my childhood. We were cousins; my father was his father's older brother. My mother was the daughter of Robert Farquharson, of Breda and Allargue. In

1863 my Uncle David had a house at Blairmore on the Gare-loch for the summer, and my mother took her children to the neighbouring village of Strone, so that the cousins might become acquainted. My impression of "Willie" is vivid: a merry, mischievous little boy in his eighth year, with bright-brown curly hair, blue-gray eyes, and a laughing face, and dressed in a tweed kilt; eager, active in his endless invention of games and occupations, and a veritable despot over his sisters in their play. He interested his London cousins in showing them how to find crabs and spouting fish, birds' nests, and brambles; terrified them with tales of snakes in the grass on the hills, and of the ghostly things that flitted about the woods at night. But his chief delight was his punt. A great part of the day he spent on and in the water, shouting with delight as he tossed on the waves in the wake of a steamer, and he occasionally startled us by being apparently capsized into the water, disappearing from sight, and then clambering into the punt dripping and happy. But I remember that with all his love of fun and teasing, he seemed to feel himself different from the other children of his age, and would fly off alone to the hillside or to the woods to his many friends among the birds and the squirrels and the rabbits, with whose ways and habitations he seemed so familiar.

About the dream and vision side of his life he learned early to be silent. He soon realised that his playmates understood nothing of the confused memories of previous lives that haunted him, and from which he drew materials to weave into stories for his school-fellows in the dormitory at nights. To his surprise he found they saw none of the denizens of the other worlds—tree spirits and nature spirits, great and small—so familiar to him, and who he

imagined must be as obvious to others as to himself. He could say about them as Lafcadio Hearn said about ghosts and goblins, that he believed in them for the best of possible reasons, because he saw them day and night.

He found, as have other imaginative psychic children, that he had an inner life, a curious power of vision unshared by any one about him; so that what he related was usually discredited. But the psychic side of his nature was too intimately a part of himself to be killed by misunderstanding. He learned early to shut it away—keep it as a thing apart—a mystery of his own, a mystery to himself. This secrecy had two direct results: he needed from time to time to get away alone, from other people, so as again and again to get into touch with "the Green Life," as he called it, for spiritual refreshment; and it developed in him a love not only of mystery for its own sake, but of mystification also that became a marked characteristic, and eventually was one of the factors which in his literary work led to the adoption of the pseudonym.

Once only, as far as I know, in the short psychic tale called "The Four Winds of the Spirit," did he, in his writings, make any reference to his invisible playmates. I have often heard him speak of a beautiful, gentle white Lady of the Woods, about whom he once wrote in a letter: "For I, too, have my dream, my memory of one whom as a child I called Star-Eyes, and whom later I called 'Baumorair-na-mara,' the Lady of the Sea, and whom at least I knew to be no other than the woman who is in the heart of women. I was not more than seven when one day, by a well, near a sea-loch in Argyll, just as I was stooping to drink, my glancing eyes lit on a tall woman standing among a mist of wild hyacinths

under three great sycamores. I stood, looking, as a fawn looks, wide-eyed, unafraid. She did not speak, but she smiled, and because of the love and beauty in her eyes I ran to her. She stooped and lifted blueness out of the flowers, as one might lift foam out of a pool, and I thought she threw it over me. When I was found lying among the hyacinths dazed, and, as was thought, ill, I asked eagerly after the lady in white, and with hair all shiny-gold like buttercups, but when I found I was laughed at, or at last, when I passionately persisted, was told I was sun-dazed and had been dreaming, I said no more—but I did not forget."

This boy dreamer began his education at home under a governess, and of those early days I know little except that he was tractable, easily taught, and sunny-natured.

He has given an account of his first experiences at school in a paper, "In the Days of my Youth," which he was asked to contribute to *M. A. P.*

"The first tragedy in my life was when I was captured for the sacrifice of school. At least to me it seemed no less than a somewhat brutal and certainly tyrannical capture, and my heart sank when, at the age of eight (I did not know how fortunate I was to have escaped the needless bondage of early schooling till I was eight years old), I was dispatched to what was then one of the chief boarding-schools in Scotland, Blair Lodge, in Polmont Woods, between Falkirk and Linlithgow. It was beautifully situated, and though I then thought the woods were forests and the Forth and Clyde canal a mighty stream, I was glad some years ago, on revisiting the spot, to find that my boyish memories were by no means so exaggerated as I feared. I am afraid I was much more of a credit to my shepherd and fisher and gipsy

friends than to my parents or schoolmasters.

"On the very day of my arrival a rebellion had broken out, and by natural instinct I was, like the Irishman the moment he arrived in America, 'agin the Government.' I remember the rapture with which I evaded a master's pursuing grip, and was hauled in at a window by exultant rebels. In that temporary haven the same afternoon I insulted a big boy, whose peculiar physiognomy had amazed me to delighted but impolite laughter, and forthwith experienced my first school thrashing. Later in the day I had the satisfaction of coming out victor in an equal combat with the heir of an Indian big-wig, whom, with too ready familiarity, I had addressed as 'Curry.' As I was a rather delicate and sensitive child, this was not a bad beginning, and I recollect my exhilaration (despite aching bones and smarting spots) in the thought that 'school' promised to be a more lively experience than I had anticipated.

"I ran away three times, and I doubt if I learned more indoors than I did on these occasions and in my many allowed and stolen outings. The first flight for freedom was an ignominious failure. The second occasion two of us were Screaming Eagle and Sitting Bull, and we had a smothered fire o' nights and ample provender (legally and illegally procured), and we might have become habitual woodlanders had I not ventured to a village and rolled downhill before me a large circular cheese, for which, alas! I now blush to say, I forgot to pay or even to leave my name and address. That cheese was our undoing. The third time was nearly successful, and but for a gale my life, in all probability, would have had an altogether different colour and accent. We reached the port of Grangemouth, and were successful in our plot to hide ourselves as stowaways. We slept that

night amid smells, rats, cockroaches, and a mysterious congregation of ballast and cargo, hoping to wake to the sound of waves. Alas! a storm swept the Forth from west to the east. The gale lasted close on three days. On the morning of the third, three pale and wretched starvelings were ignominiously packed back to Blair Lodge, where the admiration of comrades did not make up for punishment fare and a liberal flogging.

"A fourth attempt, however, proved successful, though differently for each of us. One of the three, a rotund, squirrel-eyed boy, named Robinson, was shipped off as an apprentice in an Indiaman. A few years later he went to his dreamed-of South Seas, was killed in a squabble with hostile islanders, and, as was afterward discovered, afforded a feast (I am sure a succulent one) to his captors. The second of the three is now a dean in the Anglican Church. I have never met him, but once at a big gathering I saw the would-be pirate in clerical garb, with a protuberant front, and bald. I think Robinson had the better luck. As for the third of the three, he has certainly had his fill of wandering, if he has never encountered cannibals and if he is neither a dean nor bald."

When their son was twelve years old, William's parents left Paisley and took a house in Glasgow (India Street), and he was sent as a day scholar to the Glasgow Academy. In his sixteenth year he was laid low with a severe attack of typhoid fever. It was to that summer during the long months of convalescence in the West that many of his memories of Seumas Macleod belong. Of this old fisherman he wrote: "When I was sixteen I was on a remote island where he lived, and on the morrow of my visit I came at sunrise upon the old man standing looking

seaward with his bonnet removed from his long white locks; and upon my speaking to Seumas (when I saw he was not 'at his prayers') was answered, in Gaelic of course, 'Every morning like this I take my hat off to the beauty of the world.' Although I was sent to the Academy at Glasgow, and afterward to the University, I spent much of each year in boating, sailing, hill-climbing, wandering, owing to the unusual freedom allowed to me during our summer residence in the country and during the other vacations. From fifteen to eighteen I sailed up every loch, fjord, and inlet in the Western Highlands and islands, from Arran and Colonsay to Skye and the Northern Hebrides, from the Rhinns of Galloway to the Ord of Sutherland. Wherever I went I eagerly associated myself with fishermen, sailors, shepherds, gamekeepers, poachers, gipsies, wandering pipers, and other musicians." In this way he made many friends, especially among the fishermen and shepherds, stayed with them in their houses, and, 'having the Gaelic,' talked with them, gained their confidence, and listened to tales told by old men, and old mothers by the fireside during the long twilight evenings, or in the herring-boats at night.

"At eighteen I 'took to the heather,' as we say in the north, for a prolonged period...." Up the Gare-loch, close to Ardentinny, there was a point of waste land running into the water, frequently used as camping ground by roving tinkers and gipsies. Many a time he sailed there in his little boat to get in touch with these wandering folk. One summer he found there an encampment of true gipsies, who had come over from mid-Europe, a fine, swarthy, picturesque race. The appeal was irresistible, strengthened by the attraction of a beautiful gipsy girl. He made friends with the tribe, and persuaded the 'king' to let him

join them; and so he became ‘star-brother’ and ‘sun-brother’ to them, and wandered with them over many hills and straths of the West Highlands. To him, who at all times hated the restrictions and limitations of conventional life, to whom romance was a necessity, this free life ‘on the heather’ was the realisation of many dreams. In those few months he learned diverse things; much wood-lore, bird-lore, how to know the ways of the wind, and to use the stars as compass. I do not know exactly how long he was with the camp; two months, perhaps, or three. For to him they were so full of wonder, so vivid, that in later life, when he spoke of them, he lost all count of time, and on looking back to those days, packed with new and keen experiences so wholly in keeping with his temperament, weeks seemed as months, and he ceased to realise that the experience was compressed into one short summer. He never wove these memories into a sequent romance, though in later time he thought of so doing. For one thing, the present was the absorbing actuality to him, and the future a dream to realise; whether in life or in work the past was past, and he preferred to project himself toward the future and what it might have in store for him. But traces of the influence of those gipsy days are to be seen in *Children of To-morrow*, in the character of Annaik in *Green Fire*, and in the greater part of the story of “The Gipsy Christ,” published later in the collection of short stories entitled *Madge o’ the Pool*. He also had projected a romance to be called *The Gipsy Trail*, but it was never even begun.

One thing, however, I know for certain, that the truant’s parents were greatly concerned over his disappearance. After considerable trouble the fugitive was recaptured. Not long after he was put into a lawyer’s office, ostensibly to teach him

business habits, but also the better to chain him to work, to the accepted conventions of life, and to remove him out of the way of dangerous temptations offered by the freer College life with its long vacations.

"Not long after my return to civilisation, at my parent's urgent request, I not only resumed my classes at the University, but entered a lawyer's office in Glasgow (on very easy conditions, hardly suitable for a professional career), so as to learn something of the law. I learned much more, in a less agreeable fashion, when I spent my first years in London and understood the pains and penalties of impecuniosity! The only outside influence which had strongly perturbed my boyhood was the outbreak of the Franco-German War, and I recall the eager excitement with which I followed the daily news, my exultation when the French were defeated, my delight when the Prussians won a great victory. A few years later I would have 'sided' differently, but boys naturally regarded the French as hereditary foes."

In the autumn of 1871 he had been enrolled as student at the Glasgow University, and he attended the sessions of 1871-72 and 1872-73 during the Lord Rectorship of The Right Honourable B. Disraeli. He did not remain long enough at the university to take his degree. Yet he worked well, and was an attentive scholar. Naturally, English Literature was the subject that attracted him specially; in that class he was under Prof. John Nichol, whose valued friendship he retained for many years. At the end of his second session he was one of three students who were found 'worthy of special commendation.' The chief benefit to him of his undergraduate days was the access it gave him to the University Library. There new

worlds of fascinating study were opened to him; not only the literature and philosophy of other European countries, but also the wonderful literatures and religions of the East. He read omnivorously; night after night he read far into the morning hours literature, philosophy, poetry, mysticism, occultism, magic, mythology, folk-lore. While on the one hand the immediate result was to turn him from the form of Presbyterian faith in which he had been brought up, to put him in conflict with all orthodox religious teachings, it strengthened the natural tendency of his mind toward a belief in the unity of the great truths underlying all religions; and, to his deep satisfaction, gave him a sense of brotherhood with the acknowledged psychics and seers of other lands and other days. At last he found a sympathetic correspondence with his thoughts and experiences, and a clew to their possible meaning and value.

In 1874, with a view to finding out in what direction his son's capabilities lay, Mr. David Sharp put him into the office of Messrs. Maclure and Hanney, lawyers, in Glasgow, where he remained till his health broke down and he was sent to Australia. It was soon evident that he would never be a shining light in the legal profession: his chief interest still lay in his private studies and his earliest efforts in literature. In order to find time for all he wished to do, which included a keen interest in the theatre and opera whenever the chance offered, he allowed himself during these two years four hours only out of the twenty-four for sleep; a procedure which did not tend to strengthen his already delicate health. At no time in his life did he weigh or consider what amount of physical strength he had at his disposal. His will was strong, his desires were definite; he expected his strength to be adequate to his

requirements, and assumed it was so, until, from time to time, a serious breakdown proved to him how seriously he had overdrawn on his reserve.

CHAPTER II

AUSTRALIA

My second meeting with my cousin was in August of 1875, when he spent a week with us at a cottage my mother had taken at Dunoon, then one of the most charming villages on the Clyde.

I remember vividly the impression he made on me when I saw the tall, thin figure pass through our garden gateway at sunset—he had come down by the evening steamer from Glasgow—and stride swiftly up the path. He was six feet one inch in height, very thin, with slightly sloping shoulders. He was good-looking, with a fair complexion and high colouring; gray-blue eyes, brown hair closely cut, a sensitive mouth, and winning smile. He looked delicate, but full of vitality. He spoke very rapidly, and when excited his words seemed to tumble one over the other, so that it was not always easy to understand him.

In September my sister and I visited our Uncle

and Aunt at 16 Rosslyn Terrace, Glasgow, and before the close of that month their son and I were secretly plighted to one another. Then began a friendship that lasted unbrokenly for thirty years.

It was then he confided to me that his true ambition lay not in being a scientific man, as it was supposed, but a poet: that his desire was to write about Mother Nature and her inner mysteries, but that as yet he had not sufficient mastery of his art to be able to put his message into adequate form. After much persuasion he read to me several of his early attempts, and promised to send me a copy of whatever he should write.

We were very anxious to meet again before I returned to London, as we should of necessity be separated till the following autumn. A few days later in Edinburgh came the desired opportunity. But how and where to meet? No one must know, lest our secret should be discovered—for we well knew all our relations would be unanimous in disapproval.

Instead of going to the Lawyer's office one morning my cousin took an early train into Edinburgh—and I left my sister to make the necessary excuses for my absence at luncheon. But where to meet? We knew we should run the risk of encountering relations and acquaintances in the obvious places that suggested themselves. At last a brilliant idea came to my betrothed, and we spent several hours in—the secluded Dean Cemetery, and were not found out! We talked and talked—about his ambitions, his beliefs and visions, our hopeless prospects, the coming lonely months, my studies—and parted in deep dejection.

The immediate outcome of the day was a long poem of no less than fifty-seven verses addressed to me: "In Dean Cemetery"—a pantheistic dream, as its

author described it; and in a note to one of the verses he wrote: “I hold to the rest of the poem, for there *are* spirits everywhere. We are never alone, though we are rarely conscious of other presences.”

The poem is too long and too immature to quote from. It was one of a series, never of course published, that he wrote about this time; all very serious, for his mind was absorbed in psychic and metaphysical speculation.

And the reason why he chose such serious types of poems to dedicate to the girl to whom he was engaged was that she was the first friend he had found who to some extent understood him, understood the inner hidden side of his nature, sympathised with and believed in his visions, dreams, and aims.

Immediately on my return to London he sent me three long poems written in 1873 under the influence of Shelley—then to him the poet of poets. Very faulty in their handling, they are to me significant, inasmuch as they strike the keynote of all his subsequent intimate writings. “To the Pine Belt” begins with these lines:

> To-day amid the pines I went
> In a wonderment,
> For the ceaseless song
> Of lichened branches long
> In measures free
> Said to me
> Strange things of another life
> Than woodland strife.

In *The Blue Peaks* he sings of the Quest of the beckoning dim blue hills, of which he wrote again many years later in *The Divine Adventure*. And the third, “The River το καλυγ,” is an ecstatic chant to

Beauty:

> O Spirit fair
> Who dwelleth where
> The heart of Beauty is enshrined.

Wherewith he invokes "Nature, or Beauty, or God" to help him to realise the poignant dream of beauty, which haunted him in diverse ways throughout his life. When he sent them to me he realised how youthful and faulty was the presentment, and he wrote: "If I had not promised to send these poems I should certainly not do so now. They are very poor every way, and the only interest they may have for you is to show you the former current of my thoughts—I did indeed put Beauty in the place of God, and Nature in that of his Laws. Now that I see more clearly (and that is not saying much), these appear trash. Still there is some good here and there. I am glad I have written them, for they helped me to arrive at clearer convictions. The verse and rhythm are purposely uneven and irregular —it admitted of easier composition to write so." While at the University he had made an eager study of comparative religions, their ethics and metaphysics, being then in active revolt against the religious teachings in which he had been brought up. This mental conflict, this weighing of metaphysical problems, found expression in the first Book of a projected Epic on Man, to be called *Upland, Woodland, Cloudland*. "Amid the Uplands" only was finished, and consists of two thousand lines in blank verse; the leading idea is fairly suggested in these lines from the Proem:

> "And I have written in the love of God
> And in a sense of man's proud destiny.

• • • • •

And I have striven to point out harmony,
An inner harmony in all things fair,
Flow'rs, tree, and cloudlet, wind, and ocean wave,
Wold, hill, and forest, with the heart of man,
And with the firmament and universe,
And thence with God. All things are part of Him."

Scattered through the many pages of philosophic exhortation and speculation, of descriptions of nature, of psychical visions, are lines that are suggestive of later development, of later trend of thought, and from them the following are selected:

"There is in everything an undertone ...
Those clear in soul are also clear in sight,
And recognise in a white cascade's flash,
The roar of mountain torrents, and the wail
Of multitudinous waves on barren sands,
The song of skylark at the flush of dawn,
A mayfield all ablaze with king-cups gold,
The clamour musical of culver wings
Beating the soft air of a dewy dusk,
The crescent moon far voyaging thro' dark skies,
And Sirius throbbing in the distant south,
A something deeper than mere audible
And visible sensations; for they see
Not only pulsings of the Master's breath,
The workings of inevitable Law,
But also the influences subordinate
And spirit actors in life's unseen side.
One glint of nature may unlock a soul."

• • • • •

"Our Evil is too finite to disturb
The infinite of good."

• • • • •

"We all are wind-harps casemented on Earth,
And every breath of God that falls may fetch
Some dimmest echo of a faint refrain
From even the worst strung of all of us."

• • • • •

"Oh, I have lain upon a river's brink
And drank deep, deep of all the glory near,
Until my soul in unison did beat
With all things round me: I was at the root,
The common root of life from which all flow,
And when thus far could enter unto all;
I look'd upon a rose and seemed to grow
A bud into a bloom, I watched a tree
And was the life that quicken'd the green leaves,
I saw the waters swirling and became
The law of their wild course, and in the clouds
I felt my spirit wand'ring over heaven.
I did identify myself with aught
That rose before me, and communion held.

• • • • •

Death is not only change, or sleep; it is
God's seal to sanctify the soul's advance."

• • • • •

In the beginning of 1875 he made various experiments in rhymed metre, all equally serious in subject and stiff in handling; but in the latter part of the year he wrote several little songs in a lighter vein and happier manner.

The following year brought a fresh change in his circumstances, and placed him face to face with the serious questions of practical means of living. His father had been in bad health for some months, and he himself developed disquieting symptoms of chest trouble. I had been in Italy during the three spring months, and was overjoyed on my return to hear that

we and my uncle's family were to spend August at Dunoon in neighbouring houses. On arriving there we found my uncle in an alarming condition and his son looking extremely delicate. Nevertheless there were many happy days spent there—and rambling over the hills, boating and sailing on the lochs, in talking over our very vague prospects, in reading and discussing his poems. Of these he had several more to show me, chief among them being an idyll "Beatrice," dedicated to me, and a lyrical drama "Ariadne in Naxos" which excited in me the greatest admiration and pride. Toward the middle of the month my uncle's condition grew hopeless, and on the 20th he died. His death was a great shock to his son, whose health gave way: consumption was feared (as it proved, causelessly) and in the autumn he was ordered a voyage to Australia.

In September I was taken by my mother to Aberdeenshire, and thus I had no opportunity of seeing William again, and the last thing I heard of him, when he had left Scotland in a sailing ship, was a gloomy prediction made by an old relative to my mother: "Ah, that poor nephew of yours, Willie Sharp, he'll never live to reach Australia."

To quote his own words:

"So to Australia I went by sailing ship, relinquishing my idea of becoming a formidable rival to Swinburne (whose *Atalanta in Calydon* had inspired me to a lyrical drama named *Ariadne in Naxos*), to Tennyson (whose example I had deigned to accept for an idyll called 'Beatrice'), and to the author of *Festus*, whose example was responsible for a meditative epic named 'Amid the Uplands.' Alas! 'subsequent events' make it unlikely that these masterpieces will ever see the light.

"In Australia I had friends with whom I stayed,

and from them I joined an eminent colonist whose tragic end cast a cloud over a notable career as an explorer. With him I saw much of the then wild country in Gippsland, beyond the Buffalo and Bogong Mountains, across the Murray River into the desert region of lower New South Wales."

So to Australia he sailed, not only in search of health but to look about and see if he would care to settle there, supposing that he should find work that he could do, as it was now imperative he should provide for his future. In *The Sport of Chance*, and in an article "Through Bush and Fern," he has given graphic descriptions of the memorable ride which afforded the newcomer a unique opportunity of seeing something of the interior of the colony; and from these the following selections are taken:

"It was the full tide of summer when my friend and I started one morning in continuance of our ride south through the ranges that rise and swell and slope away in mighty hollows, sweeping like immense green waves around the bases of those lofty Australian Alps, of which Mounts Hotham, Kosciusko, and Feathertop are the chief glories. Although early, the heat of the sun was already very powerful; but its effect was more bracing than enervating, owing to the clearness and dryness of the atmosphere.... Across the rugged mountains we rode, by difficult passes over desolate plains, along sweeping watercourses marked by the long funeral procession of lofty blue-gums, and mournful, stringy bark. Day by day we saw the sun rise above the hills. We slept, while our horses stood by panting with heat, under what shade we could get, and arose when the sky had lost its look of molten copper and had taken on once more its intense ultramarine. At night as we rode across the plains we heard the

howling of the wild dogs as they scoured afar off, or sent flying in all directions startled kangaroos, which leaped across the moonlit wastes like ghosts of strange creatures in pre-Adamite times.... At last we had come to Albury to join a friend who promised us some swan shooting, and it thus came about that early one morning, about an hour before dawn, we found ourselves crouching under the shelter of some wattles growing close to the Murray lagoons. Not a sound was to be heard save the monotonous swish of the river as it swept slowly onward, except when at rare intervals some restless parrot or cockatoo made a transient disturbance somewhere in the forest. The stillness, the semi-darkness, the sound of the rushing water, our expectancy, all rendered the hour one of mingled solemnity and excited tension; and it was with difficulty that at least one of our small party repressed some sound when within a few feet a venomous-looking snake wriggled away with a faint hiss from a bunch of knotted grass."

At this juncture, unfortunately the writer was carried away by his interest in snakes ... in rare water birds and "Murray-cod," and quite forgot to finish his account of the swan shooting. It is obviously unnecessary to explain that shooting, as a sport, had no attraction for him; whereas observing birds and bats, fish, etc., was always a preoccupying interest.

"What a day of intense heat followed that morning! When at last we reached our previous night's shelter, a shepherd station known as Bidgee Bend, we were nearly exhausted.

"While resting on a rough shake-down and lazily smoking, my eye happened to glance at my saddle, which was lying close at hand, and right in the midst thereof I saw a large scorpion with its tail raised in

that way which is known to signify a vicious state of mind. Hearing my exclamation, the stockman looked round, and without a word reached for a long-lashed whip, and with a blow of the shaft put an end to the possibly dangerous intentions of our unwelcome visitor. Of an extremely laconic nature, our shepherd friend never uttered a word he felt to be unnecessary, and when, after having asked him if he saw scorpions frequently hereabouts, and received a monosyllabic reply in the affirmative, I added, 'Any other kind of vermin?' he muttered sleepily, with his pipe in his mouth, 'Bull-dog ants, hairy spiders, centipedes, bugs.'"

On his return to Melbourne the traveller realised that there was no immediate prospect of finding work. He had made inquiries in every available direction, but he did not make any great effort. He realised that life in the New World, under such conditions as would be open to him, would be very distasteful; and greatly as he had enjoyed the few months' sojourn in Australia, owing chiefly to Mr. Turner's friendliness, he had little regret when he went on board the *Loch Tay* for his homeward faring.

The return voyage, too, was eventful. The route lay round Cape Horn, and the ship was driven by contrary winds down into the Antarctic seas, where it encountered bitterly cold weather, and came close to drifting icebergs.

The *Loch Tay* reached England in June, and the wanderer came direct to my mother's house in London and stayed with us there for several weeks. This first visit to London was uneventful, but full of quiet happiness for us both. He had, of course, much to see, and it was a delight to me to be his cicerone. It was, moreover, a much wished-for opportunity to introduce him to my special friends, while my

mother made him known to whosoever she thought would be influential in helping her nephew to find some suitable post or occupation.

I had three friends in particular I wanted him to know; two were then in London; but the third, John Elder, was in New Zealand, and did not return till the following year. His sister, however, Miss Adelaide Elder, was in town. She and my sister had been my confidants during the preceding two years in the matter of our engagement, and I was naturally most wishful that she and my cousin should meet. We had known each other from childhood—our parents were old friends—and we had read and studied together, often in a quiet part of Kensington Gardens reading Tennyson, Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Fichte, etc. The other friend was Miss Alison—afterward Mrs. Mona Caird—the novelist and essay writer. We three were friends with many tastes and interests in common, not the least being all questions relating to women. To my great satisfaction out of the meeting with my cousin there grew deeply attached friendships that lasted throughout his life.

In spite of all our efforts no work was found for the wanderer; he spent the remainder of the year in Scotland and devoted his time to writing. I have about two letters written to me about that time. In one, dated August 21st from Braemar, he says:

“I feel another self within me now more than ever; it is as if I were possessed by a spirit who must speak out.... I am in no hurry to rush into print; I do not wish to write publicly until I can do so properly. It would be a great mistake to embody my message in such a poem as ‘Uplands,’ although a fifty times better poem than that is. People won’t be preached to. Truth can be inculcated far better by inference, by suggestion.... I am glad to see by your note you

are in good spirits. I also now look on things in a different light; but, unfortunately, Lill, we poor mortals are more apt to be swayed by moods than by circumstances, and look on things through the mist of these moods."

In the other letter he wrote:

"I am too worried about various things to settle to any kind of literary work in the meantime. The weather has been wretchedly wet, and the cold is intense. I do trust I shall get away from Scotland before the winter sets in, as I am much less able to stand it than I thought I was. Even with the strong air up here I can't walk any distance without being much the worse for it."

One cause of the "worry" was a candid letter of criticism he had received from Robert Buchanan, whose *The Book of Orm* had been one of his great favourites among books of modern verse. Its fine mysticism appealed to him, and to the author he sent a number of his poems, and asked for a criticism and hoping for a favourable one. But, alas, when it came it was uncompromisingly the reverse; and the older poet strongly advised the young aspirant not to dream of literature as a career. Many years ago, he explained, when he was struggling in London he tried in vain to get certain employment of the kind, but he had never succeeded and had had "to buffet the sharp sea of journalism." It was a great blow. It produced a deep and prolonged depression, and it required all my powers of persuasion and reiterated belief in his possibilities to enable him to pull himself together and try again.

His hope was unfulfilled and he remained in Scotland throughout the winter, at Moffat, where his mother had taken a house. Despite the cold and the delay, he enjoyed the long rambles over the snow-

clad hills and in the fir woods; and wrote a number of poems afterward published in *The Human Inheritance*; and so vivid were certain effects of sunglow in the winter woods, that he described them in one of his last writings included in *Where the Forest Murmurs*.

But for the most part his mood was one of depression; under it he wrote the following sonnet:

THE GATE OF DEATH

I wonder if the soul upon that day
  When Death's gate opens to it, will with gaze
  Rapt and bewilder'd tremble at the rays
Of God's great glory—or if wild dismay
Will stun it with blank horror, while away
  It watches the unguided world blaze
  With speed relentless down the flowing ways
That end in nothing; while far off a gray
Wan shadow trembles ere it fades for aye?
  Or if, half blinded still with death's amaze,
Dimly and faintly it will somewhat see,
  Some Shadow become substance and unroll
Until there looms one vast Humanity,
  One awful, mighty, and resistless Whole?

In the late Spring of 1878 William Sharp settled in London. An opening had been found for him in the City of Melbourne Bank by Mr. Alexander Elder, the father of our friends, just in time to prevent him from carrying out his decision to go as a volunteer in the Turkish army during its conflict with Russia.

Neither the work nor the prospects offered were inviting, but he was thankful to have a chance of trying his fortunes in London. He bound himself as clerk in the Bank for three years, on a salary of £80, £90, and £100. As owing to the long idleness he had unavoidable debts to pay off, he determined to try

what he could do with his pen to add to the slender income. He took a room in 19 Albert Street, Regent's Park, whence he could walk to the Bank, yet sleep not far away from birds and trees; and he had the good fortune to fall in with a kindly, competent landlady. Now began a long, arduous struggle for the means of livelihood, for health, for a place among the literary writers of his day—a "schooling in the pains and impecuniosities of life" from which he learned so much. He had no influence to help him; and no friends other than those he had met at my mother's house. Each week-end he came to 72 Inverness Terrace and stayed with us from Saturday till Monday. A serious difficulty now presented itself, one which threatened us both with temporary disaster. As long as my betrothed was in Scotland it was quite possible to preserve the secret of our engagement. Now that he was in London and a constant visitor at our house it was not so simple a matter. Moreover, to me it did not seem honourable toward my mother, and I wished her to know. He, however, was not of my opinion; not only would he lose much—we both believed we could not win my mother to our way of thinking—if he were forbidden to come to the house, but he also delighted in the very fact of the secrecy, of the mystery, and, indeed, mystification, which I did not then realise was a marked characteristic of his nature. For me such secrecy had no charm, but was fraught with difficulties and inconveniences. Many were our discussions, and at last he yielded an unwilling consent.

One Sunday afternoon in the late summer a dejected couple wandered about in Kensington Gardens, under the old trees, trying to forecast what seemed a mournful future. However, our fears were

groundless. My mother, though she felt it her duty to point out to us the hopelessness and foolishness of the engagement from a worldly point of view, her strong objection to it on the score of our cousinship, his delicacy and lack of prospects, nevertheless realised the uselessness of opposing her daughter's decision, accepted the inevitable, and from that moment treated her nephew as her son.

Two months later he wrote to me:

26: 8: 78.

... Thanks for your welcome note which I received a little ago. I, too, like you, was sitting at my open window last night (or rather this morning) with the stars for my companions: and I, too, took comfort from them and felt the peace hidden in their silent depths. I know of nothing that soothes the spirit more than looking on those awful skies at midnight. Some of our aspirations seem to have burnt into life there, and, tangled in some glory of starlight, to shine down upon us with beckoning hands.... I have told you before how that music, a beautiful line of poetry, and other cherished things of art so often bring you into close communion with myself. But there is one thing that does it infallibly and more than anything else: trees on a horizon, whether plain or upland, standing against a cloudless blue sky—more especially when there is a soft blue haze dimly palpitating between. Strange, is it not? I only half indefinitely myself know the cause of it. *One* cause certainly is the sense of music there is in that aspect—possibly also the fairness of an association so sympathetic with some gracious memory of the past.

P. S.—By-the-bye, have you noticed that my "Nocturne" is in the July number of *Good Words*?

This poem was of special interest to me because it had been written while I had played to him on the

piano one evening. It was in the summer of 1878 also that he just met Mr. John Elder, whom I had known from childhood. John was a graduate of Cambridge, a thinker and man of fine tastes, and his new friend found a great stimulus in the keen mind of the older man. Owing to delicacy he could be but little in England, and till his death in 1883 the two men corresponded regularly with one another. From the letters of the younger man I have selected one or two to illustrate the trend of his mind at that date:

19 Albert St., Regent's Park,
Oct., 1879.

My dear John,

Thanks for your welcome letter of 18th August. My purpose, in my letter of May 7th, if I recollect rightly, was to urge that Reason is sometimes transcended by Emotion—sufficiently often, that is to say, to prevent philosophers from deriding the idea that a truth may be reached emotionally now and again, quicker than by the light of Reason. God may be beyond the veil of mortal life, but I cannot see that he has given us any definite revelation beyond what pure Deism teaches, viz., that there is a Power —certainly beneficent, most probably eternal, possibly (in effect, if not in detail) omnipotent—who, letting the breath of His being blow through all created things, evolves the Ascidian into man, and man into higher manifestations than are possible on earth, and whose message and revelation to man is shown forth in the myriad-paged volume of nature, and the inherent yearning in every human soul for something out of itself and yet of it. Of such belief, I may say that I am.

But my mind is like a troubled sea, whereon the winds of doubt blow continually, with waves of dead hopes and religious beliefs washing far away behind, and nothing before but the weary seeming of

phantasmal shores. At times this faith that I cherish comes down upon me like the hushful fall of snow-flakes, calming and soothing all into peace; and again, it may be, it appears as a dark thunder-cloud, full of secret lightnings and portentous mutterings. And, too, sometimes I seem to waken into thought with a start, and to behold nothing but the blind tyranny of pure materialism, and the unutterable sorrow and hopelessness of life, and the bitter blackness of the end, which is annihilation. But such phases are generally transient, and, like a drowning man buffeting the overwhelming waves, I can often rise above them and behold the vastness and the Glory of the Light of Other Life.

And this brings me to a question which is at present troubling many others besides myself. I mean the question of the immortality of the individual. I do not know how you regard it yourself, but you must be aware that the drift of modern thought is antagonistic to personal immortality, and that many of our best and most intelligent thinking men and women abjure it as unworthy of their high conception of Humanity....

But *is* Humanity all? Has Humanity fashioned itself out of primal elements, arisen and marched down the long, strange ways of Time—still marching, with eyes fixed on some self-projected Goal—without ever a spiritual breath blowing upon it, without ever the faintest guidance of any divine hand, without ever a glance of sorrowful and yearning but yet ineffably hopeful love from some Being altogether beyond and transcending it? Is it, can it be so? But in any case, whether with the Nirvana of the follower of Buddha, the absorption of the soul in the soul of God of the Deist and Theist, or with the loss of the individual in the whole of the Race of the Humanitarian, I cannot altogether agree. It may be the “old Adam” of selfishness; it may be poverty of highest feeling and insufficiency of intellectual grasp; but I cannot embrace the belief in the extinction of

the individual....

23d October, 1880.

I am glad you like my short paper in the *Sectarian Review* and I think that you understand my motive in writing it. It is no unreasoning reverence that I advocate, no "countenancing beliefs in worn-out superstitions," as you say; no mercy to the erring, but much mercy to and sympathy with the deceived. I do not reverence the Bible or the Christian Theology in *themselves*, but for the beautiful spirituality which faintly but ever and again breathes through them, like a vague wind blowing through intricate forests; and so far I reverence the recognition of this spiritual breath in the worship of those whose views are so very different from my own....

I have been writing a good deal lately—chiefly verse. There is one thing which I am sure will interest you: some time ago I wrote a sonnet called "Religion," the drift of which was to show the futility of any of the great creeds *as* creeds, and two or three weeks ago showed it to my friend Mr. Belford Bax. It seems to have made considerable impression upon him, for, after what he calls "having absorbed it," he has set it to very beautiful recitative music. There are some fine chords in the composition, preluding the pathetic melody of the finale; and altogether it has given me great pleasure. But what specially interests me is that it is the first time (as far as I am aware) of a sonnet in any language having been set to music. The form of this kind of verse is of course antagonistic to song-music, and could only be rendered by recitative. Do you know of any instance having occurred? The sonnet in question will appear in *The Examiner* in a week or two.

Lo, in a dream, I saw a vast dim sea
  Whose sad waves broke upon a barren shore;
  The name of this wan sea was *Nevermore*,
The land *The Past*, the shore *Futility*:

Thereon I spied three mighty Shadows; three
  Weary and desolate Shades, of whom each wore
  A crown whereon was writ *Despair*. To me
One spoke, and said, “Lo, I am He
  In whom the countless millions of the East
Live, move, and hope. And all is vanity!”—
  And I knew Buddha. Then the next: “The least
  Am I, but once God’s mightiest Prophet-Priest”—
So spake Mahomet. And then pitifully
The third Shade moaned, “I am of Galilee!”

I also enclose the record of a vision I had lately:

Lo, in that Shadowy place wherein is found
  The fruitage of the spirit men call dreams,
  I wander’d. Ever underneath pale gleams
Of misty moonlight quivering all around,
  And ever by the banks of sedgy streams
  Swishing thro’ fallen rushes with slow sound
A spirit walked beside me. From a mound,
Rustling from poplar-leaves from top to base,
Some bird I knew not shrilled a cry of dole,
So bitter, I cried out to God for grace.
  Whereat he by me slackened from his pace,
Turning upon me in my cold amaze
  And saying, “While the long years onward roll
Thou shalt be haunted by this hateful face—“
  And looking up, I looked on my own soul!

Nov. 20, 1880.

If this note does not reach you by New Year’s Day it will soon after—so let me wish you most heartily and sincerely all good wishes for the coming year. May the White Wings of Happiness and Peace and Health brush from your path all evil things. There is something selfish in the latter wish, for I hope so

much to see you before long again. Don't despise me when I say that in some things I am more a woman than a man—and when my heart is touched strongly I lavish more love upon the one who does so than I have perhaps any right to expect returned; and then I have so few friends that when I do find one I am ever jealous of his or her absence.

• • • • • • •

P. S.—I wonder if this late Kentish violet will retain its delicious scent till it looks at you in New Zealand. It is probably the last of its race.

Feb., 1881.

I may say in reference to the Religion of Humanity that my sympathy with Comtism is only limited, and that though I think it is and will yet be an instrument of great good, I see nothing in it of essential savingness. It is even in some of its ceremonial and practical details a decided retrogression—at least so it seems to me—and though I do not believe in a revealed God, I think such a belief higher and more precious and morally as salutary as a belief in abstract Humanity. Concrete humanity appeals more to my sympathy when filled with the breath of "God" than in its relation to its abstract Self. When I write again I will endeavour to answer your question as to whether I believe in a God or not. My friend, we are all in the hollow of some mighty moulding Hand. Every fibre in my body quivers at times with absolute faith and belief, yet I do not say that I believe in "God" when asked such a question by those whom I am conscious misinterpret me. You have some lines of mine called "The Redeemer"; they will hint something to you of that belief which buoys my soul up in the ocean of love that surrounds it. It were well for the soul, if annihilation rounds off the circle of life, to sink to final forgetfulness in the sea of precious human love; but it is far better if the soul can be borne along that sea of wonder and glory to distant ever-expanding goals, transcending in *love,*

glory, life all that human imagination ever conceived....

Farewell for the present, dear friend.

W.

CHAPTER III

EARLY DAYS IN LONDON

The most important influence in the early literary career of the young poet was his friendship with Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He gained not only a valued friend, who introduced him to many of the well-known writers of the time, but one who helped him in the development of his art by sound, careful criticism and kindly encouragement. His first acquaintance with the writings of the painter-poet dated from the Autumn of 1879, when on his birthday Miss Adelaide Elder had sent him a volume of poems, an incident destined to have far-reaching results. In 1899 he wrote to her:

DEAR ADELAIDE,

Do you know why I thought of you to-day particularly, it being my birthday? For it was you who some two and twenty years ago sent me on the 12th of September a copy of a beautifully bound

book by a poet with a strange name and by me quite unknown—Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

To that event it is impossible to trace all I owe, but what is fairly certain is that, without it, the whole course of my life might have been very different. For the book not only influenced and directed me mentally at a crucial period, but made me speak of it to an elderly friend (Sir Noel Paton) through whom I was dissuaded from going abroad on a career of adventure (I was going to Turkey or as I vaguely put it, Asia) and through whom, later, I came to know Rossetti himself—an event which completely redirected the whole course of my life.

It would be strange to think how a single impulse of a friend may thus have so profound a significance were it not that to you and me there is nothing strange (in the sense of incredible) in the complex spiritual interrelation of life. Looking back through all those years I daresay we can now both see a strange and in much inscrutable, but still recognisable, direction.

To quote his own words:

"By the autumn of 1880 I was within sight of that long and arduous career called the literary life. An extraordinary good fortune met me at the outset, for, through an introduction from Sir Noel Paton, I came to know, and know intimately, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose winsome personality fascinated me as much as his great genius impressed me. Rossetti introduced me to one who became my chief friend—the late Philip Bourke Marston; and through Rossetti also I came to know Mr. Theodore Watts, Mr. Swinburne, and others. By the spring of 1881, I was in the literary world, and in every phase of it, from the most Bohemian to the most isolated."

On the 1st of September, 1881, William Sharp presented himself at the door of 16 Cheyne Walk.

The housekeeper explained that Mr. Rossetti could receive no one. The importunate stranger persisted and stated that it was of the highest importance that he should see Mr. Rossetti and so impressed her that she not only went to report to Mr. Rossetti but came back with orders to admit him. On seeing his eager visitor, the poet-painter naturally asked him what he wanted so urgently, and his visitor answered promptly, "Only to shake hands with you before you die!" "Well," was the answer, "I am in no immediate danger of dying, but you may shake hands if you wish."

The introduction from Sir Noel Paton was then tendered; and thus began a friendship that grew to a deep affectionate devotion on the side of the younger man.

Rossetti took him into the studio, and showed him the paintings he had on his easels. The two which specially impressed his visitor were "La Donna della Fenestra," and "Dante's Dream." In a letter written to me when I was in Italy, he describes the pictures as beautiful colour harmonies, and continues:

> "After I had looked at it for a long time in happy silence, Rossetti sat behind me in the shadow and read me his translation of the poem from the *Vita Nuova*, which refers to Dante's Dream. Was it not kind of him to give so much pleasure to one, a complete stranger? I also saw several other paintings of extreme beauty, but which I have no time to mention at present. He told me to come again, and shortly before I left he asked me for my address, and said that he would ask me to come some evening to talk with him, and also to meet one or two. This was altogether unexpected. Fancy having two such men for *friends* as Sir Noel Paton and Dante Gabriel Rossetti! I went out in a dream. The outside world

was altogether idealised. I was in the golden age again. To calm myself, I went and leant over Chelsea Embankment, where there were many people as there was a regatta going on. But, though conscious of external circumstances, I was not in London. The blood of the South burned in my veins, the sky was a semi-tropical one: the river rushing past was not the Thames, but the Tiber; the granite embankment was a marble aqueduct, with vines laden with ripe fruit covering it with a fragrant veil: citrons and pomegranates were all around. Dark passionate eyes of the South met mine; the dreamy sweetness of a strange tongue sang an ineffably delicious song through and through my soul: I sank into the utmost realms of reverie, and drank a precious draught of alien life for only too brief a space. Not De Quincey in the mystic rapture of opium, not Mohammed in his vision of Paradise, drank deeper of the ineffable wine of the Supreme and Unattainable."

It was several weeks before the much-hoped-for invitation came, and the recipient was feeling so ill that he was hardly in a condition to take full advantage of it, and feared he had made a bad impression on his host. The following morning he wrote:

19 Albert St., Regent's Park N.W.,
31: 1: 80.

My dear Sir,

I hope you will not consider me ungrateful for the pleasure you gave me last night because I outwardly showed so little appreciation—but I was really so unwell from cold and headache that it was the utmost I could do to listen coherently. But though, otherwise, I look back gratefully to the whole evening I especially recall with pleasure the few minutes in which now and again you read. I have

never heard such a beautiful reader of verse as yourself, and if I had not felt—well, shy—I should have asked you to go on reading. Voice, and tone, and expression, all were in perfect harmony—and although I have much else to thank you for, allow me to thank you for the pleasure you have given me in this also.

I enclose 4 or 5 poems taken at random from my MSS. Two or three were written two or three years ago. That called the "Dancer" is modelled on your beautiful "Card-Dealer."

I have also to thank you for your kind criticisms: and hope that you do not consider my aspirations and daring hopes as altogether in vain. Despair comes sometimes upon me very heavily, but I have not yet lost heart.

Yours most faithfully,

WILLIAM SHARP.

On the 23d of February he wrote to Mrs. Caird:

DEAR MONA.

Was unable after all to resume my letter on Friday night. On Friday morning I had a note from Rossetti wanting me to come again and dine with him—this time alone, I was glad to find. I spent a most memorable evening, and enjoyed myself more than I can tell. We dined together in free and easy manner in his studio, surrounded by his beautiful paintings and studies. Then, and immediately after dinner he told me things of himself, personal reminiscences, with other conversation about the leading living painters and poets. Then he talked to me about myself, and my manuscripts—a few of which he had seen. Then personal and other matters again, followed, to my great delight (as Rossetti is a most beautiful reader) by his reading to me a great part of the as yet unpublished sonnets which go to form "The House of Life." Some of them were

splendid, and seemed to me finer than those published—more markedly intellectual, I thought. This took up a long time, which passed most luxuriously for me....

He has been so kind to me every way: and this time he gave me two most valuable and welcome introductions—one to Philip Bourke Marston, the man whose genius is so wonderful, considering he has been blind from his birth—and the other to his brother Mr. Michael Rossetti, to whom, however, he had already kindly spoken about me. I am to go when I wish to the latter's literary re-unions, where I shall make the acquaintance of some of our leading authors and authoresses. Did I tell you that the last time I dined at Rossetti's house he gave me a copy of his poems, with something from himself written on the fly-leaf? On that occasion I also met Theodore Watts, the well-known critic of *The Athenaeum*. It is so strange to be on intimate terms with a man whom a short time ago I looked on as so far off. Perhaps, dear friend, when you come to stay with Elizabeth and myself in the happy days which I hope are in store for us all, you will "pop" into quite a literary circle!... I was sure, also, you would enjoy the *Life of Clifford* in "Mod: Thought." What a splendid man he was: a true genius, yet full of the joy of life, sociable, fun-loving, genial, and in every way a gentleman. I was reading one of his books lately, and was struck with the sympathetic spirit he showed toward what to him meant nothing—Christianity. I wish we had more men like him. There is another man for whom I think I have an equal admiration, though of a different order in one sense—Dr. Martineau. Have you read anything of his?

On Wednesday evening next I am going to a Spiritual Séance, by the best mediums—which I am looking forward to with great curiosity....

Besides verse, I am writing a Paper just now on "Climate in Relation to the Influences of Art," and going on with one or two other minor things. There

now, I have told you all about myself....

Your friend and comrade,

WILL.

He submitted several poems to Rossetti who had suggested that if he had a suitable sonnet it might be included in Hall Caine's *Century of Sonnets*. Rossetti's acknowledgment contained an adverse criticism on the Sonnet sent, softened by an invitation to the younger man to go again to see him.

Saturday.

DEAR MR. ROSSETTI,

Thanks for your kind invitation to Philip and myself for Monday night—which we are both glad to accept. I found him in bed this morning on my way to the city—but had no scruple in waking him as I knew what pleasure your message would give. We both thank you also for promising to put us up at night.

I infer from your letter that you do not think *The Two Realities* good enough to send to Caine: and though of course sorry, I acquiesce in your judgment. I know that none of my best work is in sonnet-form, and that I have less mastery over the latter than any other form of verse. But I will try to improve my deficiencies in this way by acting up to your suggestions. You see, I have never had the advantage of such a severe critic as you before. For instance, I have received praise from many on account of a sonnet you once saw (one of a series on "Womanhood") called "Approaching Womanhood"—which I enclose herewith—wishing you to tell me *how* it is poor and what I might have made of it instead. As I am writing from the city I have no others by me (but indeed you have been bothered sufficiently already) but will try and give one from memory—which I hastily dashed down one day in the office.

Looking forward to Monday night,

Yours ever sincerely,

WILLIAM SHARP.

Eventually the Sonnets were written that satisfied his critic and were included in Hall Caine's Anthology.

About this time also he was attempting a poem relating to an imaginary episode in the early life of Christ. To me it seemed a mistake, and I urged him to consult Mr. Rossetti, who replied as follows:

Thursday, Jan., 1880.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I am quite unable to advise you on so abstruse a point. Strange to say, I can conceive no higher Ideal than the Christ we know; and I judge it to be very rash to lower in poetry (to the apprehension of many beautiful minds) that Ideal, by any assumption to decide a point respecting it which it is not possible to *decide,* whichever way belief or even conviction may tend.

I did not gather fully the relation of the Wandering Jew to your poem. If the very Jew in question, how is he to know of the development of humanity before his time? That he is a symbol of course I understand; but the balance between person and symbol should be clearly determined. I hope you may enjoy yourself in such good company, and am ever,

Sincerely yours,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Sir Noel Paton had given his younger countryman an introduction also to his old friend Mrs. Craik (author of John Halifax) who, it happened, was P. B. Marston's godmother. She had a house in Kent, at Shortlands, and to it she on several occasions invited

the two young poets. During one of these days, in the late summer, they went for a drive through the green lanes, when suddenly there came on a thunderstorm. The carriage was shut up, but there was no way of protecting the occupant of the box seat. So that Philip should come to no harm the younger man took the box seat and got thoroughly wet. On reaching the house he refused many suggestions to have his clothes dried, and went back to town that evening in his damp garments. A violent cold ensued, which he was unable to throw off. He was out of health, ill-nourished, owing to his slender means, and overworked. That summer my mother had taken a cottage in South Wales, on the estuary near Portmadoc, and my cousin came to spend his holidays with us. A weary delicate creature arrived, but he was sure that a bathe or two in the salt water would soon cure him. Alas, instead of that within a few days he was laid low with rheumatic fever, and for four weeks my mother and I nursed him and it was the end of September before he could go back to town. That autumn my mother let her house for six months and decided to winter in Italy with her daughters. Although there was much that was alluring in the prospect I was very greatly worried at leaving London, for my poet was so weak and delicate, and I distrusted his notions of taking care of himself. On the 13th December he wrote to me:

Monday, 13: 12: 80.

"I spent such a pleasant evening on Saturday. I went round to Francillon's house about 8 o'clock, and spent about an hour there with him and Julian Hawthorne. Then we walked down to Covent Garden, and joined the 'Oasis' Club—where we met about 30 or so other literary men and artists, including the D. Christie Murray I so much wished to

> meet, and whom I like very much. We spent a very pleasant while a decidedly 'Bohemian' night, and after we broke up I walked home with Francillon, Julian Hawthorne, and Murray. Hawthorne and myself are to be admitted members at the next meeting."

He has described his friendship with the blind poet in his Introduction to a Selection of Marston's poems published in the Canterbury Series:

"I was spending an evening with Rossetti, when I chanced to make some reference to Marston's poetry. Finding that I did not know the blind poet and that I was anxious to meet him, Rossetti promised to bring us together. I remember that I was fascinated by him at once—his manner, his personality, his conversation. 'There is a kind of compensation,' he remarked to me once, 'in the way that new friendships arise to brighten my life as soon as I am bowled over by some great loss.'"

Just before Christmas, William wrote:

DEAR MR. ROSSETTI,

> ... I wished very much to show you two poems I had written in the earlier half of this year, and now send them by the same post. The one entitled "Motherhood" I think the better on the whole. It was written to give expression to the feeling I had so strongly of the beauty and sacredness of Motherhood in itself, and how this is the same, in degree, all through creation: the poem is accordingly in three parts—the first dealing with an example of Motherhood in the brute creation, the second with a savage of the lowest order, and the third with a civilised girl-woman of the highest type.
>
> The other—"The Dead Bridegroom"—is more purely an "art" poem. After reading it, you will doubtless recognise the story, which I believe is true.

Swinburne (I understand) told it to one or two, and Meredith embodied it in a short ballad. Philip Marston told me the story one day, and, it having taken a great hold upon me, the accompanying poem was the result. After I had finished and read it to Philip, it took strong hold of his imagination also—and so he also began a poem on the same subject, treating it differently, however, and employing the *complete* details of the story, instead of, as I have done, stopping short at the lover's death, and is still unfinished.

It is in great part owing to his generously enthusiastic praise that I now send these for your inspection; but also because much of what may be good in them is owing to your gratefully remembered personal influence and kindness, as well as your own beautiful work."

His kindly critic answered:

Jan., 1881.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I have only this evening read your poems, and am quite amazed at the vast gain in distinction and reality upon anything I had seen of yours before. I read "Motherhood" first and think it best on the whole. It is full of fine things and strange variety. "The Dead Bridegroom" is less equal, but some touches are extremely fine. The close after the crisis strikes me as done with a certain difficulty and wants some pointing. As a narrative poem, I do not yet think it quite distinct enough, though it always rises at the right moment. The execution of your work needs some reform in detail. The adjectives, especially when monosyllabic, are too crowded. There are continual assonances of *ings*, *ants*, *ows*, etc., midway in the lines. However, the sonorousness is sometimes striking and the grip of the phrases complete at its best. I am sure you have benefited much by association with Philip Marston, though I

do not mean to say that such things as these can have their mainspring elsewhere than in native gift.

I will keep the poems a few days yet and then return them.

Yours sincerely,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

A letter from the younger poet, written a few days later, reached me in Rome:

24: 1: 81.

"Well, last Friday was a 'red-letter' day to me. I went to Rossetti's at six, dined about 7.30, and stayed there all night. We had a jolly talk before dinner, and then Shields the painter came in and stayed till about 11 o'clock: after that Rossetti read me all his unpublished poems, some of which are magnificent—talked, etc.—and we did not go to bed till about three in the morning. I did not go to the Bank next day, as I did not feel well: however, I wrote hard at poetry, etc., all day till seven o'clock, managing to keep myself up with tea. I was quite taken aback by the extent of Rossetti's praise. He said he did not say much in his letter because writing so often looks 'gushing' but he considered I was able to take a foremost place among the younger poets of the day—and that many signs in my writings pointed to a first-class poet—that the opening of 'The Dead Bridegroom' was worthy of Keats—that 'Motherhood' was in every sense of the word a memorable poem—that I must have great productive power, and broad and fine imagination—and many other things which made me very glad and proud."

"The Dead Bridegroom" was never published, but in a letter to a friend who raised objections to the treatment of the poem "Motherhood"—he wrote in explanation:

"You seem to think my object in writing was to describe the actual initial act of Motherhood—whereas such acts were only used incidentally to the idea. I entirely agree with you in thinking such a *motif* unfit for poetic treatment—and more, I think the choice of such would be in very bad taste and wanting in true delicacy. My aim was something very far from this—and what made me see you had not grasped it were the words—'Besides, is not your type of civilised woman degraded by being associated with the savage and the wild beast?'

"Of course, what I was endeavouring to work out was just the opposite of this. 'Motherhood' was written from a deep conviction of the beauty of the state of Motherhood itself, of the holy, strangely similar bond of union it gave to all created things, and how it, as it were, forged the links whereby the chain of life reached unbroken from the polyp depths we do see to the God whom we do not see. Looking at it as I did, I saw it transfigured to the Seal of Unity: I saw the bestial life touch the savage, and the latter's low existence edge complete nobility of womanhood, as—in the spirit—I see this last again merge into fuller spiritual periods beyond the present sphere of human life. In embodying this idea I determined to take refuge in no vague transcendentalism, or from any false feeling shirk what I knew to be noble in its mystic wonder and significance: and I came to the conclusion that the philosophic idea could be best embodied and made apparent by moulding it into three typical instances of motherhood, representing the brute, the savage, and the civilised woman. From this point of view, I considered the making choice of the initial act of motherhood—of birth—entirely justifiable, and beyond reach of reproach of impurity, or even unfitness. As to the artistic working out of these typical *motives*, I gave to the first glow and colour, to the second mystery and weirdness, to the third what dignity and solemnity I could.

"These were my aims and views, and I have not yet seen anything to make me change them....

"So much for 'Motherhood.' As to 'The Dead Bridegroom,' I quite admit that the advisability of choosing such subjects is a very debatable one. It is the only one of mine (in my opinion) which could incur the charge of doubtful 'fitness.' As a poem, moreover, it is inferior in workmanship to 'Motherhood.'"

To E. A. S.:

"4: 2: 81.

"I have written one of my best poems (in its own way) since writing you last. It was on Tuesday night: I did not get back till about seven o'clock, and began at once to write. Your letter came an hour or so afterward but it had to lie waiting till after midnight, when I finished, having written and polished a complete poem of thirty verses in that short time. It is a ballad. The story itself is a very tragic one. Perhaps the kind of verse would be clear to you if I were to quote a verse as a specimen:

"And I saw thy face wax flush'd, then pale,
And thy lips grow blue like black-ice hail,
With eyes on fire with the soul's fierce bale,
Son of Allan!
"I may have been pale, and may be red—
But this night shall one lie white and dead.
(O Mother of God! whose eyes
Watch men lie dead 'neath midnight skies.)"

"Both story and verse I invented myself: and I think you will think it equal to anything I have done in power. It was a good lot to do at a sitting, wasn't it? I will read it to you when you come home again.... I enjoyed my stay with Rossetti immensely. We did not breakfast till one o'clock on Tuesday—pretty late, wasn't it? (I told you I had a holiday,

didn't I?) He told me again that he considered 'Motherhood' fit to take the foremost place in recent poetry. He has such a fine house, though much of it is shut up, and full of fine things: he showed me some of it that hardly any one ever sees. He has asked me to come to him again next Sunday. Isn't it splendid?—and ar'n't you glad for my sake? He told Philip that he thought I "had such a sweet genial happy nature." Isn't it nice to be told of that. My intense delight in little things seems also to be a great charm to him—whether in a stray line of verse, or some new author, or a cloudlet, or patch of blue sky, or chocolate-drops, etc., etc. Have you noticed this in me? I am half gratified and half amused to hear myself so delineated, as I did not know my nature was so palpable to comparative strangers. And now I am going to crown my horrid vanity by telling you that Mrs. Garnet met Philip a short time ago, and asked after the health of his friend, the "handsome young poet!" There now, amn't I horridly conceited? (N. B.—I'm pleased all the same, you know!)

"I wrote a little lyric yesterday which is one of the most musical I have ever done. To-day, I was 'took' by a writing mood in the midst of business hours, and despite all the distracting and unpoetical surroundings, managed to hastily jot down the accompanying lyric. It is the general end of young *unknowing* love....

"I had a splendid evening last night, and Rossetti read a lot more of his latest work. Splendid as his published work is, it is surpassed by what has yet to be published. The more I look into and hear his poems the more I am struck with the incomparable power and depth of his genius—his almost magical perfection and mastery of language—his magnificent spiritual strength and subtlety. He read some things last night, lines in which almost took my breath away. No sonnet-writer in the past has equalled him, and it is almost inconceivable to imagine any one

> doing so in the future. His influence is already deep and strong, but I believe in time to come he will be looked back to as we now look to Shakespeare, to Milton, and in one sense to Keats. I can find no language to express my admiration of his supreme gifts, and it is with an almost painful ecstasy that I receive from time to time fresh revelations of his intellectual, spiritual, and artistic splendour. I fancy one needs to be an actual poet to feel this to the full, but every one, however dim and stagnant or coldly intellectual his or her soul, must feel more or less the marvellous beauty of this wedding of the spirit of emotional thought and the spirit of language, and the child thereof—divine, perfect expression. Our language in Rossetti's hands is more solemn than Spanish, more majestic than Latin, deeper than German, sweeter than Italian, more divine than Greek. I know of nothing comparable to it. He told me to call him Rossetti and not 'Mr. Rossetti,' as disparity in age disappears in close friendship, wasn't it nice of him? It makes me both very proud and humble to be so liked and praised by the greatest master in England—proud to have so far satisfied his fastidious critical taste and to have excited such strong belief in my powers, and humble in that I fall so far short of him as to make the gulf seem impassable."

In Italy I was making a careful study of the old masters in painting, and found that my correspondent took but lukewarm interest in my enthusiasm. Until that date he had had little opportunity of studying Painting; and at no time did the *cinquecento* and earlier painters really attract him. I regretted his indifference, and asked him, banteringly, if his dislike extended equally to the early masters of the pen and to those of the brush.

He replied: "You ask me, if I dislike the Old Masters of Poetry as much as I do those of Painting?

and I reply Certainly not, but at the same time the comparison is not fair. Most of the old poets are not only poets of their time but have special beauties at the present day, and can be read with as much or almost as much pleasure now as centuries ago. Their imagination, their scope, their detail is endless. On the other hand the Old Masters of Painting are (to me, of course, and speaking generally) utterly uninteresting in their subjects, in the way they treat them, and in the meaning that is conveyed. If it were not for the richness and beauty of their colour I would never go into another gallery *from pleasure*, but colour alone could not always satisfy me. But take the 'Old Masters' of Poetry! Homer of Greece, Virgil and Dante of Italy, Theocritus of Sicily, and in England Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Webster, Ford, Massinger, Marlowe, Milton!

"The poetry of these men is beautiful in itself apart from the relation they bear to their times. We may not care for Dryden (though I do) or Prior or Cowley, because in the verse of these latter there is nothing to withstand the ages, nothing that rises above their times. In looking at Rubens, or Leonardo da Vinci, or Fra Angelico, we must school ourselves to admiration by saying 'How wonderful for their time, what a near attempt at a perspective, what a near success in drawing nature—external and human!' Would you, or any one, care for a painting of Angelico's if executed in exactly the same style and in equally soft and harmonious colours at the present day? Could you enjoy and enter into it apart from its relation to such-and-such a period of early Christian Art? It may be possible, but I doubt it. On the other hand take up the Old Masters of Poetry and judge them by the present high standard. Take up Homer—who has his width and space? Dante—who

has his fiery repressed intensity? Theocritus, who has sung sweeter of meadows and summer suns and flowers? Chaucer—who is as delicious now as in the latter part of the fourteenth century! Shakespeare—who was, is, and ever shall be the supreme crowned lord of verse!—Take up one of the comparatively speaking minor lights of the Elizabethan era. Does Jonson with his 'Every Man in his Humour,' or his 'Alchemist,' does Webster with his 'Duchess of Malfi,' does Ford with his 'Lover's Melancholy,' does Massinger, with his 'Virgin Martyr,' do Beaumont and Fletcher with their 'Maid's Tragedy,' does Marlowe with his 'Life and Death of Dr. Faustus,' pall upon us? Have we ever to keep before us the fact that they lived so many generations or centuries ago?

"I never tire of that wonderful, tremendous, magnificent epoch in literature—the age of the Elizabethan dramatists.

"Despite the frequent beauty of much that followed I think the genius of Poetry was of an altogether inferior power and order (excepting Milton) until once again it flowered forth anew in Byron, in Coleridge, in Keats, and in Shelley! These two last names, what do they not mean! Since then, after a slight lapse, Poetry has soared to serener heights again, and Goethe, Victor Hugo, Tennyson, and Browning have moulded new generations, and men like Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris, Marston, Longfellow, and others have helped to make still more exquisitely fair the Temple of Human Imagination. Men like Joaquin Miller and Whitman are the south and north winds that soothe or stir the leaves of thought surrounding it.

"We are on the verge of another great dramatic epoch—more subtle and spiritual if not grander in dimensions than that of the sixteenth century. I hope

to God I live to see the sunrise which must follow the wayward lights of the present troubled dawn....

"On Monday evening (from eight till two) I go again as usual to Marston's. I called at his door on my way here this afternoon and left a huge bouquet of wallflowers, with a large yellow heart of daffodils, to cheer him up. He is passionately fond of flowers...."

That winter, despite his continued delicacy, was full of interest to William, who had always a rare capacity for throwing himself into the enjoyment of the moment, whatever it might be, or into the interests of others and dismissing from his mind all personal worries. No matter how depressed he might be, when with friends he could shake himself free from the thraldom of the black clouds and let his natural buoyant spirit have full play. His genial sunny manner, his instinctive belief in and reliance on an equal geniality in others assured him many a welcome.

Among the literary houses open to him were those of Mr. and Mrs. William Rossetti, Miss Christina Rossetti, Mr. and Mrs. William Bell Scott, Mr. and Mrs. Francillon, Mr. Robert Browning, and Mr. Theodore Watts. Mr. and Mrs. George Robinson, whose daughter, Mary, distinguished herself among the poets of her generation, were especially good to him. Among artists whose studios he frequented were Mr. Ford Madox Brown, Mr. William Morris and Mr. Holman Hunt, and Sir Frederick Leighton; and among his intimate friends he counted Mathilde Blind, the poet, Louise Bevington, Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, Belford Bax and others.

There was a reverse side to the picture however.

His desire and effort not to identify himself—in his original work, with any set of writers, or phase of literary expression, tended to make him of no account in the consideration of some of his fellow writers. His was a slow development, and while he gained greatly in the technical knowledge of his art through the wise and careful advice of Rossetti, the sensitive taste of Philip Marston, the more severe criticism of Theodore Watts, he felt he had a definite thing to say, a definite word of his own to express sooner or later. It was long before this finally shaped its utterance, and in the interval he experimented in many directions, studied various methods—and of course to make a livelihood wrote many "pot-boilers"—always hoping that he would ultimately "find himself." Unquestionably, with his nature—which vibrated so sensitively to everything that was beautiful in nature and life, and had in it so much of exuberance, of optimism—the severe grind for the bare necessities of life, the equally severe criticism that met his early efforts, proved an invaluable-schooling to him. The immediate result, however, was that his "other self," the dreaming psychic self, slept for a time, or at any rate was in abeyance. "William Sharp" gradually dominated, and before long he was accepted generally as literary critic and later as art critic also. So complete, apparently, for a time, was this divorce between the two radical strains in him, that only a few of his intimates suspected the existence of the sensitive, delicate, feminine side of him that he buried carefully out of sight, and as far as possible out of touch with the current of his literary life in London where at no time did the "Fiona Macleod" side of his nature gain help or inspiration.

Just as of old, when in Glasgow, he had wandered

in the city and beyond it, and made acquaintances with all sorts and conditions of men and women, so, too, did he now wander about London, especially about the neighbourhood of "The Pool" which offered irresistible attractions and experiences to him. These he touched on later in "Madge o' the Pool" and elsewhere. I remember he told me that rarely a day passed in which he did not try to imagine himself living the life of a woman, to see through her eyes, and feel and view life from her standpoint, and so vividly that "sometimes I forget I am not the woman I am trying to imagine." The following description of him, at this date, is taken from a letter quoted in Mrs. Janvier's article on "Fiona Macleod and her Creator" in *The North American Review*.

"You ask about our acquaintance with Willie Sharp. Yes, we knew him well in the days when we all were gay and young.... He was a very nice-looking amiable young fellow whom every one liked, very earnest with great notions of his own mission as regards Poetry, which he took *very* seriously. He used to have the saving grace of fun—which kept him sweet and wholesome—otherwise he might have fallen into the morbid set."

Unfortunately, I have very few letters or notes that illustrate the light gay side of his nature—boyish, whimsical, mischievous, with rapid changes of mood. Others saw more of it at this period than I; for to me he came for sympathy in his work and difficulties; to others he went for gaiety and diversion, and to them he made light of his constant delicacy; so that the more serious side of his life was usually presented to me—and naturally our most unpromising prospects and our long engagement were not matters to inspirit either of us.

At the end of August in that year his connection with the Bank of the City of Melbourne ceased. That his services were scarcely valuable to his employers may be gathered from the manner and reason of his dismissal. He has himself told the story:

"I did not take very kindly to the business, and my employers saw it. One day I was invited to interview the Principal. He put it very diplomatically, said he didn't think the post suited me (I agreed), and finally he offered me the option of accepting an agency in some out-of-the-way place in Australia, or quitting the London service. 'Think it over,' he said, 'and give us your answer to-morrow.' I think I might have given him my answer there and then. Next morning the beauty of the early summer made an irresistible appeal to me. I had not heard the cuckoo that season, so I resolved to forget business for the day, seek the country, and hear the cuckoo; and I had a very happy time, free from everybody, care, and worry. Next day I was called in to see the Principal. 'I should have sent word—busy mail day,' he said. 'Was I ill?' he asked. 'No,' I replied, and explained the true cause of my absence. 'That's scarcely business,' he said. 'We can't do with one who puts the call of the cuckoo before his work.' However, his offer still held. What was I to do? I left the bank."

During the intervening months efforts to find other work resulted through the kindness of Mr. George Lillie Craik in a temporary post held for six months in the Fine Art Society's Gallery in Bond Street. It was the proposal of the Directors to form a section dealing with old German and English Engravings and Etchings, and that William should be put in charge of it; and that meanwhile, during the six months, he should make a special study of the

subject, learn certain business details to make him more efficient. The work and the prospect were a delightful change after the distasteful grind at the Bank, and he threw himself into the necessary studies with keen relish.

In the autumn he spent two months in Scotland, visiting his mother, and other relatives, Mr. W. Bell Scott, and his old friend Sir Noel Paton.

From Lanarkshire he wrote in September to me and to Rossetti.

To E. A. S.:

LESMAHAGOW, Sept., 1881.

... Yesterday I spent some hours in a delicious ramble over the moors and across a river toward a distant fir wood, where I lay down for a time, beside the whispering waters, seeing nothing but a semicircle of pines, a wall of purple moorland, the brown water gurgling and splashing and slowly moving over the mossy stones, and above a deep cloudless blue sky—and hearing nothing but the hum of a dragonfly, the summery sound of innumerable heather-bees, and the occasional distant bleat of a sheep or sudden call of a grouse. I lay there in a kind of trance of enjoyment—half painful from intensity. I drank in not only the beauty of what I have just described, but also every little and minute thing that crossed my vision—a cluster of fir-needles hanging steel-blue against the deeper colour of the sky, a wood-dove swaying on a pine-bough like a soft gray and purple blossom, a white butterfly clinging to a yellow blossom heavy with honey, a ray of sunlight upon a bunch of mountain-ash berries making their scarlet glow with that almost terrible red which is as the blood of God in the sunsets one sometimes sees, a dragonfly poised like a flame arrested in its course, a little beetle stretching its sharded wings upon a gray stone, a tiny blue morsel of a floweret between two

blades of grass looking up with, I am certain, a *sense* of ecstatic happiness to the similar skies above—all these and much more I drank in with mingled pain and rejoicing. At such times I seem to become a part of nature—the birds seem when they sing to say things in a no longer unfamiliar speech—nor do they seem too shy to approach quite close to me. Even bees and wasps I do not brush away when they light upon my hands or face, and they never sting me, for I think they know that I would not harm them. I feel at these rare and inexpressibly happy times as a flower must feel after morning dew when the sun comes forth in his power, as a pine tree when a rising wind makes its boughs quiver with melodious pain, as a wild wood-bird before it begins to sing, its heart being too full for music.... O why weren't you there?

10th Sept., 1881.

MY DEAR ROSSETTI,

Where I most enjoy myself is along the solitary banks of the Nithan: it is a true mountain stream, now rushing along in broken falls, now rippling over shallows of exquisite golden-brown hues—now slipping with slow perfect grace of motion under the overhanging boughs of willow, pine, or mountain-ash—and ever and again resting in deep dark linns and pools in deliciously dreamful fashion, the only signs of life being a silver flash from its depths as some large trout or grilse stirs from the shelter of mottled boulders banking the sides, or when a dragonfly like a living flame flashes backward and forward after the gray gnats. Indeed, I never saw such a place for dragonflies—I think there must be vast treasures of rubies and emeralds under these lonely moors, and that somehow the precious stones dissolve and become permeated with the spirit of life, and rise up living green fires or crimson and purple flames to flash upon the unseen hill-winds instead of upon a woman's bosom or in the Holy of

Holies in an idolater's temple....

After the gloaming has dreamed itself into night the banks and woods along the stream seem to become a part of a weird faeryland. The shadows are simply wonderful. White owls come out and flit about on silent ghostly wings with weird uncanny cries, and bats begin to lead a furiously active existence. The other night I was quite startled by seeing a perfectly white animal slowly approaching me: it looked remarkably like the ghost of a fox or wild-cat, but I am afraid it was only a white hare.

So much for my surroundings. As for the few people hereabout they are all charmingly of the old time. After dinner, and while the claret, port, and sherry (the latter, oh so brandied!) are in process of consumption, large toddy goblets with silver spoon-ladles and smaller tumblers are handed round to ladies and gentlemen alike. Then come the large silver flagon with the hot water, the bowl with the strictly symmetrical lumps of sugar, three of which go to this large tumbler, and the cut crystal decanter of pure Glenlivet. The custom has great advantages, but it certainly does not conduce to the safe driving of the dogcart home again.

Here is a specimen of a purely Scotch Bill of Fare, for some especially noteworthy occasion:

BILL OF FARE

A wee drappie Talisher.

———

Callipee Broth. Hotch Potch.

———

Saumon à la Pottit Heed. Pomphlet à la Newhaven.

———

Anither Drappie.

———

Mince Collops. Doo Tairt.

———

Haggis.

——

An Eek.

——

Stuffed Bubbly Jocks an Hawm.
Gigot of Mutton wi' red curran jeelie.
Sheep's Heed an' Trotters.

——

Tatties Biled & Champit.
Bashed Neeps.
Jist a wee Donal'.

——

Glesky Magistrates. Sma' peas.

——

Grozet Pies. Aiple Dumplins.

——

Ice Puddin wi' cookies.

——

A Guid Dram to keep a' doon.

When I have a house of my own I shall give such a dinner some day, and the Sassenach hearts present shall admit there is no dinner like a Scotch one and no whiskey like the heavenly Celtic brew.

And now, au revoir,

Ever yours affectionately,

WILLIAM SHARP.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEATH OF ROSSETTI

The Directors of The Fine Art Society decided finally not to organise the special department of Engravings of which William Sharp hoped to take charge, therefore his engagement fell through and he was thrown on his own resources. The outlook was very serious, for he was still practically unknown to editors and publishers; and during the following two years he had a hard fight with circumstances. No post of any kind turned up for him and he had to depend solely on his pen, and for many months was practically penniless; and many a time the only food he could afford, after a meagre breakfast, was hot chestnuts bought from men in the street.

I do not care to dwell on those days; I could do so little to help, and by common consent we hid the true condition of things from his mother and mine. Nevertheless we firmly believed in his “future”; that with persistence and patience—and endurance—he would “gain a footing”; that circumstances were pushing him into the one career suited to him, even if the method seemed too drastic at times.



DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

He had already succeeded in having a poem accepted occasionally by one or two Magazines and Weeklies. In 1879 *Good Words* published a poem entitled “Night,” and in 1880 two Sonnets on Schubert’s “Am Meer.” *The Examiner* printed some Sonnets and a poem of fifteen lines. In 1881 he contributed a long poem on Victor Hugo to *Modern Thought*, and in February of 1882 his Sonnet “Spring

Wind" was accepted by the *Athenæum* and it was afterward included in Hall Caine's Century of Sonnets. Early the following year he spent a delightful week-end with Rossetti, at Birchington, whence he wrote to me:

Feb. 13, 1882.

"Just a line to tell you I am supremely content. Beautiful sea views, steep 'cavey' cliffs, a delicious luxurious house, and nice company. By a curious mistake I got out at the wrong place on Sunday, and had a long walk with my bag along the cliffs till I arrived rather tired and hot at my destination. I was surprised not to find Hall Caine there, but it appeared he clearly understood I was to get out at a different station altogether. I was also delayed in arriving, as I asked a countryman my direction and he told me to go to the left—but from the shape of the coast I argued that the right must be the proper way—I went to the right in consequence, and nearly succeeded in going over a cliff's edge, while my theory was decidedly vanquished by facts. However the walk repaid it. Oh, the larks yesterday! It was as warm as June, and Rossetti and Caine and myself went out and lay in the grass (at least I did) basking in the sun, looking down on the gleaming sea, and hearing these heavenly incarnate little joys sending thrills of sweetness, and vague pain through all my being. I seemed all a-quiver with the delight of it all. And the smell of the wrack! and the cries of the sea-birds! and the delicious wash of the incoming tide! Oh, dear me, I shall hate to go back to-morrow. Caine is writing a sonnet in your book, Watts is writing a review for the *Athenæum*, Rossetti is about to go on with painting his Joan of Arc, and I am writing the last lines of this note to you."

Little did he dream as he shook hands with his host on the Monday morning that he was bidding a

last farewell to his good friend.

Of that visit he wrote later:

> "Of my most cherished memories is a night at Birchington-on-Sea, in March, 1882. It had been a lovely day. Rossetti asked me to go out with him for a stroll on the cliff; and though he leaned heavily and dragged his limbs wearily as if in pain, he grew more cheerful as the sunlight warmed him. The sky was a cloudless blue and the singing of at least a score of larks was wonderful to listen to. Everywhere Spring odours prevailed, with an added pungency from the sea-wrack below. Beyond, the sea reached far to horizons of purple shaded azure. At first I thought Rossetti was indifferent: but this mood gave way. He let go my arm and stood staring seaward silently, then, still in a low tired voice, but with a new tone in it he murmured, 'It is beautiful—the world and life itself. I am glad I have lived.' Insensibly thereafter the dejection lifted from off his spirit, and for the rest of that day and that evening he was noticeably less despondent.
>
> "The previous evening Christina Rossetti and myself were seated in the semi-twilight in the low-roofed sitting room. She had been reading to him but he had grown weary and somewhat fretful. Not wishing to disturb him, Miss Rossetti made a sign to me to come over to the window and there drew my attention to a quiet hued but very beautiful sunset. While we were enjoying it Rossetti, having overheard an exclamation of almost rapturous delight from Christina, rose from his great armchair before the fire and walked feebly to the window. He stared blankly upon the dove-tones and pale amethyst of the sky. I saw him glance curiously at his sister, and then again long and earnestly. But at last with a voice full of chagrin he turned away pettishly saying he could not see what it was we admired so much. 'It is all gray and gloom,' he added; nor would he hear a word to the contrary, so ignorant was he of the

havoc wrought upon his optic nerve by the chloral poison which did so much to shorten his life.... 'Poor Gabriel,' Miss Rossetti said, 'I wish he could have at least one hopeful hour again.' It was with pleasure therefore next day she heard of what he had said upon the cliff, and how he had brightened. The evening that followed was a happy one, for, as already mentioned Rossetti grew so cheerful, relatively, that it seemed as though the shadow of death had lifted. What makes it doubly memorable to me is that when I opened the door for Miss Rossetti when she bade me good-night, she turned, took my hand again, and said in a whisper, 'I am so glad about Gabriel, and grateful.'"

To E. A. S.:

11: 4: 82.

"...After spending a very pleasant day at Haileybury with Farquharson [E. A. Sharp's brother] we arrived late in London, and while glancing over an evening paper my eye suddenly caught a paragraph which made my heart almost stop. I could not bring myself to read it for a long time, though I knew it simply rechronicled the heading—"Sudden Death of Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti." He died on Sunday night at Birchington. I cannot tell you what a grief this is to me. He has ever been to me a true friend, affectionate and generous—and to him I owe more perhaps than to any one after yourself. Apart from my deep regret at the loss of one whom I so loved, I have also the natural regret at what the loss of his living friendship means. I feel as if a sudden tower of strength on which I had greatly relied had given way: for not only would Rossetti's house have been my own as long as and whenever I needed, but it was his influence while alive that I so much looked to. Comparatively little known to the public, his name has always been a power and recommendation in itself amongst men of letters and artists and those

who have to do with both professions. When I recall all that Rossetti has been to me—the pleasure he has given me—the encouragement, the fellowship—I feel very bitter at heart to think I shall never see again the kindly gray eyes and the massive head of the great poet and artist. He has gone to his rest. It were selfish to wish otherwise considering all things....

If I take flowers down, part of the wreath shall be from you. He would have liked it himself, for he knew you through me, and he knew I am happier in this than most men perhaps."

To E. A. S.:

April 13, 1882.

" ... I have just returned (between twelve and one at night) tired and worn out with some necessary things in connection with Rossetti, taking me first to Chelsea, then away in the opposite direction to Euston Road. As I go down to Birchington by an early train, besides having much correspondence to get through after breakfast, I can only write a very short letter. I have felt the loss of my dear and great friend more and more. He had weaknesses and frailties within the last six or eight months owing to his illness, but to myself he was ever patient and true and affectionate. A grand heart and soul, a true friend, a great artist, a great poet, I shall not meet with such another. He loved me, I know—and believed and hoped great things of me, and within the last few days I have learned *how* generously and how urgently he impressed this upon others. God knows I do not grudge him his long-looked-for rest, yet I can hardly imagine London without him. I *cannot* realise it, and yet I know that I shall never again see the face lighten up when I come near, never again hear the voice whose mysterious fascination was like a spell. What fools are those vain men who talk of death: blinded, and full of the dust of corruption. As God lives, the soul dies not. What

though the grave be silent, and the darkness of the Shadow become not peopled—to those eyes that can see there is light, light, light—to those ears that can hear the tumult of the disenfranchised, rejoicing. I am borne down not with the sense of annihilation, but with the vastness of life and the imminence of things spiritual. I *know* from something beyond and out of myself that we are now but dying to live, that there is no death, which is but as a child's dream in a weary night.

I am very tired. You will forgive more, my dearest friend."

To Mr. W. M. Rossetti:

13 THORNGATE ROAD,
SUTHERLAND GARDENS, W.,
15th April, 1883.

DEAR MR. ROSSETTI,

As your wife kindly expressed a wish that I would send you a copy of the sonnet I left in your brother's coffin along with the flowers, I now do so. It must be judged not as a literary production, but as last words straight from the heart of one who loved and revered your brother.

Yours very sincerely,
WILLIAM SHARP.

To Dante Gabriel Rossetti
AVE! MORS NON EST!

True heart, great spirit, who hast sojourn'd here
Till now the darkness rounds thee, and
Death's sea
Hath surged and ebbed and carried suddenly
Thy Soul far hence, as from a stony, drear,
And weary coast the tide the wrack doth shear;
Thou art gone hence, and though our sight
may be

Strained with a yearning gaze, the mystery
Is mystic still to us: to thee, how clear!

O loved great friend, at last the balm of sleep
Hath soothed thee into silence: it is well
After life's long unrest to draw the breath
No more on earth, but in a slumber deep,
Or joyous hence afar, the miracle
Await when dies at last imperious Death.

W. S.

Keenly desirous of offering some tribute to the memory of Rossetti, whose friendship had meant so much to him during the years of struggle in London, William Sharp eagerly accepted a proposal from Messrs. Macmillan that he should write a biographical Record and appreciation of the painter-poet, to be produced within the year. It was begun in June, it was his first lengthy attempt in prose and attempted with little knowledge of the art of writing; but it was written "red hot," as he used to say, inspired by deep affection and profound admiration for his friend. He spared no pains to make his story as accurate as practicable, and visited the chief owners of the pictures, photographs of which Rossetti had given him. Several of the later paintings he had seen and discussed many times in Rossetti's studio.

The book divides itself naturally into two parts representing the man in his dual capacity as painter and as poet, and the author selected as frontispiece Rossetti's most characteristic and symbolic design for his sonnet on the sonnet.

In his Diary of 1890 the author refers to "my first serious effort in prose, my honest and enthusiastic, and indeed serviceable, but badly written 'Life of Rossetti.'" And he tells that the first two thirds were

written at Clynder on the Gareloch (Argyll), "in a little cottage where I stayed with my mother and sisters eight years ago"; and the rest was written in London, and published in December.

"I remember that the book was finished one December day, and so great was the pressure I was under, that, at the end, I wrote practically without a break for thirty-six hours: i. e., I began immediately after an early breakfast, wrote all day except half an hour for dinner, and all evening with less than ten minutes for a slight meal of tea and toast, and right through the night. About 4 or 5 A.M. my fire went out, though I did not feel chilled till my landlady came with my breakfast. By this time I was too excited to be tired, and had moreover to finish the book that day. I was only a few minutes over breakfast, which I snatched during perusal of some notes, and then buckled to again. I wrote all day, eating nothing. When about 7 P.M. I came to 'finis,' I threw down the pen from my chilled and cramped fingers: walked or rather staggered into the adjoining bedroom, but was asleep before I could undress beyond removal of my coat and waistcoat. (What hundreds of times I have been saved weariness and bad headaches, how often I have been preserved from collapse of a more serious kind, by my rare faculty of being able to sleep at will at any time, however busy, and for even the briefest intervals—ten minutes or less.)

"For three weeks before this I had been overworking and I was quite exhausted, partly from want of sufficient nourishment. It was the saving of my brain, therefore, that I slept fourteen hours without a break, and after a few hours of tired and dazed wakefulness again fell into a prolonged slumber, from which I awoke fresh and vigorous in

mind and body."

The most interesting letter which he received during the interval of the writing was one from Robert Browning, in answer to an inquiry concerning a letter written years earlier by Rossetti to Browning, to know if the author of *Paracelsus* was also the author of *Pauline*. Rossetti once told William Sharp that it was "on the forenoon of the day when the *Burden of Nineveh* was begun, conceived rather," that he read this story (at the British Museum) "of a soul by the soul's ablest historian." So delighted was Rossetti with it, and so strong his opinion that *Pauline* was by Browning, that he wrote to that poet, then in Florence, for confirmation. Mr. Browning, in his reply—which I quote from my husband's monograph on Browning—gave the following particulars of the incident:

ST. PIERRE DE CHARTREUSE,
Aug. 22, 1882.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

> Rossetti's *Pauline* letter concerning which you inquire was addressed to me at Florence, more than thirty years ago: I must have preserved it, but, even were I at home, should be unable to find it without troublesome searching. It was to the effect that the writer, personally and altogether unknown to me, had come upon a poem in the British Museum, which he copied the whole of, from its being not otherwise procurable, that he judged it to be mine, but could not be sure, and wished me to pronounce on the matter—which I did. A year or two after, I had a visit in London from Mr. Allingham and a friend—who proved to be Rossetti: when I heard he was a painter I insisted on calling on him, though he declared he had nothing to show me—which was far enough from the case. Subsequently on another of my returns to London, he painted my portrait: not, I

fancy, in oils but water colours—and finished it in Paris shortly after: this must have been in the year when Tennyson published "Maud," unless I mistake: for I remember Tennyson reading the poem one evening, while Rossetti made a rapid pen-and-ink sketch of him, very good, from an unobserved corner of vantage—which I still possess and duly value. This was before Rossetti's marriage.

I hope that these particulars may answer your purpose; and beg you to believe me, dear Mr. Sharp,

Yours very truly,

ROBERT BROWNING.

The young biographer wrote to every one who he thought might possess drawings or paintings by Rossetti—and among others he applied to Tennyson. The Poet Laureate replied:

ALDWORTH, HASLEMERE,

Oct. 12, 1882.

DEAR SIR,

I have neither drawing nor painting by Rossetti. I am sorry for it, for some of his work which I have seen elsewhere I have admired very much; nor (as far as I know) have I any letter from him, nor have I the slightest recollection of his being present when I was "reading the proof sheets of Maud."

My acquaintance with him was in fact but an acquaintance, not an "intimacy," though I would willingly have known something more of so accomplished an artist.

Wishing all success to your Memorial of him,

I am,

Faithfully yours,

A. TENNYSON.

The book met with immediate success; it was recognised that the work was "one of no ordinary

difficulty," that the author "brought fairness and critical acumen to his task," "truest enthusiasm and perseverance that nothing can daunt; that by reason of his friendship he had unusual insight into the history and work of Rossetti," and "a critic of Art and a writer of poems he is thus further to be respected in what he has to say." Only three letters are in my possession of the many he received from friends of his own, or of the dead poet; two are from Walter Pater with whom he had recently become acquainted: and the other from Christina Rossetti:

30 Torrington Square.

Dear Mr. Sharp,

Thank you with warm thanks from my Mother and myself for your precious gift. She has already and with true pleasure perused Chapter I. *I* have but glanced here and there as yet but with an appetite for the feast to come. I shall be both fortunate and unfortunate if I find occasion for the marginal notes you want—fortunate if even thus I can be of use: but I will rather wish myself a very narrow field for strictures. Allow me to congratulate you on the binding of the well-known monogram and crest—a pretty point which catches and gratifies the eye at a first glance. I figure so amiably in connection with your frontispiece that I may reasonably regret having brought nothing to the transaction (in reality) beyond good will.

Very truly yours,
Christina G. Rossetti.

This letter was received while the book was in preparation:

2 Bradnor Road, Oxford,
Nov. 4, 1882.

My dear Sharp,

(I think we have known each other long enough to drop the "Mr.") I read your letter with great pleasure, and thank you very much for it. Your friendly interest in my various essays I value highly. I have really worked hard for now many years at these prose essays, and it is a real encouragement to hear such good things said of them by one of the most original of young English poets. It will be a singular pleasure to me to be connected, in a sense, in your book on Rossetti, with one I admired so greatly. I wish the book all the success both the subject and the writer deserve. You encourage me to do what I have sometimes thought of doing, when I have got on a little further with the work I have actually on hand—viz. to complete the various series of which the papers I have printed in the *Fortnightly* are parts. The list you sent me is complete with the exception of an article on Coleridge in the *Westminster* of January, 1866, with much of which, both as to matter and manner, I should now be greatly dissatisfied. That article is concerned with S. T. C.'s prose; but, corrected, might be put alongside of the criticism on his verse which I made for Ward's "English Poets." I can only say that should you finish the paper you speak of on these essays, your critical approval will be of great service to me with the reading public. I find I have by me a second copy of the paper on Giorgione, revised in print, which I send by this post, and hope you will kindly accept. It was reprinted some time ago when I thought of collecting that and other papers into a volume. I am pleased to hear that you remember with pleasure your flying visit to Oxford; and hope you will come for a longer stay in term time early next year. At the end of this month I hope to leave for seven weeks in Italy, chiefly at Rome, where I have never yet been. We went to Cornwall for our summer holiday, but though that country is certainly very singular and beautiful, I found there not a tithe of the stimulus to one's imagination which I have sometimes

experienced in quite unrenowned places abroad.

I should be delighted with a copy of the Rossetti volume from yourself; but it is a volume I should have in any case purchased, and I hope it may appear in time to be my companion on my contemplated journey.

Very sincerely yours,
WALTER H. PATER.

2 BRADNOR ROAD,
Jan. 15, 1883.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Thank you very sincerely for the copy of your book, with the fine impression of the beautiful frontispiece, which reached me yesterday. One copy of the book I had already obtained through a bookseller in Rome, and read it there with much admiration of its wealth of ideas and expression, and its abundance of interesting information. Thank you also sincerely, for the pleasant things you have said about myself; all the pleasanter for being said in connection with the subject of Rossetti, whose genius and work I esteemed so greatly. I am glad to hear that the book is having the large sale it deserves. Your letter of December 24th, was forwarded to me at Rome, with the kind invitation I should have been delighted to accept had it been possible, and which I hope you will let me profit by some other time. Then, I heard from my sisters, of your search for me in London, and was very sorry to have missed you there. I shall be delighted to see you here; and can give you a bed at Brasenose, where I shall reside this term.

Thank you again for the pleasure your book has given, and will give me, in future reading. Excuse this hurried letter, and

Believe me,
Very sincerely yours,

WALTER PATER.

It had been William Sharp's intention to rewrite his Study on Rossetti; for in later years he was very dissatisfied with the early book, and considered his judgment to have been immature. He had indeed arranged certain publishing preliminaries; and he wrote the dedicatory chapter; but the book itself was untouched save one or two opening sentences. For this project, with many others planned by William Sharp, was laid aside when the more intimate, the more imperative work put forward under the pseudonym of "Fiona Macleod" began to shape itself in his brain. In his dedication to Walter Pater (the only portion of the book that was finished), the author explains his reasons for wishing to write a second Study of the painter-poet. He describes the new material available, and relates that in Rossetti's lifetime it was planned that a "Life should be written by Philip Bourke Marston and myself, primarily for publication in America. Rossetti took a humorous interest in the scheme, and often alluded to it in notes or conversation as the Bobbies' book (a whimsical substitute for the Boston firm of Roberts Brothers, whom we intended to honour with our great—unwritten—work): but nothing came of the project.... Rossetti was eager to help Marston; so he said he was charmed with the idea, and promised to give all the aid in his power. A week later he told me that 'there was no good in it,' and that 'it had better drop': but, instead he suggested that *he* should write an article upon Marston and his poetry for *Harper's*, or *Scribner's*, if it were more expedient that such an article should appear in an American periodical, or, if preferred, for some important Quarterly here.

"But you, cognizant as you are of much of this

detail, will readily understand and agree with me when I say that no really adequate portrait of Rossetti is likely to be given to us for many years to come. Possibly never: for his was a nature wrought of so many complexities, his a life developed perplexedly by such divers elements, that he will reappear, for those who come after us, not in any one portraiture but as an evocation from many....

"Of all that has been written of Rossetti's genius and achievement in poetry nothing shows more essential insight, is of more striking and enduring worth, than the essay by yourself, included in your stimulating and always delightful *Appreciations*. You, more than any one, it seems to me, have understood and expressed the secret of his charm. And though you have not written also of Rossetti the painter, I know of no one who so well and from the first perceived just wherein lies his innate power, his essential significance.

"Years ago, in Oxford, how often we talked these matters over! I have often recalled one evening, in particular, often recollected certain words of yours: and never more keenly than when I have associated them with the early work of Rossetti, in both arts, but preëminently in painting: 'To my mind Rossetti is the most significant man among us. More torches will be lit from his flame—or torches lit at his flame —than perhaps even enthusiasts like yourself imagine.'

"We are all seeking a lost Eden. This ideal Beauty that we catch glimpses of, now in morning loveliness, now in glooms of tragic terror, haunts us by day and night, in dreams of waking and sleeping —nay, whether or not we will, among the littlenesses and exigencies of our diurnal affairs. It may be that, driven from the Eden of direct experience, we are

being more and more forced into taking refuge within the haven guarded by our dreams. To a few only is it given to translate, with rare distinction and excellence, something of this manifold message of Beauty—though all of us would fain be, with your Marius, 'of the number of those who must be made perfect by the love of visible beauty.' Among these few, in latter years in this country, no one has wrought more exquisitely for us than Rossetti.

"To him, and to you and all who recreate for us the things we have vaguely known and loved, or surmised only, or previsioned in dreams, we owe what we can never repay save by a rejoicing gratitude. Our own Eden may be irrecoverable, its haunting music never be nearer or clearer than a vanishing echo, yet we have the fortunate warranty of those whose guided feet have led them further into the sunlit wilderness, who have repeated to us, as with hieratic speech, what they have seen and heard.

"'From time to time,' wrote Rossetti in one of those early prose passages of his which are so consecrated by the poetic atmosphere—'from time to time, however, a poet or a painter has caught the music (of that garden), and strayed in through the close stems: the spell is on his hand and his lips like the sleep of the Lotus-eaters, and his record shall be vague and fitful; yet will we be in waiting, and open our eyes and our ears, for the broken song has snatches of an enchanted harmony, and the glimpses are glimpses of Eden.'"

• • • • • • •

It was during the preparation of this early book that the first volume of William Sharp's poems was published—too late however to be welcomed by

either of the two friends who had taken so keen an interest in its growth: Rossetti, to whom all the poems had been read—and John Elder to whom it was originally dedicated. It is entitled *The Human Inheritance; Motherhood; Transcripts from Nature* (Elliot Stock), and contains a prefatory poem, and last lines dedicated to myself.

"The Human Inheritance" is a long poem in four cycles—the Inheritance of Childhood, Youth, Manhood and Womanhood, and Old Age, and was an expression of his belief that the human being should fearlessly reach out to every experience that each period might have to offer. Eager, and intensely alive, the poet thirsted till his last breath after whatever might broaden and deepen his knowledge, his understanding, his enjoyment of life.

The second long poem, "The New Hope: a Vision of the Travail of Humanity," was especially connected with John Elder, the outcome of many talks and letters concerning the purport of the Travail of Humanity—concerning a belief they both held that a great new spiritual awakening is imminent that

> ... "the one great Word
> That spake, shall wonderfully again be heard"
> ...

To "Motherhood" allusion has been made in one or two letters.

Notwithstanding that some of the critics predicted that the new name was destined to become conspicuous, it was not by these poems, but by the Life of Rossetti that the real impetus was given to his literary fortunes and emphasised the fact of his existence to publishers and the reading public. But to

the poet himself—and to me—the publication of the book of poems was a great event. We looked upon it as the beginning of the true work of his life, toward the fulfilment of which we were both prepared to make any sacrifice.

I have a few letters relating to this volume of poems, and append the three which the recipient especially cared to preserve:

2 BRADMORE ROAD,
July 30th.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Since you have been here I have been reading your poems with great enjoyment. The presence of philosophical, as in "The New Hope" and of such original, and at the same time perfectly natural motives as "Motherhood" is certainly a remarkable thing among younger English poets, especially when united with a command of rhythmical and verbal form like yours. The poem "Motherhood" is of course a bold one; but it expresses, as I think, with perfect purity, a thought, which all who can do so are the better for meditating on. The "Transcripts from Nature" seem to me precisely all, and no more than (and just how is the test of excellence in such things) what little pictures in verse ought to be.

Very sincerely yours,
WALTER PATER.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

I have really not much to say about your poems. That you are of the tribe or order of prophets, I certainly believe. What rank you may take in that order I cannot guess. But the essential thing is that you are the thing *poet*, and being such I doubt much whether talk about your gift and what you ought to do with it will help you at all.

In "Motherhood" I think you touch the highest

point in the volume. The "Transcripts from Nature"—some of them—give me the *feel* in my nerves of the place and hour you describe, I like the form but I think you have written a sufficient mass in this form, and that future *rispetti* ought to be rare, that is, whenever it is necessary and right to express yourself in that form. (It is harder to take in many in succession than even sonnets.) The longer poems seem to me as decisively the poetry of a poet as the others, but they seem not so successful (while admirable in many pages and in various ways).

I believe a beautiful action, beautifully if somewhat severely handled, would bring out your highest. I wish you had some heroic old Scotch story to brood over and make live while you are in Scotland.

I look forward with much interest to your Pre-Raphaelism and Rossetti.

Very sincerely yours,
EDWARD DOWDEN.

Sept. 6, 1882.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

... I came abroad and brought your book with me. I have read it again through among the mountains and have found much to admire and more than like in it; so that the hours I passed in reading it are and will be pleasant hours to remember. If I may venture a criticism it is that nature occupies more than three fourths of the Emotion of the Book, and not Humanity, and even the passion and childhood and youth, and later love and age—and all passions are painted in terms of Nature, and through her moods. It pleases me, for I care more for Nature myself when I am not pressed on by human feeling, than I do for Man, but an artist ought to love Man more than Nature, and should write about Him for his own sake. It won't do to become like the being in the "Palace of Art." It will not do either to live in a

> Palace of Nature, alone. But all this is more a suggestion than an objection, and it is partly suggested to me at first by the fact that the poem in the midst of The Human Inheritance, Cycle III, is the nearest to the human heart and yet the least well written of all the cycles—at least so it seems to me. I like exceedingly "The Tides of Venice." It seems to me to come nearer the kind of poem in which the Poet's Shuttle weaves into one web Nature and Humanity and the close is very solemn and noble.
>
> You asked me to do a critic's part. It is a part I hate, and I am not a critic. But I say what I say for the sake of men and women whom you may help through the giving of high pleasure even more than you help them in this book.
>
> With much sympathy and admiration,
>
> I am yours most sincerely,
>
> STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

Two other deaths occurred in this year, and made a profound impression on the young writer. I quote his own words:

"It was in 1882 also that another friend, to whom Philip Marston had also become much attached—attracted in the first instance by the common bond of unhappiness—died under peculiarly distressing circumstances. Philip Marston and myself were, if I am not mistaken, the last of his acquaintances to see him alive. Thomson had suffered such misery and endured such hopelessness, that he had yielded to intemperate habits, including a frequent excess in the use of opium. He had come back from a prolonged visit to the country, where all had been well with him, but through over confidence he had fallen a victim again immediately on his return. For a few weeks his record is almost a blank. When the direst straits were reached, he so far reconquered his

control that he felt able to visit one whose sympathy and regard had stood all tests. Marston soon realised that his friend was mentally distraught, and endured a harrowing experience, into the narrative of which I do not care to enter.

"I arrived in the late afternoon, and found Philip in a state of nervous perturbation. Thomson was lying down on the bed in the adjoining room: stooping I caught his whispered words that he was dying; upon which I lit a match, and in the sudden glare beheld his white face on the blood-stained pillow.

"He had burst one or more blood-vessels, and the hæmorrhage was dreadful. Some time had to elapse before anything could be done; ultimately with the help of a friend who came in opportunely, poor Thomson was carried downstairs, and having been placed in a cab, was driven to the adjoining University Hospital. He did not die that night, nor when Marston and I went to see him in the ward next day was he perceptibly worse, but a few hours after our visit he passed away.

"Thus ended the saddest life with which I have ever come in contact—sadder even than that of Philip Marston, though his existence was oftentimes bitter enough to endure...."

The other death was that of Emerson, whose writings had been a potent influence in the life-thought of the young Scot from his college days. Indeed throughout his life Emerson's Essays were a constant stimulus and refreshment. "My Bible," as he called the Volume of Selected Essays, accompanied him in all his wanderings, and during the last weeks he spent in Sicily in 1905 he carefully studied it anew and annotated it copiously.

On hearing of Emerson's death he wrote a poem in memoriam—"Sleepy Hollow"—which was printed in the *Academy* and afterward in his second volume of verse *Earth's Voices*. According to *Harper's Weekly* (3: 6: 1882) "No finer tribute has been rendered to Emerson's memory than William Sharp's beautiful poem 'Sleepy Hollow.' And, as *Earth's Voices* is now out of print, I will quote it in full:

SLEEPY HOLLOW
In Memoriam: Ralph Waldo Emerson

He sleeps here the untroubled sleep
  Who could not bear the noise and moil
  Of public life, but far from toil
A happy reticence did keep.

With Nature only open, free:
  Close by there rests the magic mind
  Of him who took life's thread to wind
And weave some poor soul's mystery

Of spirit-life, and made it live
  A type and wonder for all days;
  No sweeter soul e'er trod earth's ways
Than he who here at last did give

His body back to earth again.
  And now at length beside them lies[1]
  One great and true and nobly wise—
A King of Thought, whose spotless reign

The overwhelming years that come
  And drown the trash and dross and slime
  Shall keep a record of till Time
Shall cease, and voice of man be dumb.

At lasts he rests, whose high clear hope
  Was wont on lofty wings to scan
  The future destinies of man—

Who saw the Race through darkness grope,

Through mists and error, till at last
  The looked-for light, the longed-for age
  Should dawn for peasant, prince, and sage,
And centuries of night be past.

Thy rest is won: O loyal, brave,
  Wise soul, thy spirit is not dead—
  Thy wing'd words far and wide have fled,
Undying, they shall find no grave.

CHAPTER V

FIRST VISIT TO ITALY

"After Rossetti's death, I wrote," William Sharp has related, "to the commission of Messrs. Macmillan, a record of his achievements in the two arts of literature and poetry, my first and of course immature attempt at a book of prose. I had also written a book of poems, which, however, did not attract much attention, though it had the honour of a long and flattering review in the *Athenæum*. Happily, it seems to have fallen into the hands of the editor of *Harper's Magazine*, for some time afterward I received a letter from him asking me to let him see any poems I had by me. I sent him all I had and the matter passed from my mind. Months went by, and I remember how, one day, I had almost reached my last penny. In fact, my only possession of any value was a revolver, the gift of a friend. That night I made up my mind to enlist next morning. When I got up on the following morning there were two letters for me. The usual thing, I said to myself, notice of 'declined with thanks.' I shoved them into my pocket. A little later in the day, however, recollection impelled me to open one of the letters. It was from the editor of *Harper's*, enclosing a cheque for forty pounds for my few *Transcripts from Nature*, little six-line poems, to

be illustrated by Mr. Alfred Parsons, A.R.A. That money kept me going for a little time. Still it was a struggle, and I had nearly reached the end of my resources when one day I came across the other letter I had received that morning. I opened and found it to be from a, to me, unknown friend of one who had known my grandfather. He had heard from Sir Noel Paton that I was inclined to the study of literature and art. He therefore enclosed a cheque for two hundred pounds, which I was to spend in going to Italy to pursue my artistic studies. I was, of course, delighted with the windfall, so delighted, indeed, that I went the length of framing the cheque and setting it up in my lodgings. I tried to get my landlord to advance me the not very ambitious loan of a needed sovereign on the spot, but he only shook his head knowingly, as if he suspected something. However, at last, he risked a pound, and I think I spent most of it that afternoon in taking the landlady and her family to the pantomime.



WILLIAM SHARP
From a photograph taken in Rome in 1883

"Eventually I went to Italy and spent five months away."

Thus, the year 1883 opened with brighter prospects. Not only was it easier to get articles

accepted and published, but "William obtained the post of London Art Critic to *The Glasgow Herald*, to be taken up in the autumn. During his stay in London he had made a continual study of the Old Masters, and his connection with The Fine Art Society had brought him in touch with modern work and living artists. Therefore, with the opportune cheque in his pocket he decided to spend the ensuing months in careful study of pictures in Italy.

He left London at the end of February, and remained in Italy till the end of June, when he joined my mother and myself in the Ardennes.

He went first of all to stay with an aunt of mine, Mrs. Smillie, who had a villa in the outskirts of Florence. From that city and later from Rome and Venice he wrote to me the following impressions:

FLORENCE,

Wednesday, 14: 3: 83.

... "Yesterday morning I went to Sta. Maria Novella, and enjoyed it greatly. It is a splendid place, though on a first visit I was less impressed than by Santa Croce....

The monumental sculpture is not so fine as in Santa Croce, but on the other hand there are some splendid paintings and frescoes—amongst others Cimabue's famous picture of the Virgin seated on a throne. I admired some frescoes by Fillipino Lippi—also those in the Choir by Ghirlandajio: in the Capella dei Strozzi (to the left) I saw the famous frescoes of Orcagna, the Inferno and Paradiso. They greatly resemble the same subjects by the same painter in the Campo Santo at Pisa. What a horrible imagination, poisoned by horrible superstitions, these old fellows had: his Paradise, while in some ways finely imagined, is stiff and unimpressive, and his Inferno simply repellent. It is strange that religious art should have in general been so

unimaginative. The landscapes I care most for here are those of the early Giottesque and pre-Raphaelite painters—they are often very beautiful—for the others, there is more in Turner than in them all put together...."

FLORENCE, 18: 3: 83.

" ... Well, yesterday after lunch I went to the Chiesa del Carmine, and was delighted greatly with the famous frescoes of Masaccio, which I studied for an hour or more with great interest. He was a wonderful fellow to have been the first to have painted movement, for his figures have much grace of outline and freedom of pose. Altogether I have been more struck by Masaccio than by any other artist save Michel Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci. If he hadn't died so young (twenty-seven) I believe he would have been amongst the very first in actual accomplishment. He *did* something, which is more than can be said for many others more famous than himself, who merely duplicated unimaginative and stereotyped religious ideals....

Yesterday being Holy Thursday we went to several Churches and in the afternoon and evening to see the Flowers for the Sepulchres. Very much impressed and excited by all I saw. I was quite unprepared for the mystery and gloom of the Duomo. There were (comparatively) few people there, as it is not so popular with the Florentines as Sta. Maria Novella—and when we entered, it was like going into a tomb. Absolute darkness away by the western entrances (closed), a dark gloom elsewhere, with gray trails of incense mist still floating about like wan spirits, and all the crosses and monuments draped in black crape, and a great canopy of the same overhead. Two acolytes held burning tapers before only one monument, that of the Pietà under the great crucifix in the centre of the upper aisle—so that the light fell with startling distinctness on the dead and mutilated body of Christ. Not a sound was to be heard but the

wild chanting of the priests, and at last a single voice with a strain of agony in every tone. This and the mystery and gloom and pain (for, strange as it may seem to you, I felt the agony of the pierced hands and feet myself) quite overcame me, and I burst into tears. I think I would have fainted with the strain and excitement, if the Agony of the Garden had not come to an end, and the startling crash of the scourging commenced, the slashing of canes upon the stones and pillars. I was never so impressed before. I left, and wandered away by myself along the deserted Lung-Arno, still shivering with the excitement of almost foretasted death I had experienced, and unable to control the tears that came whenever I thought of Christ's dreadful agony. To-day (Good Friday) the others have gone to church, but I couldn't have gone to listen to platitudes—and don't know if I can bring myself to enter the catholic churches again till the Crucifixion is over, as I dread a repetition of last night's suffering. I shall probably go to hear the Passion Music in the church of the Badia (the finest in Florence for music). How I wish you were with me...."

FLORENCE, 3: 4: 83.

" ... The last two days have been days of great enjoyment to me. First and foremost they have been heavenly warm, with cloudless ardent blue skies—and everything is beginning to look fresh and green. Well, on Monday I drove with Mrs. Smillie away out of the Porta San Frediano till we came in sight of Scanducci Alto, and then of the Villa Farinola. There I left her, and went up through beautiful and English-like grounds to the house, and was soon ushered in to Ouida's presence. I found her alone, with two of her famous and certainly most beautiful dogs beside her. I found her most pleasant and agreeable, though in appearance somewhat eccentric owing to the way in which her hair was done, and

also partly to her dress which seemed to consist mainly of lace. A large and beautiful room led into others, all full of bric-a-brac, and filled with flowers, books, statuettes and pictures (poor), by herself. We had a long talk and she showed me many things of interest. Then other people began to arrive (it was her reception day).

Before I left, Ouida most kindly promised to give me some introductions to use in Rome. Yesterday she drove in and left three introductions for me which may be of good service—one to Lady Paget, wife of the British Ambassador, one to the Storys, and one to Tilton, the sculptor....

Yesterday I perhaps enjoyed more than I have done since I came to Italy. In the morning Arthur Lemon, the artist, called for me, and being joined by two others (Lomax, an artist, and his brother) we had a boat carried over the weir and we got into it at the Cascine and rowed down stream past the junction of the Mugnone and Arno, till Florence and Fiesole were shut from view, and the hills all round took on extra beauty—Monte Beni on the right and Monte Morello on the left glowing with a haze of heat, and beyond all, the steeps of Vallombrosa in white—and Carrara's crags also snow-covered behind us. We passed the quaint old church and village of San Stefano and swung in-shore to get some wine....

We rowed on and in due course came in sight of Signa. We put on a spurt (the four of us were rowing) and as we swept at a swift rate below the old bridge it seemed as if half the population came out to see the unusual sight of *gentili signorini* exerting themselves so madly when they might be doing nothing. We got out and said farewell to the picturesque-looking fellow who had steered us down —had some breakfast at a Trattoria, where we had small fish half-raw and steeped in oil (but not at all bad)—kid's flesh, and delicious sheep's-milk cheese, bread, and light, red, Chianti wine. We then spent some two or three hours roaming about Signa, which

is a beautifully situated dreamy sleepy old place—with beautiful "bits" for artists every here and there—old walls with lizards basking on them in numbers—and lovely views.

We came back by Lastia, a fine ancient walled town, and arrived in Florence by open tramcar in the evening, finally I had a delicious cold bath. The whole day was heavenly. If the river has not sunk too low when I return from Rome, Arthur Lemon and some other artists and myself are going on a sketching trip down the Arno amongst the old villages—the length of Pisa—taking about two days."

ROME.

" ... It is too soon to give you my impressions of Rome, but I may say that they partly savour of disappointment.... Of one thing however, I have already seen enough to convince me—and that is that Rome is not for a moment to be compared to Florence in beauty—neither in its environs, its situation, its streets, nor its rivers. Its palaces may be grander, the interiors of its churches more magnificent, its treasures of art more wonderful, but in beauty it is as far short as London is of Edinburgh. But it has one great loveliness which can never tire and which charms immeasurably—the fountains which continually and every here and there splash all day and night in the sunlight or in green grottoes in the courts of villas and palaces. I am certain that I should *hate* to live here—I believe it would kill me—for Rome is too old to be alive—unless indeed a new Rome entirely overshadows the past. I don't suppose you will quite understand, and I cannot explain just now—but so I feel. Florence (after the cold has gone) is divine—air, atmosphere, situation, memory of the past, a still virile present—but Rome is an anomaly, for what is predominant here is that evil mediæval Rome whose eyes were blind with blood and lust and hate. Ancient Rome is magnificent—but so little remains of it that one can no more live in it than in

Karnak or Thebes: as for modern Rome, everything seems out of keeping—so that one has either to weary with the dull Metropolitanism of the capital of Italy or else to enter into the life of the mediæval ages....

I expect and believe that I shall find Rome beautiful in many things, even as she is already majestic and wonderful—and that the more one becomes acquainted with the Eternal City the more one loves or at least reverences and delights in it.

Meanwhile, however, with me, it is more a sense of oppression that I experience—a feeling as if life would become intolerable unless all sense of the past were put away. I hate death, and all that puts one in mind of death—and after all Rome is only a gigantic and richly ornamented tomb....

How I hate large cities! Even Florence is almost too large, but there at least one can always escape into open space and air and light and freedom at will —and the mountains are close, and the country round on all sides is fair, and the river is beautiful. Do not be provoked with me when I say that Signa, for instance, is more beautiful to me than Rome—and that the flashing of sunlight in the waters of the fountains, the green of Spring in the flowered fields and amongst the trees, and the songs of birds and the little happy-eyed children, mean infinitely more to me than the grandest sculptures, the noblest frescoes, the finest paintings. This is my drawback I am afraid, and not my praise—for where such hundreds are intensely interested I am often but slightly so. Again and again when I find myself wearied to death with sight-seeing I call to mind some loch with the glory of morning on it, some mountain-side flecked with trailing clouds and thrilling me with the bleating of distant sheep, the cries of the cliff hawks, and the wavering echoes of waterfalls: or, if the mood, I recall some happy and indolent forenoon in the Cascine or Monte Oliveto or in the country paths leading from Bellosguardo, where I watched the

shadows playing amongst the olives and the dear little green and grey lizards running endlessly hither and thither—and thinking of these or such as these I grow comforted. And often when walking in the Cascine by myself at sunset I have heard a thrush or blackbird call to its mate through the gloom of the trees, or when looking toward Morello and the Appenine chain and seeing them aglow with wonderful softness, or, on the Arno's banks I have seen the river washing in silver ripples and rosy light to the distant crags of Carrara where the sun sank above the Pisan sea—often at such times my thrill of passionate and sometimes painful delight is followed by the irrepressible conviction that such things are to me more beautiful, more worthy of worship, more full of meaning, more significant of life, more excelling in all manner of loveliness, than all the treasures of the Uffizi and the Pitti, the Vatican and the Louvre put together. But whenever I have expressed such a conviction I have been told that the works of man are after all nobler, in the truer sense lovelier, and more spiritually refreshing and helpful —and though I do not find them so, I must believe that to most people such is the case, perhaps to the infinite majority.

And, after all, why am I to be considered inferior to my fellows because I love passionately in her every manifestation the mother who has borne us all, and to whom much that is noblest in art is due!...

Yet I would not be otherwise after all. I know some things which few know, some secrets of beauty in cloud, and sea and earth—have an inner communion with all that meets my eyes in what we call nature, and am rich with a wealth which I would not part with for all the palaces in Rome. Do you understand me, Lill, in this?... Poor dear! I had meant to have told her all about my visit to Orvieto (alone worth coming to Italy for—if only to behold the magnificent Cathedral) but instead I have only relieved my mind in a kind of grumbling....

What fascinates me most in Rome is the sculpture. Well as I knew all the famous statues, from copies and casts, some of them were almost like new revelations—especially the Faun of Praxiteles, of which I had never seen a really good copy. Can't say, however, I felt enthusiastic about the Capitoline Venus."

ROME, 16th April, 1883.

" ... I have just come in from the Campagna where I have spent some of the happiest hours I have yet had in Rome. I went for some three miles across the glorious open reaches of tall grass, literally dense with myriads of flowers—not a vestige of a house to be seen, not a hint of Rome, nothing but miles upon miles of rolling grassy slopes till they broke like a green sea against the blue-purple hills, which were inexpressibly beautiful with their cloud-shadows athwart their sides and the lingering snows upon their heights. There was not a sound to be heard save those dear sounds of solitary places, the endless hum of insects, the cries of birds, the songs of many larks, the scream of an occasional hawk, the splash of a stream that will soon be dried up, and the exquisite, delicious, heavenly music of the wind upon the grass and in the infrequent trees.... And a good fairy watched over me to-day, for I was peculiarly fortunate in seeing one or two picturesque things I might have missed. First, as I was listening to what a dear spark of a lintie was whistling to its mate, I heard a dull heavy trampling sound, and on going to a neighbouring rise I saw two wild bulls fighting. I never realised before the immense weight and strength these animals have. Soon after, a herd of them came over the slope, their huge horns tossing in the sunlight and often goring at each other. I was just beginning to fancy that I had seen my last of Rome (for I had been warned against these wild cattle especially at this season) when some picturesquely-attired horsemen on shaggy little

steeds came up at full speed, and with dogs and long spears or poles and frantic cries urged the already half furious, half terrified animals forward. It was delightful to witness, and if I were a painter I would be glad to paint such a scene. I then went across a brook and up some slopes (half buried in flowers and grasses) till I came to a few blackthorn trees and an old stone-pine, and from there I had a divine view. The heat was very great, but I lay in a pleasant dreamy state with my umbrella stuck tentwise, and I there began the first chapter of the novel I told you before I left that I intended writing. I had been thinking over it often, and so at last began it: and certainly few romances have been begun in lovelier places. Suddenly, through one eye, as it were, I caught sight of a broad moving shadow on the slope beyond me, and looking up I was electrified with delight to see a large eagle shining gold-bronze in the sun. I had no idea (though I knew they preyed on the lambs, etc., further on the Campagna and in the Maremma) that they ever came so near the haunts of men. It gave one loud harsh scream, a swoop of its broad wings, and then sailed away out of sight into the blue haze beyond the farthest reaches I could see. Away to the right I saw a ruined arch, formerly some triumphal record no doubt, and near it was a shepherd, clad in skins, tending his goats. No other human sign—oh, it was delicious and has made me in love with the very name of Rome. Such swarms of lizards there were, and so tame, especially the green ones, which knew I wouldn't hurt them and so ran on to my hands. The funniest fly too I ever saw buzzed up, and sat on a spray of blackthorn blossom and looked at me: I burst out laughing at it, and it really seemed to look reproachfully at me—and for a moment I felt sorry at being so rude. I could have lain there all day, so delicious was the silence save for these natural sounds—and all these dear little birds and insects. What surprised me so much about the flowers was not only their immense quantity, but

also their astounding variety. At last I had to leave, as it is not safe to lie long on the Campagna if one is tired or hungry. So I strolled along through the deep grasses and over slope after slope till at last I saw the clump of stone pines which were my landmark, and then I soon joined the road...."

SIENA, 30th April, 1883.

"You will see by the above address that I have arrived in this beautiful old city.

I left Rome and arrived in Perugia on Thursday last—spending the rest of the day in wandering about the latter, and watching the sunset over the far-stretching Umbrian country. I made the acquaintance of some nice people at the Hotel, and we agreed to share a carriage for a day—so early on Friday morning we started in a carriage and pair for Assisi. About 3 miles from Perugia we came to the Etruscan tombs, which we spent a considerable time in exploring: I was much struck with the symbolism and beauty of the ornamental portions, Death evidently to the ancient Etrurians being but a departure elsewhere. The comparative joyousness (exultation, as in the symbol of the rising sun over the chief entrance) of the Etruscans contrasts greatly with the joylessness of the Christians, who have done their best to make death repellant in its features and horrible in its significance, its possibilities.

Only a Renaissance of belief in the Beautiful being the only sure guide can save modern nations from further spiritual degradation—and not till the gloomy precepts of Christianity yield to something more akin to the Greek sense of beauty will life appear to the majority lovely and wonderful, alike in the present and in the future.

After leaving the Tombs of the Volumnii we drove along through a most interesting country, beautiful everywhere owing to Spring's feet having passed thereover, till we came to the Church of Sta. Maria degli Angeli—on the plain just below Assisi.

We went over this, and then drove up the winding road to the gray old town itself, visiting, before ascending to the ruined citadel at the top of the hill, the Chiesa di Santa Chiara. Lying on the grass on the very summit of the hill, we had lunch, and then lay looking at the scenery all round us, north, south, east, and west. Barren and desolate and colourless, with neither shade of tree nor coolness of water, these dreary Assisi hills have nothing of the grandeur and beauty of the barrenness and desolation of the north—they are simply hideous to the eye, inexpressibly dreary, dead, and accursed. I shall never now hear Assisi mentioned without a shudder, for picturesque as the old town is, beautiful as are the Monastery, the Upper Church, the paintings and the frescoes—they are overweighted in my memory with the *hideousness* of the immediate hill-surroundings. It made me feel almost sick and ill, looking from the ruined citadel out upon these stony, dreary, lifeless, hopeless hills—and I had again and again to find relief in the beauty of more immediate surroundings—the long grasses waving in the buttresses of the citadel, the beautiful yellow (absolutely stainless in colour) wallflowers sprouting from every chink and cranny, and the green and gray lizards darting everywhere and shining in the sunlight. Here at least was life, not death: and to me human death is less painful than that of nature, for in the former I see but change, but in the latter—annihilation. These poor mountains!—once, long ago, bright and joyous with colour and sound and winds and waters and birds—and now without a tree to give shadow where grass will never again grow, save here and there a stunted and withered olive, like some plague-stricken wretch still lingering amongst the decayed desolation of his birthplace—without the music and light of running water, save, perhaps twice amidst their parched and serried flanks a crawling, muddy, hideous *liquid*; and without sound, save the blast of the winter-wind and

the rattle of dislodged stones.

Yet the day was perfect—one of those flawless days combining the laughter of Spring and the breath of ardent Summer: but perhaps this very perfection accentuates the desert wretchedness behind the old town of St. Francis. Yet the very day before I went I was told that the view from the citadel was lovely (and this not with reference to the Umbrian prospect in *front* of Assisi, which is fine though to my mind it has been enormously exaggerated)—lovely! As well might a person ask me to look at the divine beauty of the Belvedere Apollo, and then say to me that lovely also was yon maimed and hideous beggar, stricken with the foulness of leprosy.

The hills about Assisi beautiful! Oh Pan, Pan, indeed your music passed long, long ago out of men's hearing...."

FLORENCE, 7th May.

"On either Wednesday or Thursday last we started early for Monte Oliveto, and after a long and interesting drive we came to a rugged and wild country, and at last, by the side of a deep gorge to the famous Convent itself. The scenery all round made a great impression on me—it was as wild, almost as desolate as the hills behind Assisi—but there was nothing repellant, i. e., stagnant, about it. While we were having something to eat outside the convent (a huge building) the abbé came out and received us most kindly, and brought us further refreshment in the way of hard bread and wine and cheese—their mode of life being too simple to have anything else to offer.

Owing to the great heat and perhaps over-exposure while toiling up some of the barren scorched roads, where they became too hilly or rough for the horses—I had succumbed to an agonising nervous headache, and could do nothing for a while but crouch in a corner of the wall in the shade and keep wet handkerchiefs constantly over

my forehead and head. In the meantime the others had gone inside, and as Mrs. S. had told the abbé I was suffering from a bad headache he came out to see me and at once said I had had a slight touch of the sun—a frequent thing in these scorched and barren solitudes. He took me into a private room and made me lie down on a bed—and in a short time brought me two cups of strong black coffee, with probably something in it—for in less than twenty minutes I could bear the light in my eyes and in a few minutes more I had only an ordinary headache. He was exceedingly kind altogether, and I shall never think of Monte Oliveto without calling to remembrance the Abbé Cesareo di Negro. I then spent about three hours over the famous 35 noble frescoes by Sodoma and Signorelli, illustrating the life of Saint Benedict, the founder of the convent. They are exceedingly beautiful—and one can learn more from this consecutive series than can well be imagined. While taking my notes and wondering how I was to find time (without staying for a couple of days or so) to take down all particulars—I saw the abbé crossing the cloisters in my direction, and when he joined me he said, “la Signora” had told him I was a poet and writer, and that I thought more of Sodoma than any of his contemporaries, and so he begged me to accept from him a small work in French on the history of the convent including a fairly complete account of each fresco. A glance at this showed that it would be of great service to me, and save much in the way of note-taking—and I was moreover glad of this memento; he inscribed his name in it....

The more I see of Sodoma’s work the more I see what a great artist he was—and how enormously underrated he is in comparison with many others better known or more talked about. After having done as much as I could take in, I went with the abbé over other interesting parts and saw some paintings of great repute, but to me unutterably wearisome

and empty—and then to the library—and finally through the wood to a little chapel with some interesting frescoes. I felt quite sorry to leave the good abbé. I promised to send him a copy of whatever I wrote about the Sodomas—and he said that whenever I came to Italy again I was to come and stay there for a few days, or longer if I liked—and he hoped I would not forget but take him at his word. Thinking of you, I said I supposed ladies could not stay at the Convent—but he said they were not so rigorous now, and he would be glad to see the wife of the young English poet with him, if she could put up with plain fare and simple lodging. Altogether, Monte Oliveto made such an impression on me that I won't be content till I take you there for a visit of a few days...."

VENEZIA, 10th May.

" ... I came here one day earlier than I anticipated. What can I say! I have no words to express my delight as to Venice and its surroundings —it makes up an hundredfold for my deep disappointment as to Rome. I am in sympathy with everything here—the art, the architecture, the beauty of the city, everything connected with it, the climate, the brightness and joyousness, and most of all perhaps the glorious presence of the sea.... From the first moment, I fell passionately and irretrievably in love with Venice: I should rather be a week here than a month in Rome or even Florence: the noble city is the crown of Italy, and fit to be empress of all cities.

All yesterday afternoon and evening (save an hour on the Piazza and neighbourhood) I spent in a gondola—enjoying it immensely: and after dinner I went out till late at night, listening to the music on the canals. Curiously, after the canals were almost deserted—and I was drifting slowly in a broad stream of moonlight—a casement opened and a woman sang with as divine a voice as in my poem of

The Tides of Venice: she was also such a woman as there imagined—and I felt that the poem was a true forecast. Early this morning I went to the magnificent St. Mark's (not only infinitely nobler than St. Peter's, but to me more impressive than all the Churches in Rome taken together). I then went to the Lido, and had a glorious swim in the heavy sea that was rolling in. On my return I found that Addington Symonds had called on me—and I am expecting W. D. Howells. I had also a kind note from Ouida.

Life, joyousness, brightness everywhere—oh, I am so happy! I wish I were a bird, so that I could sing out the joy and delight in my heart. After the oppression of Rome, the ghastliness of Assisi, the heat and dust of Florence—Venice is like Paradise. Summer is everywhere here—on the Lido there were hundreds of butterflies, lizards, bees, birds, and some heavenly larks—a perfect glow and tumult of life—and I shivered with happiness. The cool fresh joyous wind blew across the waves white with foam and gay with the bronze-sailed fisher-boats—the long wavy grass was sweet-scented and delicious—the acacias were in blossom of white—life—dear, wonderful, changeful, passionate, joyous life everywhere! I shall never forget this day—never, never. Don't despise me when I tell you that once it overcame me, quite; but the tears were only from excess of happiness, from the passionate delight of getting back again to the Mother whom I love in Nature, with her wind-caresses and her magic breath."

The weeks in Venice gave my correspondent the crowning pleasure of his Italian sojourn; Venetian art appealed to him beyond that of any other school. The frequent companionship of John Addington Symonds, the long hours in the gondola, in the near and distant lagoons were a perpetual joy to him. June he spent in the Ardennes with my mother and

me—at Dinant, at Anseremme and at La Roche. They were happy days which we spent chiefly in a little boat sailing up the Lesse, dragging it over the shallows, or resting in the green shade of oak and beech trees.

In July he was once more in London and hard at work. Among other things he had contributed a series of articles on the Etrurian Cities to the *Glasgow Herald*, and followed them with letters descriptive of the Ardennes, then relatively little known. In August he packed all his Italian notes, and joined his mother and sisters at Innellan on the Clyde, and later he visited Sir Noel Paton in Arran, whence he wandered over many of his old loved haunts in Loch Fyne, in Mull and in Iona.

On his way back to London—where he was to take up his work as Art Critic to the *Glasgow Herald*—a serious misadventure befell him. His portmanteau with all his precious Italian photographs, notes and other MSS. was lost. Nowhere could he trace it, and he had to return without it. He was in despair; for it meant not only the loss of material for future commissions, but the loss of work already finished, and in process.

It was a wet August; and his search through the various places he had passed on the Clyde was made in pouring rain. Again and again on the steamers and on the piers he was soaked during those miserable days. He settled in London at 13 Thorngate Road, Sutherland Gardens, in deep depression; his persistent appeals to the Railway Company were unavailing. As the autumn advanced his old enemy rheumatism took hold of him, and he was laid low again with rheumatic fever, which this time attacked his heart mainly. His sister Mary came up to town and she and I nursed him. The best tonic however toward recovery was the reappearance of the lost portmanteau with its much mourned over contents in a soaked and sodden condition, but still legible and serviceable.

In the Introduction to a selection of Philip Marston's Poems my husband relates that:

"During the spring months of 1884 I was residing at Dover, and in April Marston came down from London to spend a week or so with me. The weather was perfect, and our walks by shore and cliff were full of delight to us both. Once or twice we crossed to Calais for the sake of the sail, and spent a few hours in the old French port, and returned by the afternoon boat. In the evenings, after dinner, we invariably adjourned to the beach, either under the eastern bluffs, or along the base of Shakespeare's Cliff, for the music of the sea, in calm or tidal turbulence or tempest, had an unfailing fascination for him.

"He took keen pleasure in learning how to distinguish the songs of the different birds, and all spring's sounds and scents were sources of exquisite pleasure. How well I remember the rapt expression of puzzled delight which animated his face, as one day we crossed some downs to the westward of Folkestone. 'Oh, what is that?' he cried eagerly; and to my surprise I found that what had so excited him was the crying of the young lambs as they stumbled or frisked about their mothers. He had so seldom been out of London in early spring that so common an incident as this had all the charm of newness to him.

"A frisky youngster was eagerly enticed alongside, and the blind poet's almost childlike happiness in playing with the woolly little creature was something delightful to witness. A little later I espied one which had only been a few hours in the world, and speedily placed it in his arms. He would fain have carried it away with him: in his tender solicitude for it he was like a mother over her first-born.

"As we turned to walk homeward we met a boy holding a young starling in his hand. Its feeble strident cries, its funny little beak closing upon his

finger under the impression it was a gigantic worm, delighted him almost as much as the lambkin. 'A day of days!' was his expressive commentary, as tired and hungry we reached home and sat down to dinner, with the deep boom of the sea clearly audible through the open window."

From Dover W. S. went to Paris for the first time in his capacity as Art Critic, and thoroughly enjoyed himself as this letter to me shows:

PARIS, 10th April, 1884.

What remains of me after to-day's heat now writes to you. This morning I spent half an hour or so in M. Bourget's study—and was flattered to find a well-read copy of my *Rossetti* there. He had a delightful library of books, and, for a Frenchman, quite a respectable number by English writers: amongst other things, I was most interested in seeing a shelf of about 30 volumes with letters or inscriptions inside from the corresponding contemporary critics, philosophists, etc. M. Bourget is fortunate in his friends.

I then went to breakfast with him at a famous Café, frequented chiefly by *hommes de lettres*. At our table we were soon joined by Hennequin and two others. After breakfast (a most serious matter!) I adjourned with Bourget to his club, La Société Historique, Cercle St. Simon, and while there was introduced to one or two people, and made an honorary member with full privileges. I daresay Bourget's name is better known to you as a poet, but generally his name is more familiar as the author of "Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine"—an admirable series of studies on the works and genius of Baudelaire, Renan, Gustave Flaubert, Taine, and Stendhal. He very kindly gave me a copy (which I am glad to have from him, though I knew the book already) and in it he wrote

À William Sharp

de son confrère
Paul Bourget.

After leaving him I recrossed the Champs Elysées —perspired so freely that the Seine perceptibly rose —sank exhausted on a seat at the Café de la Paix— dwelt in ecstasy while absorbing a *glace aux pistaches* —then went back to the Grand Hotel—and to my room, where after a bit I set to and finished my concluding Grosvenor Gallery Notice.

On Sunday, if I can manage it, I will go to Mdme. Blavatsky.

On Monday Bourget comes here for me at twelve, and we breakfast together (he with me this time)— and I then go to M. Lucien Mariex, who is to take and introduce me to M. Muntz, the writer of the best of the many books on Raphael and an influential person in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Somebody else is to take me to look at some of the private treasures in the École des Beaux Arts. In the course of the week I am to see Alphonse Daudet, and Bourget is going to introduce me to Émile Zola. As early as practicable I hope to get to Neuilly to see M. Milsand, but don't know when. If practicable I am also to meet François Coppée (the chief living French poet after Victor Hugo)—also M. M. Richepin, F. Mistral (author of *Miréio*), and one or two others. Amongst artists I am looking forward to meeting Bouguereau, Cormin, Puvis de Chavannes, and Jules Breton. As much as any one else, I look forward to making the acquaintance of Guizot to whose house I am going shortly with M. Bourget. There is really a delightful fraternity here amongst the literary and artistic world. And every one seems to want to do something for me, and I feel as much flattered as I am pleased. Of course my introductions have paved the way, and, besides, Bourget has said a great deal about me as a writer—too much, I know."

The two important events of 1884 were the publication of a second volume of Poems, and our marriage.

In June *Earth's Voices* (Elliot Stock) was issued and was well received at home and in America. In an article on William Sharp and Fiona Macleod written for *The Century* in 1906 Mr. Ernest Rhys wrote of this volume:

"There was an impassioned delight in nature—in nature at large, that is—in her seas and skies, or in her scenery subjectively coloured by lyric emotion to be found in these early books.

"Perhaps one of his Northern poems may best serve to illustrate his faculty; and there is one that is particularly to the purpose, since it sketches 'Moonrise' from the very spot—Iona—with which so many of the 'Fiona' tales and fantasies were to be connected afterward.

> Here where in dim forgotten days,
> A savage people chanted lays
> To long since perished gods, I stand:
> The sea breaks in, runs up the sand,
> Retreats as with a long-drawn sigh,
> Sweeps in again, again leaves dry
> The ancient beach, so old and yet
> So new that as the strong tides fret
> The island barriers in their flow
> The ebb hours of each day can know
> A surface change. The day is dead,
> The Sun is set, and overhead
> The white north stars set keen and bright;
> The wind upon the sea is light
> And just enough to stir the deep
> With phosphorescent gleams and sweep
> The spray from salt waves as they rise.

"Sharp's early work is more like that of a lyric

improvisator than of a critical modern poet. At this period he cared more for the free colours of verse than for exact felicity of phrase. His writings betrayed a constant quest after those hardly realisable regions of thought, and those keener lyric emotions, which, since Shelley wrote and Rossetti wrote and painted, have so often occupied the interpreters of the vision and spectacle of nature.

"One may find this variously attempted or half expressed in several of the poems of his second book. In one called 'A Record' (to which a special inscription drew attention in the copy he sent me), he treats very fancifully the mystery of transmigration. He pictures himself sitting in his room, and there he resumes the lives, and states of being, of many savage types of man and beast viewed in passion and action—the tiger, the eagle, and the primitive man who lighted the fire that consumed the dry scrub and his fellow-tribesmen:

> He looks around to see some god,
> And far upon the fire-scorched sod
> He sees his brown-burnt tribesmen lie,
> And thinks their voices fill the sky,
> And dreads some unseen sudden blow—
> And even as I watch him, lo,
> My savage-self I seem to know.

"Or again he reincarnates the Druid:

> And dreaming so I dream my dream:
> I see a flood of moonlight gleam
> Between vast ancient oaks, and round
> A rough-hewn altar on the ground
> Weird Druid priests are gathered
> While through their midst a man is led
> With face that seems already dead.

"And again the type is changed into a Shelleyan recluse, a hermit who had had retreated to his cave, and that hermit

> Was even that soul mine eyes have traced
> Through brute and savage steadily,
> That he even now is part of me
> Just as a wave is of the sea.

"If there are traces of Shelley in this poem, Rossetti and Swinburne have also their echo in some of its rhapsodic, highly figurative stanzas. There are unmistakable germs in it, too, of some of the supernatural ideas that afterward received a much more vital expression in 'Fiona Macleod's' work."

The volume was dedicated to his friend Walter Pater and from him and other writers and friends he received many interesting letters, and from them I select the following:

2 Bradmore Road, May 28th.

My dear Sharp,

I was just thinking of sending off my long-delayed acknowledgment of your charming volume, with its friendly dedication (which I take as a great compliment, and sincerely thank you for) when your post card arrived. These new poems must, I feel sure, add much to your poetic reputation. I have just finished my first reading of them; but feel that I shall have to go back many times to appreciate all their complex harmonies of sense and rhythm. On a first superficial reading, I incline to think that the marks of power cluster most about the poem of *Sospitra*. Also, I prefer the *Transcripts from Nature*, to the various poems included in *Earth's Voices*, admirable as I think many of the latter to be, e. g., The Song of the Flowers, The Field Mouse, The Song of the Thrush, The Cry of the Tiger, The Chant of the Lion, The Hymn of the Autumn. This looks shamefully

matter-of-fact. But then, you asked me to tell you precisely which I preferred. *The Shadowed Souls*, among the short pieces, I find very beautiful. The whole volume seems to me distinguishable among latter-day poetry for its cheerfulness and animation, and of course the Australian pieces are delightfully novel and fresh. Many thanks, again, from

Yours very sincerely,

WALTER H. PATER.

In an article on Christina Rossetti, William Sharp relates:

"In the beginning of May, 1884, I called to see Miss Rossetti and to leave with her a copy of a just-published volume of verse, but failed to find her at home. The poem I cared most for was the epilogue, *Madonna Natura*, but instinct told me Miss Rossetti would neither like nor approve so pagan an utterance, and the surmise was correct:

30 TORRINGTON SQUARE, W. C.,

May 3, 1884.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

I might say "Why do you call just when we are out?" only that you might retort "Why are you out just when I call?"

Thank you very much for your new volume and yet more for the kindness which enriches the gift. Be sure my Mother and I retain you in friendly remembrance.

An imperfect acquaintance with your text inclines me for the present to prefer "the Thames" amongst rivers, and the "West" among winds, and the "Thrush" among song-birds. So also "Deserts" to "Cornfields."

Of course all the pieces which memorialise our dear Gabriel interest us.

And "Ah Sin" I like and sympathise with: and I

fear it is only too lifelike. Shall I or shall I not say anything about "Madre Natura"? I dare say without my taking the liberty of expressing myself you can (if you think it worth while) put my regret into words.

Very truly yours,

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

"Though I cannot recall what I wrote, write I did evidently, and obviously also with eagerness to prove that, while I accepted her gentle reproof in the spirit in which she offered it, I held the point of view immaterial; and no doubt a very crude epistle it was in thought and diction...."

That summer my Poet and I were very happy receiving the congratulations from our friends on the approaching termination of our nine years of waiting. We were married on a Friday the 31st October 1884 at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, and his friend Eric S. Robertson—Editor of The Great Writer Series, and afterward Professor of Literature and Logic at Lahore Government College—acted as best man. Mrs. Craik lent us her house at Dover for our honeymoon, and we also made a flying visit to Paris.

The end of November found us settled in a little house in Talgarth Road, West Kensington (No. 46): our relatives furnished the house for us and we began our new life with high hopes and a slender purse. My husband had £30 in his pocket, and I had an income of £35 a year.

Among the many kindly letters of congratulations came one from Mr. Addington Symonds.

DAVOS PLATZ, Dec. 22, 1884.

MY DEAR MR. SHARP,

Allow me first to congratulate you on your

marriage, and settlement in London. You will remember that I was privileged at Venice to see a volume of your "Transcripts from Nature," in relation to which you told me of your engagement. I am therefore interested to hear of the happy event, and wish both you and Mrs. Sharp all the prosperity, which it is possible for mortals to enjoy! When I come to London (which I hope to do next year) I shall not forget your kind invitation.

I must give you most hearty thanks for the enjoyment of a rare delight in your post-card and letter about my Sonnets. I have so high an esteem of your own original work in poetry that to be appreciated by you is no common pleasure. Such words as yours are more than many of the ordinary reviews, even if kindly; and they take the annoyance away, which some unjust and ignorant critiques leave upon a sensitive mind.

If it were not that men like yourself, who have the right and power to judge, speak thus from time to time, I do not think I should care to go on publishing what I take pleasure in producing, but what has hitherto brought me no gains and caused me to receive some kicks. It is indeed very good of you amid your pressing literary occupations and the more delightful interests of your life at present, to find time to tell me what you really value in my work. Thank you for noticing the omission of the comma after *islands* in Sonnet on p. 38 of Vag: Lit:

It has fallen out accidentally; and if such a remarkable event as a 2nd. edn. occurs, it shall be replaced. So also will I alter what you rightly point out as a blemish in the Sonnet on p. 200—the repetition of *deep deep* and *sleep* in the same line. That was questioned by my own ear. I left it thus because I thought it added a sort of oppressive dreaminess to the opening of the Sonnet, striking a keynote. But if it has struck you as wrong, I doubt not that it should be altered; since it will not have achieved the purposed effect. And those effects are

after all tricks.

I shall also attend to your suggestions about future work. I have had it in my mind to continue the theme of "Animi Figura," and to attempt to show how a character which has reached apparent failure in moral and spiritual matters may reconstruct a life's philosophy and find sufficient sources of energy and health. There is no doubt great difficulty in this motif. But were it possible to succeed in some such adumbration of what the Germans call a Versöhnung, then the purgation of the passions at which a work of art should aim would be effected. Believe me, with renewed thanks, to be very sincerely yours,

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

Many were the pleasant literary households that gave a welcome to us, and in particular those of Mr. and Mrs. Craik, of Mr. and Mrs. George Robinson, whose beautiful daughters Mary, the poetess, and Mabel, the novelist, I already knew; of Mr. and Mrs. Francillon, of Mrs. Augusta Webster, and of Dr. and Mrs. Garnett. In these and other houses we met many common friends and interesting people of note; most frequently, among others, Mr. Walter Pater, Mr. Robert Browning, Dr. Westland Marston, Mr. and Mrs. Ford Madox Brown, Mr. and Mrs. William Rossetti, Mr. and Mrs. William Morris, Mr. and Mrs. Holman Hunt, Mr. Andrew Lang, Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Frederick Shields, Mr. Theodore Watts, Sir Frederick Leighton, Miss Mathilde Blind, Miss Olive Schreiner, Miss Louise Bevington, Mr. and Mrs. John Todhunter, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Wilde and Mrs. Lynn Linton.

CHAPTER VI

SONNETS OF THIS CENTURY

1885 was a year of hard work. It was our desire that such work should be done that should eventually make it possible for my husband to devote himself exclusively to original work—perhaps in a year or two at most. Meanwhile the outlook was satisfactory and encouraging. He held the post of London Art-Critic to the *Glasgow Herald*, was on the staff of *The Academy* then under the Editorship of his good friend Mr. James Cotton; and he wrote for *The Examiner*, *The Athenaeum* and other weeklies.

On the appearance in *The Athenaeum* of his Review on *Marius the Epicurean* the author expressed his satisfaction in a letter:

2 Bradmore Road,
March 1, 1885.

My dear Sharp,

I have read your article in *The Athenaeum* with very real pleasure; feeling criticism, at once so independent and so sympathetic, to be a reward for all the long labours the book has cost me. You seem to me to have struck a note or criticism not merely pleasant but judicious; and there are one or two important points—literary ones—on which you have said precisely what I should have wished, and thought it important for me, to have said. Thank you sincerely for your friendly work! Also, for your letter, and promise of the other notices, which I shall look out for, and greatly value. I was much pleased also that Mrs. Sharp had been so much interested in my writing. It is always a sign to me that I have to some extent succeeded in my literary aim when I gain the approval of accomplished women.



WALTER PATER

I should be glad, and feel it a great compliment, to have Marius translated into German, on whatever terms your friend likes—provided of course that Macmillan approves. I will ask him his views on this point. As regards the ethical drift of Marius, I should like to talk to you, if you were here. I *did* mean it to be more anti-Epicurean than it has struck you as being. In one way however I am glad that you have mistaken me a little on this point, as I had some fears that I might seem to be pleading for a formal thesis,

or "parti pris." Be assured how cheering your praise —praise from so genuine and accomplished a fellow-workman—has been to me. Such recognition is especially a help to one whose work is so exclusively personal and solitary as the kind of literary work, which I feel I can do best, must be. I fancied you spoke of bringing your wife to Oxford this term; and wish we had a room to offer you. But I think you know that we have at most only room for a single visitor. It will however give my sisters great pleasure to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Sharp. Only let us know a week or so, if possible, before you come to Oxford, that we may see as much of you as possible: and with our united kind regards, believe me, my dear Sharp,

Very sincerely yours,
WALTER PATER.

I hope that in generosity to me you are not wasting too much of the time that belongs to your own original work. I have told Macmillan to send you a properly bound copy of Marius, with only a few misprints.

Mr. Theodore Watts had frequently spoken to us about a romance he had in hand, and partly in print. After much persuasion he sent several chapters of *Aylwin* to us during our summer holiday, and we read them on the shores of West Loch Tarbert in Argyll with keen enjoyment. An enthusiastic letter from the younger author brought this reply:

SEAFORD, Sept. 16, 1885.

MY DEAR SHARP,

My best thanks for your most kind and suggestive letter. I am much gratified to know that in you and Mrs. Sharp I have true sympathisers in a story which

although it may and I hope will be generally popular, can only deeply appeal to the heart of hearts of here and there one of the true romantic temper. Swinburne, who has read it all, tells me that the interest grows sharply and steadily to the very end and the finest volume is the last.

You are right in your surmise as to the rapidity in which the story was written to dictation. Both its merits and its defects you will find to arise from the fact that the conception came to me as one whole and that my eagerness to pour it out while the imagination was at white heat conquered everything. I doubt if it ever *could* have been written save to dictation. When do you return?

Kindest regards to Mrs. Sharp,

Yours affectly,

THEO. WATTS.

P.S.—I and Swinburne are getting some delicious bathing.

In the article written for *The Century Magazine*, 1907, on William Sharp and Fiona Macleod, Mr. Ernest Rhys gives a reminiscent description of the young author and of his impressions of him, on their first acquaintance:

"One summer morning, some twenty years ago, in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, I was called down to an early visitor, and found waiting me a superb young man—a typical Norseman, as I should have thought him—tall, yellow-haired, blue-eyed. His cheeks were as rosy as a young girl's, his manners as frank and impulsive as a boy's. He had come with an introduction from a common friend (Mrs. William Bell Scott), a would-be contributor to a new periodical; but he soon passed from the discussion of an article on De Quincey to an account of himself that was joyously and consciously exuberant. He told of adventures in Australian backwoods, and of

intrigues in Italy that recalled Cellini; and then he turned, with the same rapid flow of brief staccato sentences, to speak of his friend Mr. Swinburne's new volume of poems, or of the last time he walked along Cheyne Walk to spend an evening with Rossetti. He appeared to know everybody, to have been everywhere. Finally, though he had apparently been sitting up all the night before to write an epic or a 'Quarterly' article, he was quite ready to start the same evening for Paris, not only to be present at a new play there, but in order to be able to talk, hours on end in the dark, about the 'Contes Extraordinaires' of M. Ernest Hello, or about a very different and still more wonderful being, then little known in London, called Nietzsche.

"It is not easy to avoid extravagance in speaking of one who was in all things an illusionist. Sharp's sensations, doings, artistic ideas, and performances were not to be counted by rule and measure. He was capable of predicting a new religion as he paced the Thames Embankment, or of devising an imaginary new theatre for romantic drama—whose plays were yet to be written (by himself)—as he rode home from the Haymarket.

"Before we separated, at that first meeting, he had made more plans for events and new great works than the most sanguine of imaginers and writers could hope to effect in a lifetime. And, alas! for his control of circumstance, within a fortnight I was summoned to his sick-bed. He was down with scarlet fever, and it fell to me to write from his notes, or otherwise to complete, more than one essay and review which he had undertaken before he fell ill....

"There was another side to William Sharp. He had a spirit of fun, boyish mischief even, which found the slightest reflection in his work; for his writing is not remarkable for its humour. His extravagance of energy, which vehemently sped his pen, led him, in the course of his earlier life, into a hundred wild exploits. To him a piece of writing was

an adventure. He delighted in impossible feats of composition, such as trying to finish a whole romance between sunset and sunrise. It follows that, with all this huge impetuosity, he was a poet who was rather disinclined by temperament for the 'poetic pains.' What he wrote in haste he was not always anxious to correct at leisure; and he was happy about what he wrote—at any rate, until a colder mood supervened at some later stage of his development.

"In keeping with this mental restlessness, Sharp was an insatiable wanderer. No sooner did he reach London than he was intriguing to be off again. Some of his devices in order to get work done, and to equip these abrupt expeditions, were as absurd as anything told by Henri Murger. Thanks to his large and imposing presence, his sanguine air, his rosy faith in himself, he had a way of overwhelming editors that was beyond anything, I believe, ever heard of in London, before or since. On one occasion he went into a publisher's office, and gave so alluring an account of a long-meditated book that the publisher gave him a check for £100, although he had not written a word of it.

"These things illustrate his temperament. He was a romanticist, an illusionist. He did not see places or men and women as they were; he did not care to see them so: but he had quite peculiar powers of assimilating to himself foreign associations—the ideas, the colours, the current allusions, of foreign worlds. In Italy he became an Italian in spirit; in Algiers, an Arab. On his first visit to Sicily he could not be happy because of the sense of bloodshed and warfare associated with the scenes amid which he was staying; he saw bloodstains on the earth, on every leaf and flower.

"The same susceptibility marked his intercourse with his fellows. Their sensations and emotions, their whims, their very words, were apt to become his, and to be reproduced with an uncanny reality in his

> own immediate practice. It was natural, then, that he should be doubly sensitive to feminine intuitions; that he should be able, even on occasion, thanks to an extreme concern with women's inevitable burdens and sufferings, to translate, as men are very rarely able to do, their intimate dialect."

The description given by Mr. Rhys of William Sharp's method of work as characterised by an impetuosity which made him "disinclined for the poetic pains" belonged to one phase of his development. During the early days of hard work for the bare necessities of life, he had little time to devote to the writing of poetry or of purely imaginative work. His literary efforts were directed toward the shaping of his prose critical writings, toward the controlled exercise of the mental faculties which belonged to the William Sharp's side of himself. From time to time the emotional, the more intimate self would sweep aside all conscious control; a dream, a sudden inner vision, an idea that had lain dormant in what he called "the mind behind the mind" would suddenly visualise itself and blot out everything else from his consciousness, and under such impulse he would write at great speed, hardly aware of what or how he wrote, so absorbed was he in the vision with which for the moment he was identified. In those days he was unwilling to retouch such writing; for he thought that revision should be made only under a similar phase of emotion. Consequently he preferred for the most part to destroy such efforts if the result seemed quite inadequate, rather than alter them. Later, when that side of his nature found expression in the Fiona Macleod writings—when those impulses became more frequent, more reliable, more coherent—he changed his attitude toward the question of revision,

and desired above all things to give as beautiful an expression as lay in his power to what to him were dreams of beauty.

For his critical work, however, he studied and prepared himself deliberately. He believed that the one method of attaining to a balanced estimate of our literature is by a comparative study of foreign contemporary writing.

"The more interested I became in literature," he on one occasion explained to an interviewer, "the more convinced I grew of the narrowness of English criticism and of the importance to the English critic of getting away from the insular point of view. So I decided that the surest way of beginning to prepare myself for the work of the critic would be to make a study of three or four of the best writers among the older, and three or four among the younger school of each nation, and to judge from the point of view of the nation. For example, in studying French literature, I would try to judge from the point of view of a Frenchman. When this task was done I tried to estimate the literature under consideration from an absolute impersonal and impartial point of view. Of course, this study took a long time, but it furnished me material that has been invaluable to me in my work ever since."

It was his constant endeavour to understand the underlying motive in any phase of modern literature; and he believed that "what is new in literature is not so likely to be unfit for critics, as critics are likely to be unfit for what is new in literature." Concerning the art of Criticism he expressed his belief in an unfinished article: "When I speak of Criticism I have in mind not merely the more or less deft use of commentary or indication, but one of the several ways of literature and in itself a rare and fine art, the

marriage of science that knows, and of spirit that discerns."

"The basis of Criticism is imagination: its spiritual quality is sympathy: its intellectual distinction is balance."

The occasion of his visit to Mr. Ernest Rhys was in connection with a scheme for the publication of two series of cheap re-issues of fine literature—a comparatively new venture five-and-twenty years ago—to be published by Messrs. Walter Scott: *The Camelot Classics* to be edited by Ernest Rhys and to consist of selected prose writings, and *The Canterbury Poets* to be edited by William Sharp;—Each volume to be prefaced by a specially written introduction. For the Prose Series William Sharp prepared De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, and Mrs. Cunningham's *Great English Painters*. For a third series—Biographies of *Great Writers* edited by Eric S. Robertson and Frank T. Marzial, he wrote his monographs on Shelley in 1887, on Heine in 1888 and on Browning in 1890.

Meanwhile he contributed a volume from time to time to *The Canterbury Poets*, among others: Collections of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Great Odes, American Sonnets, and his Collection of English Sonnets. In preparing the Edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets he consulted Mr. Edward Dowden on one or two points and received the following reply:

DAVOS PLATZ, Dec. 6, 1885.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

> The most welcome gift of your *Songs, Poems and Sonnets* of Shakespeare reached me to-night. I have already looked it quickly through, and have seen enough to know that this volume will be my constant companion in future upon all my wanderings.

Comparisons are odious. So I will not make a list of the other travelling companions, which your edition of Shakespeare's lyrics is destined to supersede.

I will only tell you *why* yours has the right to supersede them. First and foremost, it is more scientifically complete.

Secondly, it is invaluable in its preservation of the play-atmosphere, by such introductory snatches as you insert e. g. on p. 20. Hitherto, we had often yearned in our Shakespearean anthologies for a whiff of the play from which the songs were torn. You have given this just where it was needed, and else not. That is *right*.

Thirdly, the Preface (to my mind at least) is more humanly and humanely true about Shakespeare's attitude in the Sonnets than anything which has yet been written about them.

(I thank you, par parenthèse, for "the *vox humana* of Hamlet!") And apropos of p. 11, I think you might have mentioned François Victor Hugo's translation of Shakespeare's Sonnets. It is a curious piece of French criticism. But the main thing left upon my mind by this first cursory perusal is that you are one of those who live (as Goethe has for ever put it) in "*the whole*." It is the great thing for modern criticism to get itself up out of holes and corners, mere personal proclivities and scholarly niceties, into the large air of nature and of man.

The critic who does this, has to sacrifice the applause of coteries and the satisfaction which comes from "discovering" something and making for his discovery a following.

But I am sure this is the right line for criticism, and the one which will ultimately prevail, to the exclusion of more partial ways.

I therefore, who, in my own humble way, have tried as critic to preserve what Goethe also calls the "abiding relations," *bleibende Verhältnisse*, feel specially drawn to your work by the seal of largeness

set upon it.

You test Shakespeare in his personal poems as man, from the standpoint of the whole; and this seems to me eminently scientific—right. In a minor point, I can tell you, as no one else could, that your critical instinct is no less *acute* than generally right. You have quoted one of my sonnets in the notes. This Sonnet was written, to myself consciously, under the Shakespearean influence. The influence was complex, but very potent; and your discernment, your "spotting" of it, appears to me that you have the right scent—fiuto (as Italians) flair (as Frenchmen call that subtle penetration into the recesses of a mind regulated by style).

Thank you from my heart for this gift, which (I hope, if years enough are given me) shall wear itself out in the daily service of your friend,

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

In the following letter to Mr. Symonds the Editor explained the intention of his collected *Sonnets of this Century*:

12: 11: 85.

MY DEAR MR. SYMONDS,

I am shortly going to bring out a Selection of the Best Sonnets of this Century (including a lengthy Introductory Essay on the Sonnet as a vehicle of poetic thought, and on its place and history in English Literature)—and I should certainly regard it as incomplete if your fine sonnet-work were unrepresented. I am giving an average of *two* to each writer of standing, but in your case I have allowed for *five*. This is both because I have a genuine admiration for your sonnet-work in the main, and because I think that you have never been done full justice to as a poet—though of course you have met with loyal recognition in most of those quarters where you would most value it....

I have taken great pleasure in the preparation of the little book, and I think that both poetically and technically it will be found satisfactory. My main principles in selection have been (1) Structural correctness. (2) Individuality, with distinct poetic value. (3) Adequacy of Sonnet-Motive.

I hope that you are hard at work—not neglecting the shyest and dearest of the muses—? Is there any chance of your being in London in the late Spring? I hope so.

Sincerely yours,
WILLIAM SHARP.

In the preparation of the volume he received several interesting communications from well-known English sonnet writers from which I select four. The first is from the Irish poet Aubrey de Vere; in the second Mr. George Meredith answers a question concerning his volume of sequent poems, *Modern Love*:

CURRAGH CHASE, ADARE,
Dec. 5, 1885.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

... I am much flattered by what you say about my sonnets, and glad that you like them; but I hope that in selecting so many as five for your volume you have not displaced sonnets by other authors. Sir R. Hamilton's are indeed, as you remark, excellent, and I rejoice that you are making them better known than they have been hitherto. Wordsworth once remarked to me that he had known many men of high talents and several of real genius; but that Coleridge, and Sir W. H. Hamilton were the only men he had known to whom he would apply the term "wonderful."

Yours faithfully,
AUBREY DE VERE.

BOXHILL, DORKING,
Nov. 12, 1885.

DEAR SIR,

You are at liberty to make your use of the Sonnet you have named. The Italians allow of 16 lines, under the title of "Sonnets with a tail."

But the lines of "Modern Love" were not designed for that form.

Yours very truly,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

The third letter is from Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton:

THE PINES, PUTNEY HILL,
Jan. 8, 1886.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I sent off the proofs by Wednesday afternoon's post. I had no idea that the arrangement of the sonnets would give bother and took care to write to you to ask. The matter was not at all important, and I shall be vexed, indeed, if the printers are put to trouble. The printers would, unless the snow storms interfered, get my verses by Thursday morning's *first* post.

My theory of the sonnet is exactly expressed in the sonnet on the sonnet. It is that, in the octave, the emotion flows *out* in a rhythmic billow: that the solidarity of this billow is maintained by knitting the two quatrains together by means of two rhyme sounds only: that in the sestet the billow *ebbs* back to "Life's tumultuous sea" and that like the ebb of an ocean-billow it moves backward, not solidly, but *broken up* into wavelets. This is only the arrangement of the rhymes in the sestet, that not only *need* not be based upon any given system but that *should* not be based on any given system, and should be perceived entirely by emotional demands.

Yours affectly,
THEO. WATTS.

The fourth letter is from Oscar Wilde:

16 TITE ST., CHELSEA.

DEAR SIR,

It will give me much pleasure to see the sonnets you mention included in your selection. Of the two, I much prefer "Libertatis Sacra Fames"—and if only one is taken, would like to be represented by that. Indeed I like the sonnets on p. 3 and p. 16 of my volume better than the one written in Holy Week at Genoa. Perhaps however this is merely because Art and Liberty seem to me more vital and more religious than any Creed. I send you a sonnet I wrote at the Sale of Keats's love letters some months ago. What do you think of it? It has not yet been published. I wonder are you including Edgar Allan Poe's sonnet to Science. It is one I like very much.

I will look forward with much interest to the appearance of your book.

I remain
Truly yours,
OSCAR WILDE.

ON THE SALE BY AUCTION OF KEATS'S LOVE LETTERS

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret, and apart.
And now the brawlers of the auction mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note.
Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price: I think they love not art,
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat!
Is it not said that many years ago,

In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or his woe.

I wish I could grave my sonnets on an ivory tablet —Quill pens and note-paper are only good enough for bills of lading. A sonnet should always *look* well. Don't you think so?

O. W.

The success of the volume was immediate, and a second edition followed quickly. For it I begged that the Editor would include some sonnets of his own. He had refused to do so for the 1st Edition, but he now yielded to my wish and included two, "Spring Wind" and "A Midsummer Hour." In later editions, however, he took them out again and left only the two dedicatory sonnets to D. G. Rossetti, for he considered that the Editor should not be represented in the body of the book. The volume was generously welcomed by contemporary writers. George Meredith considered it the best exposition of the Sonnet known to him; to Walter Pater the Introductory Essay was "most pleasant and informing," and "Your own beautiful dedication to D. G. R. seems to me *perfect*, and brought back, with great freshness, all I have felt, and so sincerely, about him and his work."

Robert Louis Stevenson expressed his views on the sonnet in a letter to the Editor:

SKERRYMORE (BOURNEMOUTH).

DEAR SIR,

Having at last taken an opportunity to read your pleasant volume, it has had an effect upon me much to be regretted and you will find the consequences in

verse. I had not written a serious sonnet since boyhood, when I used to imitate Milton and Wordsworth with surprising results: and since I have fallen again by your procuring (a procuration) you must suffer along with me.

May I say that my favourite sonnet in the whole range of your book is Tennyson Turner's "The Buoy-Bell?" Possibly there is a touch of association in this preference; but I think not. No human work is perfect; but that is near enough.

Yours truly,
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The form of my so-called sonnets will cause you as much agony as it causes me little. I am base enough to think the main point of a sonnet is the disjunction of thought coinciding with the end of the octave: and when a lesser disjunction makes the quatrains and sestets I call it an ideal sonnet; even if it were rhymed anyhow. But the cross rhyme, tears—fear, in the second is, even in my base eyes, a vile flaw.

(Two sonnets were enclosed in the letter.)

THE ARABESQUE
(Complaint of an artist)

I made a fresco on the coronal,
Amid the sounding silence and the void
Of life's wind-swept and unfrequented ball.
I drew the nothings that my soul enjoyed;
The pretty image of the enormous fact
I fled; and when the sun soared over all
And threw a brightness on the painted tract.
Lo, the vain lines were reading on the wall!
In vain we blink; our life about us lies
O'erscrawled with crooked mist; we toil in vain

To hear the hymn of ancient harmonies
That quire upon the mountains as the plain;
And from the august silence of the skies
Babble of speech returns to us again.

THE TOUCH OF LIFE

I saw a circle in a garden sit
Of dainty dames and solemn cavaliers,
Whereof some shuddered at the burrowing nit,
And at the carrion worm some burst in tears;
And all, as envying the abhorred estate
Of empty shades and disembodied elves,
Under the laughing stars, early and late,
Sat shamefast at this birth and at themselves.
The keeper of the house of life is fear:
In the rent lion is the honey found
By him that rent it; out of stony ground
The toiler, in the morning of the year,
Beholds the harvest of his grief abound
And the green corn put forth the tender ear.

William Sharp offered to include "The Touch of Life" in the body of the book, and "The Arabesque" in the Notes. He received this reply:

DEAR MR. SHARP,

It is very good of you, and I should like to be in one of your pleasant and just notes; but the impulse was one of pure imitation and is not like to return, or if it did, to be much blessed. I have done so many things, and cultivated so many fields in literature, that I think I shall let the "scanty plot" lie fallow. I forgot to say how much taken I was with Beaconsfield's lines (scarce a sonnet indeed) on Wellington. I am engaged with the Duke, and I believe I shall use them.

I think the "Touch of Life" is the best of my snapshots; but the other was the best idea. The fun of the sonnet to me is to find a subject; the

workmanship rebuts me.

Thank you for your kind expressions, and believe me,

Yours truly,
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The Editor was much gratified by an appreciative letter from John Addington Symonds concerning the *Edition de Luxe* of his Anthology:

DAVOS PLATZ, Nov. 28, 1886.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I have just received my copy of the magnificent edition of your *Sonnets of this Century* to which I subscribed. It is indeed a noble book. Let me say at once how much I think you have improved the Preface. There are one or two things affecting my own share in the Collection to which I should like to call your attention.

I notice that in pp. xxvii-xxix of your Introduction you have adopted the ideas I put forth (Academy, Feb. 13, 1886) about the origin of the Sonnet. But you somewhat confuse the argument by using the word *Stornello*. If you look at Ancora's *Poesia Popolare Italiana* (Livano, Vigo), pp. 175, 313, you will see that Italians regard the stornello (320) as a totally different species from the rispetto. I have explained the matter in my Renaissance in Italy, Vol. A. p. 264. I admit that there may be differences of opinion about these popular species of verse. Yet I have no doubt that every one in Italy, a *Stornello* being mentioned, would think at once of a single couplet prefaced with *Fiore di granata* or something of that sort. However, it would be pedantic to insist upon this point. I only do so because I believe I was the first to indicate the probable evolution of the sonnet from the same germ as the Rispetto Sesta Rima, and Ottava Rima; and I am distinctly myself of opinion that the Stornello is quite a separate

offshoot.

I doubt whether Sonnets in Dialogue be so rare as you imply on p. 43. I know that I composed one for Lady Kitty Clive in 1875. It is printed on p. 117 of my *Vagabunduli Libellus*. I do not esteem it, however, and only published it because it was in dialogue....

Believe me very truly yours,

J. A. SYMONDS.

P. S.—Pater is an old acquaintance of mine. Watts I never met, and I should greatly value the opportunity of knowing him in the flesh—in the spirit, I need hardly say, he has long been known to me.

This postscript reminds me of the fact that Mr. Pater, Mr. Alfred Austin, and Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton met together one evening at our house. I especially remember the occasion because of an incident that occurred, which indicated to us a temperamental characteristic of Walter Pater. During dinner a guest asked to see a necklace I was wearing. It was in the form of a serpent made of silver wire deftly interwoven to resemble scales and to make it sinuous and supple. I unfastened the serpent and as I handed it to Mr. Pater who was nearest me, it writhed in a lifelike manner, and he drew back his hands with a slight movement of dislike. In a flash I remembered the passage in *Marius the Epicurean* in which the hero's dislike to serpents is so vividly described, and I realised the description to be autobiographic. Later I had occasion to note the same effect. My husband and I in the early summer went down to Oxford so that I might meet the Misses Pater at their brother's house. In the morning I had seen Mr. Pater's study at Brasenose, and was as charmed with the beauty and austerity of the

decoration, as with the sense of quiet and repose. In the afternoon it was proposed that I should be shown the Ifley Woods. My husband, always glad to handle the oars, had, however, to consent to being rowed by one of the boat attendants, for Mr. Pater with the timidity of a recluse declined to trust himself to the unknown capabilities of one whom he regarded rather as a townsman. As Mr. Pater and I strolled through the wood I suddenly noticed that my companion gave a little start and directed my attention to what seemed of small interest. When, however, we rejoined our companions Miss Pater asked her brother if he had seen the dead adder lying on one side of the path. “Oh, yes,” he answered, turning his head on one side with a gesture of aversion; “but I did not wish Mrs. Sharp to see it.”

If *The Sonnets of this Century* gained us pleasant friendships it also brought upon us a heavy penalty. For, within the next year or two we were inundated with letters and appeals from budding poets, from ambitious and wholly ignorant would-be sonneteers, who sent sheafs of sonnets not only for criticism and advice but now and again with the request to find a publisher for them! A large packet arrived one day, I remember, with a letter from an unknown in South Africa. The writer explained his poetical ambitions, and stated that he forwarded for consideration a hundred sonnets. On examining the packet we found one hundred poems varying in length from twelve to twenty lines, but not a solitary sonnet among them!

CHAPTER VII

THE SPORT OF CHANCE

Shelley

In the summer of 1885 we went to Scotland and looked forward to an idyllic month on West Loch Tarbert. While staying with Mr. Pater in Oxford my husband had seen the advertisement of a desirable cottage to be let furnished, with service, and garden stocked with vegetables. He knew the neighbourhood to be lovely, the attraction was great, so we took the cottage for August, and in due time carried our various MSS. and work to the idyllic spot. Beautiful the surroundings were indeed:—An upland moor sloping to the loch, with its opposite hilly shore thickly wooded. The cottage was simplicity itself in its appointments, but—the garden was merely a bit of railed-in grass field destitute of plants; the vegetables consisted of a sack of winter potatoes quite uneatable, and the only service that the old woman owner would give was to light the fires and wash up the dishes and black our boots. Everything else devolved on me, for help I could get nowhere and though my husband's intentions and efforts in that direction were admirable, their practical qualities ended there! Yet to all the drawbacks we found compensation in the loveliness of the moorland, the peace of the solitude, and in the magnificent sunsets. One sunset I remember specially. We had gone for a wander westward. The sun was setting behind the brown horizon-line of the moor, and the sky was aflame with its glow.

Suddenly we heard the sound of the pipes, sighing a Lament. We stopped to listen. The sound came nearer, and we saw walking over the brow of the upland an old man with bag-pipes and streamers outlined against the orange sky. We drew aside into a little hollow. As he neared we saw he was gray haired, his bonnet and clothes were old and weatherworn. But in his face was a rapt expression as he played to himself and tramped across the moor, out of the sunset toward the fishing village that lay yonder in the cold evening light.

The summer was a wet one, and shortly after our return to town the poet developed disquieting rheumatic symptoms. Nevertheless we were both hard at work with the reviewing of pictures and books, and among other things he was projecting a monograph on Shelley. It was about this time I think that he decided to compete for a prize of £100 offered by the Editor of *The People's Friend* for a novel suited to the requirements of that weekly, and these requirements of course dictated the sensational style of story. It was my husband's one attempt to write a novel in three volumes. He did not gain the prize but the story ran serially through *The People's Friend*, and was afterward published in 1887 by Messrs. Hurst and Blackett. The scene is laid in Scotland and in Australia, with a Prologue dealing with Cornwall, where he had once spent a few days in order to act as best man to one of his fellow-passengers on the sailing ship that brought him back from Australia.

The following Review from *The Morning Post* and letter from our poet-friend Mathilde Blind will give an idea of the style and defects of the novel:

"The many who have the mental courage to allow that they prefer the objective to the subjective novel may pass some delightful hours in the perusal of Mr. Sharp's 'The Sport of Chance.' It has *primâ facie* an undeniable advantage to start with, i. e. it is unlike almost anything hitherto written in the shape of a novel in three volumes. Slightly old-fashioned, the author's manner is simple and earnest, while he shows much skill in unravelling the tangled skein of a complicated plot. He deals also in sensationalism, but this is of a peculiar kind, and it rarely violates the canons of probability. To southerners his highly-coloured pictures of Highland peasant life, with their accompaniments of visions and second sight, may savour of exaggeration, but not so to those whose youth has been past amidst similar surroundings. Many episodes of the shipwrecks of 'The Fair Hope' and 'The Australasian,' are as effective as the best of those written by authors who make a specialty of 'Tales of the Sea.' Hew Armitage's 'quest,' in Australia, is related with graphic force. The descriptions of the natural features of the country, of life in the bush, and at the outlying settlements, are all stamped with the vivid fidelity that is one of the great merits of the book. Charles Lamb, *alias* Cameron, is a singular conception. Too consistently wicked, perhaps, to escape the reproach of being a melo-dramatic villain, his misdeeds largely contribute to the interest of this exciting novel."

Nov. 6, 1888.

DEAR WILLIAM,

> ... Your "Sport of Chance" has helped me to while away the hours and certainly you have crammed sensation enough into your three volumes to furnish forth a round dozen or so. The opening part seemed to me very good, especially the description of the

storm off the Cornish coast, and the mystery which gradually overclouds Mona's life, but her death and the advent of a new set of characters seems to me to cut the story in two, while the sensational incidents are piled on like Ossa on Olympus. What seemed best to me, and also most enjoyable to my taste at least, are the personal reminiscences which I recognised in the voyage out to Australia and the descriptions of its scenery, full of life and freshness. Most of all I liked the weird picture of the phosphorescent sea with its haunting spectral shapes. You have probably seen something of the kind and ought to have turned it into a poem; if there had been a description of some scene like it in your last volume I should doubtless remember it.

With best love to Lillie,

Your sincere friend,

MATHILDE BLIND.

The opening of the new year 1886—from which we hoped much—was unpropitious. A wet winter and long hours of work told heavily on my husband, whose ill-health was increased by the enforced silence of his "second self" for whose expression leisure was a necessary condition. In a mood of dejection induced by these untoward circumstances he sent the following birthday greeting to his friend Eric S. Robertson:

46 TALGARTH ROAD, W.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I join with Lillie in love and earnest good wishes for you as man and writer. Accept the accompanying two sonnets as a birthday welcome.

There are two "William Sharp's"—one of them unhappy and bitter enough at heart, God knows—though he seldom shows it. This other poor devil also sends you a greeting of his own kind. Tear it up and

forget it, if you will.

But sometimes I am very tired—very tired.

Yours ever, my dear Eric,

W. S.

TO ERIC SUTHERLAND ROBERTSON
(On his birthday, 18: 2: 86)

I

Already in the purple-tinted woods
The loud-voiced throstle calls—sweet echoings
Down leafless aisles that dream of bygone springs:
Already towards their northern solitudes
The fieldfares turn, and soaring high, wheel broods
Of wild swans with a clamour of swift wings:
A tremor of new life moves through all things
And earth regenerate thrills with joyous moods.

Let not spring's breath blow vainly past thine heart,
Dear friend: for Time grows ruinously apace:
Yon tall white lily in its holy grace
The winds will draggle soon: for an unseen dart
Moves ever hither and thither through each place,
Nor know we when or how our lives 'twill part.

II

A little thing it is indeed to die:
God's seal to sanctify the soul's advance—
Or silence, and a long enfevered trance.
But no slight thing is it—ere the last sigh
Leaves the tired heart, ere calm and passively

The worn face reverent grows, fades the dim glance—
To pass away and pay no recompense
To Life, who hath given to us so gloriously.

Not so for thee—within whose heart lie deep
As ingots ‘neath the waves, thoughts true and fair.
Nor ever let thy soul the burden bear,
Of having life to live yet choosing sleep:
Yea even if thine the dark and slippery stair,
Better to toil and climb than wormlike creep.

In the early spring my husband was laid low with scarlet fever and phlebitis. Recovery was slow, and at the press view of the Royal Academy he caught a severe chill; the next day he was in the grip of a prolonged attack of rheumatic fever. For many days his life hung in the balance.

During much of the suffering and tedium of those long weeks the sick man passed in a dream-world of his own; for he had the power at times of getting out of or beyond his normal consciousness at will. At first he imagined himself the owner of a gipsy travelling-van, in which he wandered over the to him well-known and much-loved solitudes of Argyll, resting where the whim dictated and visiting his many fisher and shepherd friends. Later, during the long crises of the illness, though unconscious often of all material surroundings, he passed through other keen inner phases of consciousness, through psychic and dream experiences that afterward to some extent were woven into the Fiona Macleod writings, and, as he believed, were among the original shaping influences that produced them. For a time he felt himself to be practically dead to the material world, and acutely alive “on the other side of things” in the greater freer universe. He had no desire to return,

and rejoiced in his freedom and greater powers; but, as he described it afterward, a hand suddenly restrained him: “Not yet, you must return.” And he believed he had been “freshly sensitised” as he expressed it; and knew he had—as I had always believed—some special work to do before he could again go free.

The illusion of his wanderings with the travelling van was greatly helped by the thoughtfulness of his new friend Ernest Rhys who brought him branches of trees in early leaf from the country. These I placed upright in the open window; and the fluttering leaves not only helped his imagination but also awoke “that dazzle in the brain,” as he always described the process which led him over the borderland of the physical into the “gardens” of psychic consciousness or, as he called it, “into the Green Life.”

At the end of ten weeks he left his bed. As soon as possible I took him to Northbrook, Micheldever, the country house of our kind friends Mr. and Mrs. Henryson Caird, who put it at our disposal for six weeks. Slowly his strength came back in these warm summer days, as he lay contentedly in the sunshine. But as he began to exert himself new disquieting symptoms developed. His heart proved to be badly affected and his recovery was proportionately retarded.

The Autumn found us face to face with problems hard to solve, how to meet not only current expenses but also serious debt, with a limited stock of precarious strength. At the moment of blackest outlook the invalid received a generous friendly letter from Mr. Alfred Austin enclosing a substantial cheque. The terms in which it was offered were as kindly sympathetic as the thought which prompted them. He had, he said, once been helped in a similar

way with the injunction to repay the loan not to the donor but to some one else who stood in need. Therefore he now offered it with the same conditions attached. During the long months of illness it had been a constant source of regret to us that we were unable to see Philip Marston or to read to him as was our habit. We were anxious, too, for in the autumn he had been prostrated by a heat stroke, followed by an epileptic seizure. At last, on Christmas day 1886 William Sharp went to see him and spent an hour or so with him. As he tells in his prefatory Memoir to Marston's "Song-tide" (*Canterbury Poets*): "He was in bed and I was shocked at the change—as nearly a year had elapsed since I had seen him I found the alteration only too evident.... Throughout the winter his letters had been full of foreboding: 'You will miss me, perhaps, when I am gone, but you need not mourn for me. I think few lives have been so deeply sad as mine, though I do not forget those who have blessed it.'"

This was the keynote to each infinitely sad letter.

"On the last day of January 1887 paralysis set in, and for fourteen days, he lay speechless as well as sightless, but at last he was asleep and at peace. Looking at his serene face on the day ere the coffin lid enclosed it, where something lovelier than mortal sleep subtly dwelt, there was one at least of his friends who forgot all sorrow in a great gladness for the blind poet—now no longer blind, if he be not overwhelmed in a sleep beyond our ken. At such a moment the infinite satisfaction of Death seems beautiful largess for the turmoil of a few 'dark disastrous years.'"

The Spring of 1887 brought a more kindly condition of circumstances to us, in the form of good steady work. Mr. Eric Robertson had then been

selected to fill the vacant chair of Literature and Logic at the University of Lahore, and, on accepting, he suggested to Mr. Joseph Henderson that William Sharp should be his successor as Editor of the "Literary Chair" in *The Young Folk's Paper*—the boys' weekly paper for which Robert Louis Stevenson had written his "Treasure Island." "The Literary Olympic" was a portion of the paper devoted to the efforts in prose and verse of the Young Folk who wished to exercise their budding literary talents. Their papers were examined, criticised; a few of the most meritorious were printed, prefaced by an article of criticism and instruction written by their Editor and critic. The work itself was congenial; and the interest was heightened by the fact that it put us into touch with the youth of all classes, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in town and country, alike. Several of the popular novelists and essayists of to-day received the chief early training in the "Olympic." Many were the confidential personal letters to the unknown editor, who was imagined by one or two young aspirants to be white-haired and venerable. This work, moreover, could be done at home, by us both; and it brought a reliable income, a condition of security hitherto unknown to us, which proved an excellent tonic to the delicate Editor.

In August a letter came from Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton suggesting the possibility that an original poem, *The Ode to Mother Carey's Chicken* contributed to my little anthology *Sea-Music*, should be re-printed in *The Young Folk's Paper*:

> "I do especially want it to be read by boys," he wrote, "who would understand and appreciate it thoroughly." The poem appeared; and drew forth an appreciative letter from a young blacksmith who had sent contributions to "The Literary Olympic." Mr.

Watts-Dunton's acknowledgment to the "Editor" was thus expressed:

> "I have seen the poem in the paper and am much gratified to be enabled to speak, thus, to thousands of the boys of Great Britain, the finest—by far the finest—boys in the world as I always think. It was a friendly act on your part and the preliminary remarks are most kind and touching.
>
> "I sincerely hope that your indisposition has, by this time, left you, and shall be glad to get a line to say that it has. The young man's letter is most interesting. What pleases me most is the manly pride he takes in his business. A blacksmith is almost the only artisan whose occupation is tinged with the older romance as Gabriel[2] often used to say. I love still to watch them at the forge—the sparks flying round them. I hope he may not forsake such a calling for the literary struggle."

In the early part of the year "The Sport of Chance" had run serially through *The People's Friend*. Its success incited the author to write a sensational boys' story for *The Young Folk's Paper*; and accordingly in the Xmas number of that weekly appeared the first installment of "Under the Banner of St. James," a tale of the conquest of Peru. This story was followed at intervals by others such as "The Secret of the Seven Fountains," "Jack Noel's Legacy," "The Red Riders." Although the weaving of these sensational plots was a great enjoyment to the writer of them, he at no time regarded them as other than useful pot-boilers.

A letter written about this time to the American poet E. C. Stedman led to a life-long friendship with him of so genial a nature that, on becoming personally acquainted in New York two years later,

the older poet laughingly declared that he adopted the younger man from across the seas as his "English son."

In an article on "British Song" in *The Victorian Poets*, the Scottish poet was referred to as a Colonial. He wrote to the author to point out the mistake "since you are so kindly going to do me the honour of mention in your forthcoming supplementary work, I should not like to be misrepresented."

In replying Mr. Stedman explained that no great harm has been done:

> Something in your work made me suspect that, despite your Australian tone, etc., you did not hail (as we Yankees say) from the Colonies. So you will find in my new vol. of *Victorian Poets* that I do not place you with the Colonial poets, but just preceding them, and I have a reference to your Rosetti volume. The limited space afforded by my supplementary chapter has made my references to the new men altogether too brief and inadequate. Of this I am seriously aware, but trust that you and others will take into consideration the scope and aim of the chapter. You see I have learned that "The Human Inheritance" is scarce! Of course I shall value greatly a copy from the author's hands. And I count among the two pleasant things connected with my prose work—my earlier and natural metier being that of a poet—such letters as yours, which put me into agreeable relations with distant comrades-in-arms.
>
> Beginning, as you have, with the opening of a new literary period, and with what you have already done, I am sure you have a fine career before you—that will extend long after your American Reviewer has ceased to watch and profit by its course.
>
> Very sincerely yours,
>
> EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

A few months later Mr. Stedman wrote again:

NEW YORK, March 27, 1888.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Let me thank you heartily, if somewhat tardily, for your very handsome and magnanimous review of the *Victorian Poets*. It breathes the spirit of fairness—and even generosity—throughout. You have been more than "a little blind" to my faults, and to my virtues most open-eyed and "very kind" indeed. I am sufficiently sure of my own *purpose* to believe that you *have* ground for perceiving that the spirit of my major criticisms is *essential*, rather than merely "technical." I look more to the breadth and imagination of the poet than to minute details—though a stickler for natural melody and the lasting canons of art. The real value of the book lies, of course, in the chapters on some of the elder poets. You are quite right in pointing out the impossibility of correct proportion in the details of the last chapter. It is added to give more completeness to the work as a whole. For the same reason, the earlier chapters on "The General Choir" were originally introduced; but in them I knew my ground better, and could point out with more assurance the tendencies of the various "groups." But I write merely to say that I am heartily satisfied with your criticism, and grateful for it; and that I often read your other reviews with advantage—and shall watch your career, already so fruitful, with great interest. A man who comes down to first principles and looks at things broadly, as you are doing, is sure in the end to be a man of mark.

Very faithfully yours,
EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

One desirable result of this good fortune was a change of residence to a higher part of the town,

where the air was purer, and access to green fields easier. To this end in the Spring of 1887 we took a little house for three years in Goldhurst Terrace, South Hampstead. As it was numbered 17*a*, much annoyance was caused as our letters frequently were delivered at No. 17. A name therefore had to be found, and we dubbed our new home *Wescam*, a name made up of the initials of my husband, myself and our friend Mrs. Caird whose town house was within two minutes' walk of us. There was a sunny study for the invalid on the ground floor, to obviate as much as possible the need of going up and down stairs. The immediate improvement in his health from the higher air and new conditions was so marked that we had every reason to hope it would before many months be practically re-established.

The most important undertaking after the long illness was the monograph on Shelley written for *Great Writers' Series* (Walter Scott) and published in the autumn of 1887. It was a work of love, for Shelley had been the inspiring genius of his youth, the chief influence in his verse till he knew Rossetti. He was in sympathy with much of Shelley's thought: with his hatred of rigid conventionality, of the tyranny of social laws; with his antagonism to existing marriage and divorce laws, with his belief in the sanctity of passion when called forth by high and true emotion. He exclaimed that

"It is my main endeavour in this short life of Shelley to avoid all misstatement and exaggeration; to give as real a narrative of his life from the most reliable sources as lies within my power; to recount without detailed criticism and as simply and concisely as practicable, the record of his poetic achievements. To this end I shall chiefly rely on anecdote and explanatory detail, or poems and

passages noteworthy for their autobiographical or idiosyncratic value, and on indisputable facts."

He proposed merely to give a condensation of all really important material; and based his monograph mainly on Professor Dowden's memorable work (then recently published). Many statements written by William Sharp about Shelley may be quoted as autobiographic of himself. For instance: "From early childhood he was a mentally restless child. Trifles unnoticed by most children seem to have made keen and permanent impression on him—the sound of wind, the leafy whisper of trees, running water. The imaginative faculties came so early into play, that the unconscious desire to create resulted in the invention of weird tales sometimes based on remote fact in the experience of more or less weird hallucinations."

Or again: "The fire of his mind for ever consuming his excitable body, his swift and ardent emotions, his over keen susceptibilities all combined to increase the frailty of his physical health." Or this in particular: "He did not outgrow his tendency to invest every new and sympathetic correspondent (and I would add, friend) with lives of ideal splendour."

And in explanation of each idealization appearing to him "as the type of that ideal Beauty which had haunted his imagination from early boyhood," he adds: "No fellow mortal could have satisfied the desire of his heart. Perhaps this almost fantastic yearning for the unattainable—this desire of the moth for the star—is the heritage of many of us. It is a longing that shall be insatiable even in death." With Shelley he might have said of himself: "I think one is always in love with something or other; the error—and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in

flesh and blood to avoid it—consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal."

From the many letters the biographer received after the publication of his book I select three:

BRASENOSE COLLEGE, Nov. 23d.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I am reading your short life of Shelley with great pleasure and profit. Many thanks for your kindness in sending it. It seems to me that with a full, nay! an enthusiastic, appreciation of Shelley and his work, you unite a shrewdness and good sense rare in those who have treated this subject. And then your book is pleasant and effective, in contrast to a French book on Shelley of which I read reluctantly a good deal lately. Your book leaves a very definite image on the brain.

With sincere kind regards,

Very truly yours,

WALTER PATER.

CIMIEZ, PRÈS NICE.

22d Dec., 1887.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wonder how it is with you now, whether you are better, which I sincerely hope, and already in the Isle of Wight? but I suppose you will only go after Christmas. To-day it is so cold here that I wonder what it must be like with you; there is snow on the mountains behind the house and the sea looks iron-gray and ungenial.

I never told you I think how much I liked your "Shelley," which I think gives a very succinct and fair statement of the poet's life and works. It is just what is wanted by the public at large, and I thought your remarks on Shelley's relations with Harriet exceedingly sympathetic and to the point; as well as

what you say touching his married life with Mary; the passage on page 98 concerning this disenchantment with all mortal passion struck me as most happily felt and expressed. I have only one fault to find with you, and that you will think a very selfish one (so you must excuse it), to wit that when speaking of *The Revolt of Islam* you did not mention in a line or so that I was the first writer who pointed out, first in the "Westminster Review" and afterward in my Memoir of the poet, that in Cythna Shelley had introduced a new type of Woman into poetry. I am rather proud of it, and as it was mentioned by several of Shelley's subsequent biographers I would have been pleased to have seen it in a volume likely to be so popular as yours.

But enough of this small matter.

I wish you and your dear wife health and happiness.

Ever yours,
MATHILDE BLIND.

BOX HILL (DORKING),
Feb. 13, 1888.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

I have read your book on Shelley, and prefer it, matched with the bulky. Putting out of view Matthew Arnold's very lofty lift of superterrestrial nose over the Godwin nest, one inclines to agree with him about our mortal business of Shelley. We shall be coming next to medical testimony, with expositions. You have said just enough, and in the right tones. Yesterday a detachment of the Sunday tramps under Leslie Stephen squeezed at the table in the small dining-room you know, after a splendid walk over chalk and sand. When you are in the mood to make one of us, give me note of warning, and add to the pleasure by persuading your wife to come with you.

And tell her that this invitation would be more

courtly were I addressing her directly.

I am,
Very truly yours,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

CHAPTER VIII

ROMANTIC BALLADS

The Children of To-morrow

The three years spent at Wescam were happy years, full of work and interest. Slowly but steadily as health was re-established, the command over work increased, and all work was planned with the hope that before very long William should be able to devote himself to the form of imaginative work that he knew was germinating in his mind. Meanwhile he had much in hand. Critical work for many of the weeklies, a volume of poems in preparation, and a monograph on Heine, were the immediate preoccupations.

Romantic Ballads and Poems of Phantasy was published in the spring (Walter Scott). The poems had been written at different times during the previous five or six years. “The Son of Allan” had

met with the approval of Rossetti, whose influence was commented upon by certain of the critics. The book was well received both in England and America. *The Boston Literary World* considered that in such poems as "The Isle of Lost Dreams," "Twin Souls," and "The Death Child" "a conjuring imagination rises to extraordinary beauty of conception." These three poems are undoubtedly forerunners of the work of the "Fiona Macleod" period. In the Preface the writer stated his conviction that "a Romantic Revival is imminent in our poetic literature, a true awakening of genuinely romantic sentiment. The most recent phase thereof," however, "that mainly due to Rossetti, has not fulfilled the hopes of those who saw in it the prelude to a new great poetic period. It has been too literary, inherently, but more particularly in expression.... Spontaneity it has lacked supremely.... It would seem as if it had already become mythical that the supreme merit of a poem is not perfection of art, but the quality of the imagination which is the source of such real or approximate perfection.... In a sense, there is neither Youth nor Age in Romance, it is the quintessence of the most vivid emotions of life." And further on he voices the very personal belief "Happy is he who, in this day of spiritual paralysis, can still shut his eyes for a while and dream."

Concerning the idea of fatality that underlies the opening ballad "The Weird of Michel Scott"—"meant as a lyrical tragedy, a tragedy of a soul that finds the face of disastrous fate set against it whithersoever it turn in the closing moments of mortal life," he wrote to a friend, "What has always impressed me deeply—how deeply I can scarcely say—is the blind despotism of fate. It is manifested in Æschylus, in Isaiah and in the old Hebrew Prophets, in all

literature, in all history and in life. This blind, terrible, indifferent Fate, this tyrant Chance, stays or spares, mutilates or rewards, annihilates or passes by without heed, without thought, with absolute blankness of purpose, aim, or passion....

"I am tortured by the passionate desire to create beauty, to sing something of 'the impossible songs' I have heard, to utter something of the rhythm of life that has most touched me. The next volume of romantic poems will be daringly of the moment, vital with the life and passion of to-day (I speak hopefully, not with arrogant assurance, of course), yet not a whit less romantic than 'The Weird of Michel Scott' or 'The Death Child.'"

Many encouraging and appreciative letters reached him from friends known and unknown.

In Mr. William Allingham's opinion "Michel Scott clothing his own Soul with Hell-fire is tremendous!"

Professor Edward Dowden was not wholly in accord with the poet's views, as expressed in the Introduction:

RATHMINES, DUBLIN,
July 10, 1888.

MY DEAR SHARP,

It gave me great pleasure to get your new volume from yourself. I think that a special gift of yours, and one not often possessed, appears in this volume of romance and phantasy. I don't find it possible to particularise one poem as showing its presence more than another, for the unity of the volume comes from its presence. And I rejoice at anything which tends to make this last quarter of the century other than what I feared it would be—a period of collecting and arranging facts, with perhaps such generalisations as specialists can make. (Not that this is not valuable work, but if it is the sole employment of a generation

what an ill time for the imagination and the emotions!) At the same time I don't think I should make any *demand*, if I could, for Romance. I should not put forth any manifesto in its favour, for this reason—that the leaders of a movement of phantasy and romance will have such a sorry following. The leaders of a school which overvalued form and technique may have been smaller men than the leaders of a romantic school, yet still their followers were learning something; but while the chiefs of the romantic and phantastic movement will be men of genius, what a lamentable crowd the disciples will be, who will try to be phantastic *prepense*. We shall have the horrors of the spasmodic school revived without that element of a high, vague, spiritual intention which gave some nobility—or pseudo-nobility—to the disciples of the spasmodists. We shall have every kind of extravagance and folly posing as poetry.

The way to control or check this is for the men who have a gift for romance to use that gift—which you have done—and to prove that phantasy is not incoherence but has its own laws. And they ought to discourage any and every one from attempting romance who has not a genius for romance.

Sincerely yours,

E. DOWDEN.

Meanwhile, the author of the ballads was at work preparing two volumes for the *Canterbury Series*—a volume of selected Odes, and one of American Sonnets, to which he contributed prefaces—and writing critical articles for the *Academy*, *Athenæum*, *Literary World*, etc. Various important books were published that spring, and among those which came into his hands to write about were *Underwoods* by R. L. Stevenson, *In Hospital* by W. Henley; and from these writers respectively he received letters of

comment. I am unable to remember what was the occasion of the first of the R. L. Stevenson notes, what nature of request it was that annoyed the older writer. Neither of his letters is dated, but from the context each obviously belongs to 1888.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

Yes, I was annoyed with you, but let us bury that; you have shown so much good nature under my refusal that I have blotted out the record.

And to show I have repented of my wrath: is your article written? If not, you might like to see early sheets of my volume of verse, not very good, but still —and the Scotch ones would amuse you I believe. And you might like also to see the plays I have written with Mr. Henley: let me know, and you shall have them as soon as I can manage.

Yours very truly,
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The notice I had seen already, and was pleased with.

After the appearance of the review of *Underwoods*, R. L. S. wrote again:

DEAR MR. SHARP,

What is the townsman's blunder?—though I deny I am a townsman, for I have lived, on the whole, as much or more in the country: well, perhaps not so much. Is it that the thrush does not sing at night? That is possible. I only know most potently the blackbird (his cousin) does: many and many a late evening in the garden of that poem have I listened to one that was our faithful visitor; and the sweetest song I ever heard was past nine at night in the early spring, from a tree near the N. E. gate of Warriston cemetery. That I called what I believe to have been a

merle by the softer name of mavis (and they are all turdi, I believe) is the head and front of my offence against literal severity, and I am curious to hear if it has really brought me into some serious error.

Your article is very true and very kindly put: I have never called my verses poetry: they are verse, the verse of a speaker not a singer; but that is a fair business like another. I am of your mind too in preferring much the Scotch verses, and in thinking "*Requiem*" the nearest thing to poetry that I have ever "clerkit."

Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

R. L. S. SARANAC, NEW YORK.

Mr. Henley wrote:

MERTON PLACE, CHISWICK, W.,
5: 7: 88.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I am glad to have your letter. Of course I disagreed with your view of *In Hospital*; but I didn't think it all worth writing about. I felt you'd mistaken my aim; but I felt that your mistake (as I conceived it to be) was honestly made, and that if the work itself had failed to produce a right effect upon you, it was useless to attempt to correct the impressions by means outside art.

Art (as I think) is treatment *et præteria nil*. What I tried to do in *In Hospital* was to treat a certain subject—which seems to me to have a genuine human interest and importance—with discretion, good feeling, and a certain dignity. If I failed, I failed as an artist. My treatment (or my art) was not good enough for my material. *Voilà*. I thought (I will frankly confess it) that I had got the run of the thing —that my results were touched with the distinction of art. You didn't think so, and I saw that, as far as you were concerned, I had failed of my effort. I was

sorry to have so failed, and then the matter ended. To be perfectly frank, I objected to but one expression—"occasionally crude"—in all the article. I confess I don't see the propriety of the phrase at all. My method is, I know, the exact reverse of your own; but I beg you to believe that my efforts—of simplicity, directness, bluntness, brutality even—are carefully calculated, and that "crude"—which means raw, if it means anything at all—is a word that I'd rather not have applied to me. The *Saturday* Reviewer made use of it, and I had it out with him, and he owned that it was unfortunately used—that it didn't mean "raw," but something un-Miltonic (as it were), something novel and personal and which hadn't had time to get conventionalised. It's stupid and superfluous to write like this; especially as I had meant to say nothing about it. But yours of last night is so kind and pleasant that I think it best to write what's on my mind, or rather what *was* on it when I read your article. For the rest, it is good to hear that you're re-reading, and are kind of dissatisfied with your own first views. I shall look with great interest for the new statement, and value it—whatever its conclusions—a good deal. I have worked hard at the little book, and am disposed (as you see) to take it more seriously than it deserves; and whatever is said about it comes home to me.

Always yours sincerely,

W. E. H.

P. S.—I am glad you quoted "The King of Babylon." It's my own favourite of all. I call it "a romance without adjectives" and the phrase (which represents an ideal) says everything. I wish I could do more of the same reach and tune.

At Wescam we enjoyed once more the pleasant ways of friendship that had grown about us, and especially our Sunday informal evening gatherings to which came all those with whom we were in

sympathy. Among the most frequent were Mrs. Mona Caird, the eager champion of women long before the movement passed into the militant hands of the suffragettes; Walter Pater, during his Oxford vacation; Dr. and Mrs. Garnett; John M. Robertson, who was living the "simple life" of a socialist in rooms close by; Richard Whiteing, then leader-writing for *The Daily News*, and author of the beautiful idyll *The Island*. Mathilde Blind—poetess novelist, who in youth had sat an eager disciple at the feet of Mazzini, came frequently, Ernest Rhys was writing poems and editing *The Camelot Classics* from the heights of Hampstead, and his wife, then Miss Grace Little, lived in the neighbourhood with her sisters, the eldest of whom, Lizzie Little, was a writer of charming verse. W. B. Yeats came in the intervals of wandering over Ireland in search of Folk tales; John Davidson had recently come to London, and was bitter over the hard struggle he was enduring; William Watson was a rare visitor. Another frequent visitor was Arthur Tomson the landscape painter, who came to us with an introduction from Mr. Andrew Lang. A warm friendship grew up between Arthur and ourselves, which was deepened by his second marriage with Miss Agnes Hastings, a girl-friend of ours, and lasted till his death in 1905. Mr. and Mrs. John M. Swan came occasionally, Mr. and Mrs. William Strang, we saw frequently, and Theodore Roussell was an ever welcome guest. Sir George Douglas came now and again from Kelso; Charles Mavor, editor of *The Art Review*, ran down occasionally from Glasgow. Other frequenters of our Sunday evenings were Richard Le Gallienne, whose *Book bills of Narcissus* was then recently published; Miss Alice Corkran, Mr. and Mrs. Todhunter, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Coleridge, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rinder,

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pennell. The Russian Nihilist Stepniak and his wife were a great interest to us. I remember on one occasion they told us that Stepniak intended to make a secret visit to Russia—as he had done before—that he was starting the next morning, and though every care would be taken in matter of disguise, the risks were so great that he and his wife always said farewell to one another as though they never would meet again.

Mrs. Caird's town house was close to us; and she, keenly interested—as my husband and I also were—in the subject of the legal position of women, had that spring written two articles on the Marriage question which were accepted by and published in *The Westminster Review* in July. Twelve years ago the possibilities of a general discussion on such subjects were very different to what exist now. The sensibilities of both men and women—especially of those who had no adequate knowledge of the legal inequalities of the Marriage laws nor of the abuses which were and are in some cases still the direct outcome of them—were disturbed and shocked by the plain statements put forward, by the passionate plea for justice, for freedom from tyrannous legal oppression, exercised consciously and unconsciously. Mrs. Caird's articles met with acute hostility of a kind difficult to understand now, and much misunderstanding and unmerited abuse was meted out to her. Nevertheless these brave articles, published in book form under the title of *The Morality of Marriage*, and the novels written by the same pen, have been potent in altering the attitude of the public mind in its approach to and examination of such questions, in making private discussion possible.

In the autumn of 1888 the monograph on Heine

was published in the *Great Writers Series* (Walter Scott); and the author always regarded it as the best piece of work of the kind he ever did. It seemed fitting that the writer of a life of Shelley should write one of Heine, for there is a kinship between the two poets. To their biographer Heine was the strangest and most fascinating of all the poets not only of one country and one century, but of all time and of all nations; he saw in the wayward brilliant poet "one of those flowers which bloom more rarely than the aloe —human flowers which unfold their petals but once, it may be, in the whole slow growth of humanity.... At his best Heine is a creature of controlled impulse; at his worst he is a creature of impulse uncontrolled. Through extremes he gained the golden mean of art: here is his *apologia*."

The book is an endeavour to handle the subject in an impartial spirit, to tell the story vividly, to give a definite impression of the strange personality, and in the concluding pages to summarise Heine's genius. But, "do what we will we cannot affiliate, we cannot classify Heine. When we would apprehend it his genius is as volatile as his wit.... Of one thing only can we be sure: that he is of our time, of our century. He is so absolutely and essentially modern that he is often antique....

"As for his song-motive, I should say it was primarily his *Lebenslust*, his delight in life: that love so intensely human that it almost necessarily involved the ignoring of the divine. Rainbow-hued as is his genius, he himself was a creature of earth. It was enough to live.... He would cling to life, even though it were by a rotten beam, he declared once in his extremity. And the poet of life he unquestionably is. There is a pulse in everything he writes: his is no galvanised existence. No parlour passions lead him

into the quicksands of oblivion....”

The author was gratified by appreciative letters from Dr. Richard Garnett and Mr. George Meredith:

3 St. Edmund’s Terrace,
Nov 11, 1888.

My dear Sharp,

I have now finished your Heine, and can congratulate you upon an excellent piece of biographical work. You are throughout perfectly clear and highly interesting, and, what is more difficult with your subject, accurate and impartial. Or, if there is any partiality it is such as it is becoming in one poet to enlist aid for another. With all one’s worship of Heine’s genius, it must be allowed that he requires a great deal of toleration. The best excuse to be made for him is that his faults were largely faults of race—and just now I feel amiably toward the Jews, for if you have seen the Athenæum you will have observed that I have fallen into the hands of the Philistines. Almost the only point in which I differ from you is as regards your too slight mention of Platen, who seems to me not only a master of form but a true though limited poet —a sort of German Matthew Arnold. Your kind notice of my translation from the Romanzen did not escape me. Something, perhaps, should have been said of James Thomson, the best English translator.

Believe me, my dear Sharp,
Most sincerely yours,
R. Garnett.

Box Hill, Dec. 10, 1887.

Dear Mr. Sharp,

Your Heine gave me pleasure. I think it competently done; and coming as a corrective to Stigund’s work, it brings the refreshment of the antidote. When I have the pleasure of seeing you we

will converse upon Heine. Too much of his—almost all of the Love poems drew both tenderness and tragic emotion from a form of sensualism, much of his wit too was wilful—a trick of the mind. Always beware of the devilish in wit: it has the obverse of an intellectual meaning, and it shows at the best interpretation, a smallness of range. Macmillan says that if they can bring out my book "Reading of Earth" on the 18th I may expect it. Otherwise you will not receive a copy until after Christmas.

Faithfully yours,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

Mr. Meredith wrote again after the publication of his poems:

BOX HILL, Feb. 15, 1888.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

It is not common for me to be treated in a review with so much respect. But your competency to speak on the art of verse gives the juster critical tone.

Of course you have poor J. Thomson's book. I have had pain in reading it. Nature needs her resources, considering what is wasted of her finest. That is to say, on this field—and for the moment I have eyes on the narrow rather than the wider. It is our heart does us this mischief. Philosophy can as little subject it as the Laws of men can hunt Nature out of women—artificial though we force them to be in their faces. But if I did not set Philosophy on high for worship, I should be one of the weakest.

Let me know when you are back. If in this opening of the year we have the South West, our country, even our cottage, may be agreeable to you. All here will be glad to welcome you and your wife for some days.

Yours very cordially,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

It was the late spring before we could visit Mr.

Meredith. The day of our going was doubly memorable to me, because as we went along the leafy road from Burford Bridge station we met Mr. and Mrs. Grant Allen—my first meeting with them—whose home was at that time in Dorking. Memorable, too, was the courteous genial greeting from our host and his charming daughter; and the many delightful incidents of that first week end visit. William and Mr. Meredith had long talks in the garden chalet on the edge of the wood. And in the evenings the novelist read aloud to us. On that occasion I think it was he read some chapters from "One of our Conquerors" on which he was working; another time it was from "The Amazing Marriage" and from "Lord Ormont and his Aminta." The reader's enjoyment seemed as great as that of his audience, and it interested me to hear how closely his own methods of conversation resembled, in wittiness and brilliance, those of the characters in his novels. Sometimes he turned a merciless play of wit on his listener; but my husband, who was as deeply attached to the man as he admired the writer, enjoyed these verbal duels in which he was usually worsted. The incident of the visit that charmed me most arose from my stating that I had never heard the nightingale. So on the Sunday afternoon we were taken to a stretch of woodland, "my woods of Westermain" the poet smilingly declared, and there, standing among the tree-boles in the late afternoon sun-glow I listened for the bird-notes as he described them to me until he was satisfied I heard aright.

The Xmas of 1888, and the following New Year's day we passed at Tunbridge Wells, with Mathilde Blind, in rooms overlooking the common. Many delightful hours were spent together in the evenings listening to one or other of the two poets reading

aloud their verse, or parts of the novels they had in process. Mathilde was writing her *Tarantella*; my husband had recently finished a boys' serial story for *Young Folk's Paper*, with a highly sensational plot entitled "The Secret of Seven Fountains," and was at work on a Romance of a very different order in which he then was deeply interested, though in later life he considered it immature in thought and expression. The boys' story was one of adventure, of life seen from a purely objective point of view. *The Children of To-morrow* was the author's first endeavour to give expression in prose to the more subjective side of his nature, to thoughts, feelings, aspirations he had hitherto suppressed; it is the direct forerunner of the series of romantic tales he afterward wrote as Fiona Macleod; it was also the expression of his attitude of revolt against the limitations of the accepted social system. The writing of the Monograph on Shelley had rekindled many ideas and beliefs he held in common with the earlier poet—ideas concerning love and marriage, viewed not from the standpoint of the accepted practical standard of morality, nor of the possible realisation by the average humanity of a more complex code of social morality, but viewed from the standpoint held by a minority of dreamers and thinkers who look beyond the present strictly guarded, fettered conditions of married life, to a time, when man and woman, equally, shall know that to stultify or slay the spiritual inner life of another human being, through the radical misunderstanding between alien temperaments inevitably tied to one another, is one of the greatest crimes against humanity. That the author knew how visionary for the immediate future were these ideas, which we at that time so eagerly discussed with a little group of intimate sympathetic

friends, is shown by the prefatory lines in the book:

> "Forlorn the way, yet with strange gleams of gladness;
> Sad beyond words the voices far behind.
> Yet we, perplext with our diviner madness,
> Must heed them not—the goal is still to find!
> What though beset by pain and fear and sorrow,
> We must not fail, we Children of To-morrow."

The Children of To-morrow called forth all manner of divergent opinions. It was called depressing by one critic, and out of touch with realities. Another considered the chief interest of the book to consist "in what may be called its aims. It is clearly an attempt toward greater truth in art and life." All agreed as to the power displayed in the descriptions of nature. The critic in *Public Opinion* showed discernment as to the author's intentions when he wrote "To our mind the delightful irresponsibility of this book, the calm determination which it displays that now, at least, the author means to please himself, to give vent to many a pent up feeling or opinion constitutes one of its greatest charms. This waywardness, the waywardness of a true artist, is shown on almost every page.... Mr. Sharp states his case with wonderful power and lucidity; he draws no conclusions—as an artist they do not concern him—he leaves the decision to the individual temperament."

Mathilde Blind wrote to the author:

> 1 ST. EDMUND'S TERRACE, N. W., 1889.
>
> DEAR CHILD OF THE FUTURE,
>
> You have indeed written a strange, weird, romantic tale with the sound of the sea running

through it like an accompaniment. Adama Acosta is a specially well-imagined and truthful character of a high kind; and the intermittent wanderings of his brain have something akin to the wailing notes of the instrument of which he is such a master. But it is in your conception of love—the subtle, delicate, ideal attraction of two beings inevitably drawn to each other by the finest elements of their being—that the charm of the story consists to my mind; on the other hand, you have succeeded in drawing a very realistic and vivid picture of the hard and handsome Lydia, with her purely negative individuality, and in showing the deadly effect which one person may exercise over another in married life—without positive outward wrongdoing which might lead to the divorce court. I agree with you in thinking that the end is the finest part of the Romance, especially the last scene where Dane and Sanpriel are in the wood under the old oak tree, where the voice of the rising storm with its ominous note of destiny is magnificently described. Such a passing away in the mid-most fire of passion on the wings of the elements has always seemed to me the climax of human happiness. But I fear the book is likely to rouse a good deal of opposition in many quarters for the daring disregard of the binding sanctity of the marriage relation. If I may speak quite openly and as a friend who would wish you to do yourself full justice and produce the best work that is in you, I wish you had given yourself more time to work out some of the situations which seem, to me at least, to lack a certain degree of precision and consistency. Thus, for example, Dane after discovering that Ford has been trying to murder him, and is making secret love to his wife, rushes off to the painter's studio evidently bent on some sort of quarrel or revenge, yet nothing comes of it, and afterwards we find the would-be murderer on outwardly friendly terms with the sculptor on board the house boat. I must tell you by the way how powerful I think the scene of the

dying horse in Ratho Sands and the murder of Lydia. I should also have liked to have heard a little more of the real aims and objects of “The Children of the Future” and would like to know whether such an association really exists among any section of the modern Jews; we must talk of that this evening or some other time when we meet. I hope to look in to-night with Sarrazin and Bunand who are coming to a little repast here first. Madox Brown has been reading your book with the greatest interest.

Yours ever,

MATHILDE BLIND.

CHAPTER IX

FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA

In the Spring of 1889 the Chair of Literature at University College, London, became vacant on the death of Professor Henry Morley; and many of William Sharp's friends urged him to stand for election. He was of two minds on the subject. His inclinations were against work of the kind, for, temperamentally, he had difficulty in regulating his life in accordance with strict routine. Born, as he would say, with the wandering wave in his blood, the fixed and the inevitable were antipathetic to him. He was, however, awake to the material importance of such a post, to the advantages of a steady income. Had he had himself only to consider he would not have given the proposal a thought; but he believed it to be his duty to attempt to secure the post for his wife's sake, though she was not of that opinion. Among the many friends who advocated his election were Robert Browning, George Meredith, Walter Pater, Theodore Watts Dunton, Alfred Austin, Dr. Richard Garnett, Prof. Minto, Hall Caine, Sir George Douglas, Aubrey De Vere, Mrs. Augusta Webster. When, however, the date of election drew near, he consulted his doctor and withdrew his candidature. The question, to him, had all along been one of

security of means versus freedom of action; and having done his duty in the matter, his relief was great that the decision left him in possession of his freedom.

For some time William Sharp had contemplated a visit to the United States, where he was well known as poet and critic, and had many friendly correspondents. So he considered the moment to be opportune. He decided to go; although he was forbidden to lecture in America, and very opportunely our friend Mrs. Caird asked me to accompany her to Austria—to the Sun-cure at Veldes in the Carpathian Alps. She and I were the first to leave, and eventually, my husband after his return from America joined me at Cologne and accompanied me home.

Meanwhile he made his preparations for a visit to Canada and New York, and just before starting paid a flying visit to Mr. George Meredith who had written to him:

BOX HILL, July 15, 1889.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

This would have been headed to your wife, but for the chances of her flying, and the letter after her. Tell her we are grieved to lose the pleasure her company would give, and trust to welcome her on her return. When she looks on Tyrol, let her strain an eye to see my heart on the topmost peak. We hope for your coming on Saturday.

Yours very truly,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

He looked forward to his American tour with keen delight. New experiences were ever alluring; he had the power of throwing himself heart and soul into every fresh enjoyment. Going by himself seemed

to promise chances of complete recovery of health; the unexplored and the unknown beckoned to him with promise of excitement and adventure.

As he wrote to Mr. Stedman: “I am a student of much else besides literature. Life in all its manifestations is of passionate interest for me, and I cannot rest from incessant study and writing. Yet I feel that I am but on the threshold of my literary life. I have a life-time of ambitious schemes before me; I may perhaps live to fulfil a tenth part of them.”

Mid-August found him in Canada. Fine as he considered the approach to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland impressed him more. At Halifax he was the guest of the Attorney General. He wrote to me “Mr. and Mrs. Longley were most kind, and so were all the many leading people to whom I was introduced. I was taken to the annual match of the Quoit Club, and was asked to present the Cup to the winner at the close, with a few words if I felt disposed. Partly from being so taken aback, partly from pleased excitement, and partly from despair, I lost all nervousness and made a short and (what I find was considered) humourous speech, so slowly and coolly spoken that I greatly admired it myself!”

At Halifax, which he considered “worth a dozen of the Newfoundland capital,” he was met by Professor Charles Roberts who had come “to intercept me so as to go off with him for a few days in Northern Scotia and across the Straits to Prince Edward Island. So, a few days later Prof. Roberts and I, accompanied for the first 100 miles by Mr. Longley, started for Pictou, which we reached after 5 hours most interesting journey. The Attorney General has kindly asked me to go a three days’ trip with him (some 10 days hence) through the famous Cape Breton district, with the lovely Bras D’Or lakes: and

later on he has arranged for a three days' moose-hunt among the forests of Southern Acadia, where we shall camp out in tents, and be rowed by Indian guides."

New Glasgow delighted him; he visited Windsor and Halifax: "I went with Charles Roberts and Bliss Carman through Evangeline's country. En route I travelled on the engine of the train and enjoyed the experience. Grand Pré delighted me immensely—vast meadows, with lumbering wains and the simple old Acadian life. The orchards were in their glory—and the apples delicious! At one farm house we put up, how you would have enjoyed our lunch of sweet milk hot cakes, great bowls of huckleberries and cream, tea, apples, etc.! We then went through the forest belt and came upon the great ocean inlet known as the "basin of Minas," and, leagues away the vast bulk of Blomidon shelving bough-like into the Sea...."

To E. A. S.:

(On the St. Lawrence),

12th Sept.

To-day has been a momentous birthday on the whole—and none the less so because I have been alone and, what is to me an infinite relief, quite unknown. I told no one about my Saguenay expedition till the last moment—and so there is nothing definite about me in the papers save that I "abruptly left St. John" (the capital of New Brunswick) and that I am to arrive in Quebec to-morrow. I sent you a card from Rivière du Loup, the northernmost township of the old Acadians, and a delightful place. I reached it early from Temiscouata (the Lake of Winding Water)—a journey of extreme interest and beauty, through a wild and as yet unsettled country. The track has only been open this summer. Before I reached its other end (the junction

of the St. John river with the Madawaska) I was heartily sick of New Brunswick, with its oven-like heat, its vast monotonous forests with leagues upon leagues of dead and dying trees, and its all present forest-fires. The latter have caused widespread disaster.... Several times we were scorched by the flames, but a few yards away—and had "to rush" several places. But once in the province of Quebec, and everything changed. The fires (save small desultory ones) disappeared: the pall of smoke lightened and vanished: and the glorious September foliage made a happy contrast to the wearisome hundreds of miles of decayed and decaying firs. It was a most glorious sunset—one of the grandest I have ever seen—and the colour of the vast Laurentian Mountain range, on the north side of the St. Lawrence, superb. It was dark when we reached the mouth of the Saguenay River—said to be the gloomiest and most awe-inspiring river in the world —and began our sail of close upon a hundred miles (it can be followed by canoes for a greater length than Great Britain). The full moon came up, and the scene was grand and solemn beyond words. Fancy fifty miles of sheer mountains, one after another without a valley-break, but simply cleft ravines. The deep gloom as we slowly sailed through the noiseless shadow brooding between Cape Eternity and Cape Trinity was indescribable. We anchored for some hours in "Ha! Ha! Bay," the famous landing place of the old discoverers. In the early morning we sailed out from Ha! Ha! Bay, and then for hours sailed down such scenery as I have never seen before and never expect to see again.... At Quebec I am first to be the guest of the well-known Dr. Stewart, and then of Mons. Le Moine at his beautiful place out near the Indian Village of Lorette and the Falls of Montmorenci—not far from the famous Plain of Abraham, where Wolfe and Montcalm fought, and an Empire lay in balance.

In New York, William was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Stedman at 44 East 26th Street, whence he wrote to me:

> " ... So much has happened since I wrote to you from Montreal that I don't see how I'm to tell you more than a fraction of it—particularly as I am seldom alone even for five minutes. Last week I left Montreal (after having shot the rapids, etc.) and travelled to Boston via the White Mountains, through the States of Vermont, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Boston is a beautiful place—an exceedingly fine city with lovely environs. Prof. A. S. Hardy ('Passe Rose,' etc.) was most kind.... Cambridge and Harvard University, are also very fine. I enjoyed seeing Longfellow's house (Miss L. still occupies it) and those of Emerson, Lowell, etc. I spent brief visits to Prof. Wright of Harvard, to Winsor the historian, etc. On Sunday afternoon I drove with A. S. H. to Belmont in Massachusetts, and spent afternoon with Howells, the novelist. He was most interesting and genial—I had the best of welcomes from the Stedmans. They are kindness personified. The house is lovely, and full of beautiful things and multitudes of books. I have already more invitations than I can accept: every one is most hospitable. I have already met Mr. Gilder, the poet, and editor of the 'Century'; Mr. Alden of 'Harpers'; Mr. Bowen, of the 'Independent'; R. H. Stoddart, the 'father' of recent American letters; and heaven knows how many others. I have been elected honorary member of the two most exclusive clubs in N. Y., the 'Century' and 'The Players,' Next week there is to be a special meeting at the Author's Club, and I am to be the guest of the evening...."

NEW YORK, 1:10:89.

"Can only send you a brief line by this mail. I enjoyed my visit to Mr. Alden at Metuchen in New Jersey very much. Among the new friends I care

most for are a married couple called Janvier. They are true Bohemians and most delightful. He is a writer and she an artist ... and both have travelled much in Mexico. We dined together at a Cuban Café last night. He gave me his vol. of stories called 'Colour Studies' and she a little sketch of a Mexican haunted house—both addressed to 'William Sharp. Recuerdo di Amistad y carimo.'"

On leaving New York he wrote to his kind host:

Oct. 8, 1889.

MY DEAR STEDMAN,

This, along with some flowers, will reach you on the morning of your birthday, while I am far out on the Atlantic. May the flowers carry to your poet-soul a breath of that happy life which seems to inspire them—and may your coming years be full of the beauty and fragrance of which they are the familiar and exquisite symbols. You have won my love as well as my deep regard and admiration. And so I leave you to understand how earnestly and truly I wish you all good.

Once more let me tell you how deeply grateful I am to you and Mrs. Stedman for all your generous kindness to me. We have all, somewhere, sometime, our gardens, where—as Hafiz says—the roses have a subtler fragrance, and the nightingales a rarer melody; and my memory of *my* last "fortunate Eden" will remain with me always....

I shall always think of you, and Mrs. Stedman, and Arthur, as of near and dear relatives. Yes, we *are* of one family.

Farewell, meanwhile,

Ever your affectionate,

WILLIAM SHARP.

This note drew from the American poet the following reply:

MY DEAR SHARP,

'Tis quite surprising—the severity wherewith you have been missed, in this now very quiet household, since you looked down upon its members from the Servia's upper-deck, very much like Campanini in Lohengrin when the Swan gets fairly under way! The quiet that settled down was all the stiller, because you and we had to get through with so much in your ten days *chez nous*. Lay one consolation to heart: you won't have to do *this* again; when you return, 'twill be to a city of which you have deduced a general idea, from the turbid phantasmagoria of your days and nights here. The conclusions on our side were that we had formed a liking for you such as we have retained after the visits of very few guests from the Old World or the New. Well as I knew your books and record I had the vaguest notion of your *self*. 'Tis rare indeed that a clever writer or artist strengthens his hold upon those who admire his work, by personal intimacy. What can I say more than to say that we thoroughly enjoyed your visit; that we think immeasurably more of you than before you came; that you are upon our list of friends to whom we are attached for life—for good and ill. We know our own class, in taste and breeding, when we find them—which is not invariably among our different guests. Nor can one have your ready art of charm and winning, without a good heart and comradeship under it all: even though intent (and rightly) on nursing his career and making all the points he has a right to make—Apropos of this—I may congratulate you on the impression you made here on the men and women whom you chanced at this season to meet; that which you left with *us* passes the border of respect, and into the warm and even lowland of affection.

That is all I now shall say about our acquaintanceship. Being an Anglo-Saxon, 'tis not once in half a decade that I bring myself to say so much.

And now, my dear boy, what shall I say of the charming surprise with which you and your florist so punctually greeted my birthday? At 56 ("oh, woeful when!") one is less than ever used to the melting mood, but you drew a tear to my eyes. The roses are still all over our house, and the letter is your best autograph in my possession. We look forward to seeing you again with us, of course—because, if for no other reason, you and yours always have one home ready for you when in the States, at least while a roof is over our heads, even though the Latin wolf be howling at our door. Mrs. Stedman avows that I must give you her love, and joins with me in all the words of this long letter.

Affectionately your friend,

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

On our return to Hampstead we resumed our Sunday evening gatherings, and among other frequenters came Mr. and Mrs. Henry Harland, with an introduction from Mr. W. D. Howells. From Mr. George Meredith came a charming welcome home.

BOX HILL (DORKING),

Nov. 22, 1889.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I am with all my heart glad of your return and the good news you give of yourself and your wife. He who travels comes back thrice the man he was, and if you do not bully my poor Stayathoma, it is in magnanimity. The moccasins are acceptable for their uses and all that they tell me. Name a time as early as you can to come and pour out your narrative. There is little to attract, it's true—a poor interior and fog daily outside. We cast ourselves on the benevolence of friends. Give your wife my best regards. I have questions for her about Tyrol and Carinthia.

Hard at work with my "Conqueror," who has me

for the first of his victims.

England has not done much in your absence; there will be all to hear, nothing to relate, when you come.

Yours warmly,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

We went. As we walked across the fields to the cottage Mr. Meredith came through his garden gate to meet us, raised high his hat and voiced a welcome, "Hail daughter of the Sun!"

CHAPTER X

BROWNING

The Joseph Severn Memoirs

To William Sharp, as to many others, the closing days of 1899 brought a deep personal sorrow in the death of Robert Browning. The younger man had known him for several years, and had always received a warm welcome from the Poet in his house in Warwick Crescent which, with its outlook on the water of broad angle of the canal with its little tree clad island, he declared laughingly, reminded him of

Venice. And kindly he was too, when, coming to the first of our "At Homes" in South Hampstead, he assured me with a genial smile "I like to come, because I know young people like to have me."

"It is needless to dwell upon the grief everywhere felt and expressed for the irreparable loss" (W. S. wrote in his monograph on Browning). The magnificent closing lines of Shelley's "Alastor" have occurred to many a mourner, for gone indeed was "a surpassing Spirit." The superb pomp of the Venetian funeral, the solemn grandeur of the interment in Westminster Abbey, do not seem worth recording: so insignificant are all these accidents of death made by the supreme fact itself. Yet it is fitting to know that Venice has never in modern times afforded a more impressive sight than those of craped processional gondolas following the high flower-strewn famous barge through the thronged water-ways and out across the lagoon to the desolate Isle of the Dead: that London has rarely seen aught more solemn than the fog-dusked Cathedral spaces, echoing at first with the slow tramp of the pall-bearers, and then with the sweet aerial music swaying upward the loved familiar words of the "Lyric Voice" hushed so long before. Yet the poet was as much honoured by those humble friends, Lambeth artificers and a few working-women, who threw sprays of laurel before the hearse—by that desolate, starving, woe-weary gentleman, shivering in his thread-bare clothes, who seemed transfixed with a heart-wrung though silent emotion, ere he hurriedly drew from his sleeve a large white chrysanthemum, and throwing it beneath the coffin as it was lifted upward, disappeared in the crowd, which closed again like the sea upon this lost wandering wave."

But it was nevertheless difficult to realise that the

stimulating presence had passed away and the cheerful voice was silent: “It seems but a day or two that I heard from the lips of the dead poet a mockery of death’s vanity—a brave assertion of the glory of life. ‘Death, death! It is this harping on death I despise so much,’” he remarked with emphases of gesture as well as of speech—the inclined head and body, the right hand lightly placed upon the listener’s knee, the abrupt change in the inflection of the voice, all so characteristic of him—“this idle and often cowardly as well as ignorant harping! Why should we not change like everything else? In fiction, in poetry, in so much of both, French as well as English, and, I am told, in American art and literature, the shadow of death—call it what you will, despair, negation, indifference—is upon us. But what fools who talk thus! Why, *amico mio*, you know as well as I that death is life, just as our daily, our momentarily dying body is none the less alive and ever recreating new forces of existence. Without death, which is our crapelike churchyardy word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of what we call life. Pshaw! it is foolish to argue upon such a thing even. For myself, I deny death as an end of everything. Never say of me that I am dead!”

On the 4th January, 1890, W. S. wrote to Mr. Thomas A. Janvier:

London.

Many thanks for the *Aztec Treasure House*, which opens delightfully and should prove a thrilling tale. I don’t know how *you* feel, but for myself I shall never again publish serially till I have completed the story aforehand. You will have seen that I have been asked and have agreed to write the critical monograph on Browning for the *Great Writer’s Series*. This involves a harassing postponement of other work, and

considerable financial loss, but still I am glad to do it.

The Harlands spent New Year's Day with us, and the Champagne was not finished without some of it being quaffed in memory of the dear and valued friends oversea. You, both of you, must come over this spring.

Ever yours,
WILLIAM SHARP.

With each New Year a Diary was begun with the intention of its being carefully continued throughout the months, an intention however that inevitably was abandoned as the monotony of the fulfilment palled upon the writer.

The Diary for 1890 begins with a careful record of work and events, noted daily till mid February when it ceases, to be resumed more fitfully in September and October. The year is prefaced with the motto:

"C'est à ce lendemain sevère que tout artiste sérieux doit songer."—*Sainte Beuve.*

The following more important entries tell where and how the monograph was written and what other work he had on hand:

"*Jan. 2nd.*—Wrote the first 3 or 4 pages (tentative) of 'Browning': or rather the retrospective survey. Had a present of a fine Proof Etching from Ford Madox Brown of his Samson and Delilah (framed) as 'A New Year's Card.' Also from Theodore Roussel, three fine proof Etchings, also autograph copies of books from H. Harland, Mrs. Louise C. Moulton, and 'Maxwell Gray.' Also a copy of his *Balzac* from Wedmore. In the evening there dined with us Mrs. E. R. Pennell (Mr. P. unable to come). H. Harland and Mrs. Harland: Mona and Caird.

Roussel could not come till later. Had a most delightful evening. 'The psychic sense of rhythm is the fundamental factor in each and every art.'"—W. S.

"*Jan. 2nd.*—(1) Wrote Chapter of *The Ordeal of Basil Hope*. (2) Article on Haggard's new book for *Young Folk's Paper*. 'The truest literary criticism is that which sees that nowhere, at no time, in any conceivable circumstances is there any absolute lapse of intellectual activity, so long as the nation animated thereby is not in its death throes.'"—W. S.

"What exquisite music there is in the lines of Swinburne's in 'A Swimmer's Dream' (in this month's *New Review*)."

"*Jan. 3rd.*—(1) Wrote chapter of *Ordeal of Basil Hope*. Finished it by 12.30. Then went to R. Academy Press-View and spent two hours or so in the Galleries. While walking back to Club from Charing Cross thought out some opening sentences for *Browning*, leading to the wave-theory, beginning—'In human history, waves of intellectual activity concur with other dynamic movements. It used to be a formula of criticism, etc.' (wrote down a couple of Pages at Club). 'Death is a variation, a note of lower or higher insistence in the rhythmical sequence of Life.'"—W. S.

"*Jan. 4th.*—(1) Wrote article of 2,500 words upon Balzac (for *The Scottish Leader*). (2) Short 'London Correspondence' for *G. H.* The profoundest insight cannot reach deeper than its own possibilities of depth. The physiognomy of the soul is never visible in its entirety—barely ever even its profile. The utmost we can expect to produce (perhaps even to perceive, in the most quintessential moment), is a partially faithful, partially deceptive silhouette. Since no human being has ever yet seen his or her own soul, absolutely impartially and in all its rounded completeness of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of what is temporal and perishable and what is germinal and essential, how can we expect

even the subtlest analyst to depict other souls than his own. Even in a savage there must be dormant possibilities, animal and spiritual traits of all kinds, which could to a deeper than any human vision (as we can conceive it) so colour and modify an abstract 'replica' as to make it altogether unlike the picture we should draw."—W. S.

"*Jan. 5th.*—The first thing the artist should cultivate if not strongly dowered in this respect by Nature, is Serenity. A true Serenity—what Wilfred Meynell, writing of Browning, in the *Athenæum* of Friday, calls 'detachment'—is one of the surest inspirers and preservatives of that clarified psychic emotion which, in compelled or propelled expressional activity, is the cause of all really creative work. This true serenity is, of course, as far removed from a false isolation of spirit or a contemptuous indifference, as from constant perturbation about trifles and vulgar anxiety for self."—W. S.

"*Jan. 6th.*—Felt very unwell this morning.... Heard from Dr. Garnett of the death last night of Dr. Westland Marston. (1) Wrote a portion of second series of 'Fragments from the Lost Journal of Piero di Cosimo' (one of a series of Imaginary portraits I am slowly writing for magazine publication in the first instance). (2) 'London Letter' Reminiscences of Dr. Marston, etc."

"*Jan. 10th.*—Wrote a chapter of *Basil Hope*. In evening we went to Mona's. A pretty large gathering. Roussel told me he wanted to paint my portrait, and asked me to give him sittings. Some one was speaking of a poem by Browning being superlatively fine because of its high optimism and ethical message. The question is not one of weighty message, but of artistic presentation. To praise a poem because of its optimism is like commending a peach because it loves the sunshine, rather than because of its distinguishing bloom and savour. To urge that a poem is great because of its high message

is almost as uncritical as it would be obviously absurd to aver that a postman is illustrious because of some epic or history he may carry in his bag. In a word, the first essential concern of the artist must be with his vehicle. In the instance of a poet, this vehicle is language emotioned to the white-heat of rhythm."

"*Jan. 12th.*—Wrote first portion of Elegiac Poem on 'Browning' commencing:

There is darkness everywhere;
  Scarce is the city limned
    In shadow on the lagoon.
No wind in the heavy air.
  The stars themselves are dimmed,
    And a mist veils the moon.

"After lunch took T. Mavor to Alfred East's to see his Japanese pictures. Then I took T. M. to John M. Swan's Studio. Then we went to spend half an hour with Stepniak and his wife at 13 Grove Gardens."

"*Jan. 13th.*—Late in settling down, and then disinclined to write except in verse. Wrote the second and final part of the Elegaic Browning Poem for *Belford's Magazine*. It is not often that I indulge in inversions: but the gain is sometimes noticeable. I think it is in this stanza:

Alas, greatness is not, nor is
  There aught that is under the sun,
    Nor any mortal thing,
Neither the heights of bliss
  Nor the depths of evil done,
    Unshadowed by Death's wing."

He soon found that it was impossible to write the monograph in London—with its ceaseless demands and distractions. Under the pressure of much work he became so unwell that we realised he could not finish the book under existing conditions, therefore

arranged that he should leave me in charge of work at home and he should go to Hastings and devote himself mainly to his *Browning*. On the 18th he records, from rooms overlooking the sea "Blew a gale at night. The noise of the sea like a vast tide in a hollow echoing cavern: and a shrill screaming wail in the wind. Began my *Life of Browning*. To bed at 12."

Then follows a record of the work done day by day: on the 19th, twelve printed pages: on the 20th ten pages: on the 21st four only because he lunched with Coventry Patmore who was then residing at Hastings. On the 22nd, thirteen pages; on the 23rd, eleven pages, and five letters.

> *Jan. 26th* has this note: "We can no more predict Browning's place in literature as it will be esteemed by posterity than we can specify the fauna and flora of a planet whose fires have not yet sufficiently cooled to enable vegetation to grow."

His stay at Hastings was rendered pleasant by the neighbourliness of Coventry Patmore with whom he had many long talks, and by occasional visits to Miss Betham Edwards who had a house on the hill beyond the old castle.

He returned to town at the beginning of February.

On the 4th he wrote "the first scene of a Play (to be called either "The Lover's Tragedy," or "The Tower of Silence") which was afterward rewritten and published in *Vistas* as "A Northern Night."

The Diary continues:

> "*8th February*. Began about 10.30. (1) Wrote the rest of Imaginary Journal (Piero di Cosimo) i. e. about 2,000 words. In evening posted it to Mavor for March issue of *The Art Review*. (2) Wrote long London Letter for G. H. (2,000 words). (3) Began at

9.30 to do *Browning*. Including quotations did 10 printed pages. Re-read the early books of 'The Ring and the Book.' To bed at 2.30. Tired somewhat after writing to-day, in all, about 7,000 words (less Browning's quotations).

"*Sunday 9th.* Breakfast at eleven—Worked at Browning matter till 5 (in bed). In evening Mona, and Mathilde came in and Frank Rinder, Ernest Rhys, etc. Wrote *Young Folk's Paper* article. Read up till about 3 A.M.

10th. Worked six hours on end at Browning material. Between tea and dinner wrote Chap. 18 of *Ordeal of Basil Hope*; after dinner wrote Chap. 19. At 10 went up to Mona's to fetch Lill. Egmont Hake there, W. Earl Hodgson and Miss Shedlock, Mathilde Blind.

11th. At British Museum all day, working at 'Odes.' (This selection of Odes in the *Canterbury Poets*.)

In evening wrote six p. p. of *Browning*.

12th. (1) In first part of day wrote 6 pages of *Browning*. (2) Short London Letter for G. H. From 5 to 8 I wrote Chap. 20 of *Basil Hope*. (4) After dinner (between 9 and 12.30) wrote 8 more pages of *Browning* (14 in all to-day).

13th. Wrote 12 pages of *Browning* and Chap. XXI of *Basil Hope*.

"*February 14th.*—In morning, late afternoon and evening (from 9-12) wrote in all 18 printed pages of *Browning*, or, including quotation, 21."

Here the Diary abruptly ends. I do not recollect on what date the *Browning* was finished, but it was published in the early autumn. And I have no recollection as to what became of *The Ordeal of Basil Hope*, whether or not it ever appeared serially, but I think not. It never was issued in book form—and

from the time we gave up the house in Goldhurst Terrace he never gave it a thought. It was characteristic of him that when a piece of work was finished or discarded, it passed wholly out of his mind, for his energies were always centred on his work on hand and on that projected.

He was a careful student of the progress of contemporary literatures—especially French (including Belgian) Italian and American—and during the spring and summer he wrote a long article on American literature for *The National Review*, an article on D'Annunzio for *The Fortnightly*. He also prepared a volume in English of selected Essays of St. Beuve for which he wrote a careful critical Preface.

The three years at Hampstead had been happy and successful. William had regained health; and had a command of work that made the ways of life pleasant. We had about us a genial sympathetic group of friends, and were in touch with many keen minds of the day. Temperamentally he could work or play with equal jest and enjoyment; he threw himself whole-heartedly into whatever he did. Observant, keenly intuitive, he cared to come into contact with all kinds and types of men and women; cared continually to test the different minds and temperaments he came across, providing always that they had a vital touch about them, and were not comatosely conventional. Curious about life, he cared incessantly to experiment; restless and never satisfied (I do not mean dissatisfied) he constantly desired new fields for this experimentation. Therefore, happy though he had been at Wescam, successful as that experiment had proved, he felt it had served its turn and he longed for different circumstances, different environment, new possibilities in which to attempt to give fuller

expression of himself. He realised that nothing more would happen under the then existing conditions, satisfactory though they seemed externally; that indeed the satisfactoriness was a chain that was winding round him and fettering him to a form of life that was becoming rigid and monotonous, and, therefore, paralysing to all those inner impulses. His visit to America had re-awakened the desire to wander. So we gave up our house, stored our furniture, and planned to go abroad for the first winter and leave the future "in the lap of the Gods"; for was he not "of the unnumbered clan that know a longing that is unquiet as the restless wave ..." the "deep hunger for experience, even if it be bitter, the longing for things known to be unattainable, the remembrance that strives for rebirth." That summer he wrote to Mr. Stedman:

" ... You will ere this have received the copy of the little book of *Great Odes: English and American* which I sent to you. I think I told you that your own beautiful 'Ode to Pastoral Romance' has appealed to many people, and will, I hope and believe, send new readers to you, among the new generation, as a poet. Well, we are breaking up our home, and are going to leave London for a long time—probably for ever as a fixed 'residentz platz.' Most of my acquaintances think I am very foolish thus to withdraw from the 'thick of the fight' just when things are going so well with me, and when I am making a good and rapidly increasing income—for I am giving up nearly every appointment I hold, and am going abroad, having burned my ships behind me, and determined to begin literary life anew. But, truly enough, wisdom does not lie in money making—not for the artist who cares for his work at any rate. I am tired of so much pot-boiling, such increasing bartering of literary

merchandise: and wish to devote myself entirely—or as closely as the fates will permit—to work in which my heart is. I am buoyant with the belief that it is in me to do something both in prose and verse far beyond any hitherto accomplishment of mine: but to stay here longer, and let the net close more and more round me, would be fatal. Of course I go away at a heavy loss. My income will at once drop to zero, and even after six months or so will scarce have risen a few degrees above that awkward limit—though ultimately things may readjust themselves. Yet I would rather—I am ready—I should say *we* are ready —to live in the utmost economy if need be. We shall be none the less happy: for my wife, with her usual loving unselfishness and belief in me, is as eager as I am for the change, despite all the risks. Among the younger writers few have the surely not very high courage necessary to give up something of material welfare for the sake of art. As for us, we are both at heart Bohemians—and are well content if we can have good shelter, enough to eat, books, music, friends, sunshine and free nature—all of which we can have with the scantiest of purses. Perhaps I should be less light-hearted in the matter if I thought that our coming Bohemian life might involve my wife in hard poverty when my hour comes, but fortunately her future is assured. So henceforth, in a word, I am going to take down the board

WILLIAM SHARP
Literary Manufacturer
(All kinds of jobs undertaken)

and substitute:

WILLIAM SHARP
Given up Business: Moved to Bohemia.

Publishers and Editors Need not Apply.
Friends can write to W. S. % “Drama” “Fiction” or
“Poetry,”
Live-as-you-will Quarter, Bohemia.

This day week we leave our house for good. My wife and I then go into Hampshire to breathe the hay and the roses for a week at a friend’s place, 7 miles across the Downs north of Winchester: then back to London to stay with our friend, Mrs. Mona Caird, till about the 20th of July. About that date we go to Scotland, to my joy, till close on the end of September. Thereafter we return to London for a week or so, and then go abroad. We are bound first for the lower Rhineland, and intend to stay at Heidelberg (being cheap, pretty, thoroughly German, with good music and a good theatre) for about two months. Then, about the beginning of December, we go to Rome, where we intend to settle: climatic, financial, and other considerations will decide whether we remain there longer than six months, but six ideal months at least we hope for. *Mihi sex menses satis sunt vitæ septimum Orco spondeo.*

That summer we went to Clynder on the Gareloch, Argyll, in order to be near my husband’s old friend, Dr. Donald Macleod, who, as he records in his diary “sang to me with joyous abandonment a Neapolitan song, and asked me to send him a MS. from Italy for *Good Words*.” While we were in the West we made acquaintance with the poet-editor of *The Yorkshire Herald*, George Cotterell, who became a dear and valued friend. I cannot recall if it were in the early summer of 1889 or 1890 that my husband was first approached on the subject of the *Joseph Severn Memoirs*, but I remember the circumstance.

We spent a week-end in Surrey with some old friends of my mother, Sir Walter and Lady Hughes, and one morning Mr. Walter Severn, the painter, walked over to luncheon. He spoke about my husband's *Life of Rossetti*, then of the quantity of unpublished MSS. he and his family had written by and relating to his father, Joseph Severn, "the friend of Keats." Finally he proposed that his listener should take over the MSS., put them in form and write a Life of Severn, with, as the special point of literary interest, his father's devoted friendship with and care of the dying poet. After considerable deliberation, W. S. agreed to undertake the work, and arrangements were made with Messrs. Samson Low to publish it. The preparing of this Memoir brought him into pleasant relationship not only with Mr. Walter Severn, and with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, but also with Ruskin, who he visited later at Coniston, where he was delighted, among other things, with the fine collection of minerals and stones that was one of Ruskin's hobbies.

The preparation of *The Joseph Severn Memoirs* necessarily entailed correspondence with members and friends of that family, among others with W. W. Story, the sculptor, who sent him the following information:

"I knew Mr. Severn at Rome and frequently met and saw him but I can recall nothing which would be of value to you. He was, as you know, a most pleasant man—and in the minds of all is associated with the memory of Keats by whose side he lies in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome. When the bodies were removed, as they were several years ago, and laid side by side, there was a little funeral ceremony and I made an address on the occasion in honour and commemoration of the two friends. I remember we

then had hoped that Lord Houghton would have been able to be present as he had promised. But he was taken ill in the East, where he was then journeying, and I had to express the fear lest the ceremony might be a commemoration not only of two but of the three friends so intimately associated together. However, Houghton did recover from the attack and came afterward to Rome, sadly broken."

Early in October my husband and I crossed to Antwerp and stopped at Bonn. The Rhine disappointed William's expectations. He wrote to a friend: "The real charm of the Rhine, beyond the fascination that all rivers and riverine scenery have for most people, is that of literary and historical romance. The Rhine is in this respect the Nile of Europe: though probably none but Germans feel thus strongly. For myself I cannot but think it ought not to be a wholly German river, but from every point of view be the Franco-German boundary.... Germany has much to gain from a true communion with its more charming neighbour. The world would jog on just the same if Germany were annihilated by France, Russia and Italy: but the disappearance of brilliant, vivacious, intellectual France would be almost as serious a loss to intellectual Europe, as would be to the people at large the disappearance of the Moon."

From Rome he wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

Dec., 1890.

" ... Well, we were glad to leave Germany. Broadly, it is a joyless place for Bohemians. It is all beer, coarse jokes, coarse living, and domestic tyranny on the man's part, subjection on the woman's—on the one side: pedantic learning, scientific pedagogism, and mental *ennui*; on the other: with, of course, a fine leavening *somewhere* of the salt of life. However, it is only fair to say that we

were not there at the best season in which to see the blither side of Germans and German life. I saw a good deal of the southern principalities and kingdoms—the Rhine provinces, Baden, Würtemberg, and Bavaria. Of course Heidelberg, where we stayed six wet weeks, is the most picturesque of the residential places (towns like Frankfort-am-Main and Mannheim are only for merchants and traders, though they have music "galore"), but I would rather stay at Stuttgart than any I saw. It is wonderfully animated and pleasing for a German town, and has a charming double attraction both as a mediæval city and as a modern capital. There, too, I have a friend: the American novelist, Blanche Willis Howard (author of *Guenn*, *The Open Door*, etc.), who is now the wife of the Court-Physician to the King of Würtemberg and rejoices in the title "Frau Hof-Arzt von Teuffel." Dr. von Teuffel himself is one of the few Germans who seem to regard women as equals.

"But what a relief it was to be in Italy again, though not just at first, for the weather at Verona was atrocious, and snow lay thick past Mantua to Bologna. But once the summit of the Apennines was reached, and the magnificent and unique prospect of Florentine Tuscany lay below, flooded in sunshine and glowing colour (though it was in the second week of December) we realised that at last we were in Italy.... When we came to Rome we had at first some difficulty in getting rooms which at once suited our tastes and our pockets. But now we are settled in an "apartment" of 3-1/2 rooms, within a yard or so of the summit of the Quirinal Hill. The 1/2 is a small furnished corridor or ante-room: the comfortable *salotto*, is at once our study, drawing-room, and parlour.

"We have our coffee and our fruit in the morning: and when we are in for lunch our old landlady gives us delightful colazioni of maccaroni and tomatoes, or spinach and lentils, or eggs and something else, with

roasted chestnuts and light wine and bread. We have our dinner sent in from a trattoria.

"In a sense, I have been indolent of late: but I have been thinking much, and am now, directly or indirectly, occupied with several ambitious undertakings. Fiction, other imaginative prose, and the drama (poetic and prose), besides a lyrical drama, and poetry generally, would fain claim my pen all day long. As for my lyrical drama—which is the only poetic work not immediately modern in theme—which is called 'Bacchus in India'; my idea is to deal in a new and I hope poetic way with Dionysos as the Joy-Bringer, the God of Joyousness. In the first part there is the union of all the links between Man and the World he inhabits: Bacchus goes forth in joy, to give his serene message to all the world. The second part, 'The Return,' is wild disaster, and the bitterness of shame: though even there, and in the Epilogue, will sound the clarion of a fresh Return to Joy. I transcribe and enclose the opening scene for you—as it at present stands, unrevised. The 'lost God' referred to in the latter part is really that deep corrosive Melancholy whom so many poets and artists—from Dante and Durer to our own time—have dimly descried as a terrible Power.

"At the moment I am most of all interested in my blank-verse tragedy. It deals with a most terrible modern instance of the scriptural warming as to the sins of the father being visited upon his children: an instance where the father himself shares the doom and the agony. Then I have also schemed out, and hope soon to get on with, a prose play, dealing with the deep wrong done to women by certain existing laws. Among other prose books (fiction) which I have "on the stocks" nothing *possesses* me more than a philosophical work which I shall probably publish either anonymously or under a pseudonym, and, I hope, before next winter. How splendid it is to be alive! O if one could only crush into a few vivid years the scattered fruit of wasted seasons. There is

such a host of things to do: such a bitter sparsity of time, after bread-and-butter making, to do them in—even to dream of them!"

These various schemes planned mentally were never realised. William constantly projected and of the roughly drafted out possible work that absorbed him during its conception, but was put aside when a more dominating idea demanded full expression. "Bacchus in India" remained a fragment. Neither the tragedy nor that prose play was finished, and the philosophical work was never begun. A new impulse came, new work grew out of the impressions of that Roman winter which swept out of his mind all other cartooned work.

CHAPTER XI

ROME

Sospiri di Roma

Winter in Rome was one long delight to the emancipated writer. It amply fulfilled even his optimistic anticipation. He revelled in the sunshine

and the beauty; he was in perfect health; his imagination was quickened and worked with great activity. We had about us a little group of friends, who, like ourselves, intended to live quietly and simply. Among these were Mrs. Caird who had come abroad for her health; Sir Charles Holroyd, who had a studio in the Via Margoutta, and Mr. and Mrs. Elihu Vedder. Mrs. Wingate Rinder joined us for three weeks, and with her my husband greatly enjoyed long walks over the Campagna and expeditions to the little neighbouring hill towns. His Diary for the beginning of 1891 was kept with creditable regularity, and contains a record of some of these expeditions and of work done in Rome, in particular of the dates on which the poems of *Sospiri di Roma* were written. From it I have selected entries.

"*Jan. 2nd.* ... Read through and revised 'Bacchus in India.' Added the (I think good) adjective 'sun-sparkled wood...."

Poetry is a glorious rebirth of prose. When a beautiful thought can be uttered in worthy prose: best so. But when it moves through the mind in music, and shapes itself to a lyric rhythm, then it should find expression in poetry. The truest poets are those who can most exquisitely capture, and concentrate in a few words, this haunting rhythm.

Jan. 3rd. The morning broke well, though not so promisingly as yesterday.... Caught the 9 A.M. train for Albano-Laziale. Marnio is a fine and picturesque hill-city. After passing it we admired the view of the Lake of Albano, with its abrupt variations of light and profound shadow. Arrived at Albano we walked by the way of the Viaduct to L'Ariccia, with lovely views of the Campagna to the right: of Monte Cavo and Rocca di Papa to the left. Then on by a lovely road to Genzano. Having gone through the lower part and out again into the Campagna we turned

southward, and in due time reached the high ground, with its olive-orchards, looking down upon the Lake of Nemi. It looked lovely in its grey-blue stillness, with all the sunlit but yet sombre winterliness around. Nemi, itself, lay apparently silent and lifeless, 'a city of dream,' on a height across the lake. One could imagine that Nemi and Genzano had once been the same town, and had been riven asunder by a volcano. The lake-filled crater now divides these two little hill-set towns.... Walked through Albano to the N.W. gate, past the ancient tomb, and along the beautiful ilex-bordered road leading to Castel-Gandolfo. Saw two Capuchin friars with extraordinary faces. They fitted the scene. Magnificent views of the Campagna, tinted with a faint pink-grey mist: of Ostea, etc.: and of the strange dreamful, partially sunlit Tyrrhene sea. Then through Castel Gandolfo, with lovely views of Lake Albano. Broke our fast with some apples. Down the steep front till we joined the road just above the little station, where we caught the train 10 minutes later. The Aqua Felice and Claudian Aqueducts seen to great advantage in returning across the Campagna to Rome.

Jan. 5th. A fine morning, with a delicate hint of Spring in the air.... Caught the train for Champino, near Frascati. The officials at the station seemed amazed at our descending there. No one ever does so, it seems! There was literally no regular way out of the station, and when I asked how we were to get out the man did not know. Neither he nor the clerk, nor the others who gathered round knew the road back to Rome! At last some one from the train suggested that if we struck across country we would come to the Via Appia. We had a pleasant walk across a barren part of the Campagna intersected by railway cuttings, and at last came to a place called Frattochie, whence a road led us to the Via Appia Nuova. From this again we struck across a field and came upon the Via Appia Antica, adown which we

had a splendid and absolutely solitary walk. We saw no one but a few shepherds at a distance, with their large white dogs and sheep. Often stopped among the ruins, or at the top of one of the grassy tombs to hear the wind among the pines, along the grass, or in the crevices of the wall. A few drops of rain fell as we neared the tomb of Cecilia Metella, and soon the rain-storm, which we had watched approaching across the Campagna, came on. The first three wayside *trattorie* we came to were shut, but in the fourth, a peasant's resort, we got some bread, and white and poor Marino. We shared some of the bread with a large dog, and gave some wine to a malarious-looking poor devil of a labourer. Returned by the Gate of San Sebastiano.

Jan. 8th. ... Bought *L'Evolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature* by Ferdinand Brunetière; Roux's book on Italian Literature; Pierre Loti's *Mariage de Loti*. After dinner copied out 'Rebirth' (Spring's Advent) to send to *Belford's*, and 'The Sheik' for *N. Y. Independent*.

This forenoon the house nearly opposite fell in. We saw one man brought out dead. Seven others were said to be buried in the ruins. The King came later on and himself helped one of the wounded out and took him to the hospital.

Jan. 9th. Wet and rain. The Campagna covered with snow. In the forenoon I wrote four more of my 'Ebb and Flow' Series of Sea Poems —'Phosphorescence before Storm'—'Tempest Music'—'Dead Calm: Noon' and 'Dead Calm: Midnight.' The others were written some on the French coast some on the English in 1887. 'Tempest-Music' and the two 'Dead Calm' are as good if not better than any in the series. In all the latter I care most for the 'Swimmer at Sunrise' and 'The Dead-Calm-Noon': also for 'Tempest Music.'

... After dinner read to Lill for a bit including the prose version (outline) of my "Lilith."

To-day the anniversary of the Death of Victor Emmanuel, 13 years ago. The Italians idolise his memory, and call him "The Father of the Country." He is rapidly becoming a Presiding Deity. 10th rewrote and greatly improved "Phosphorescence." Its two opening lines, originally,

> "As hill winds and sun and rains inweave a veil
> Of lichen round vast boulders on the mountain side."

were out of keeping in imagery with the rest: and in every way

> "As some aerial spirit weaves a rainbow veil
> Of Mist, his high immortal loveliness to hide."

are better. Should have preferred "wild" to "high" in this line, but the 4th terminal is "wild." Perhaps not, after all.

Jan. 16th. Although it was so cold and wintry with signs of snow in suspension caught the train for Tivoli. The scenery extremely beautiful, and doubly fascinating and strange from the whirling snow falling every here and there, in strangely intermittent and separate fashion. The sheep and disconsolate shepherds on one high healthy part made a fantastic foreground. At Tivoli, which was like a hill town in Scotland in midwinter, with a storm raging, we walked past the first cascades, then up a narrow hill-path partly snowed up, partly frozen, to the open country beyond. Then back and into a trattoria where we had lunch of wine, omelette, bread, fruit, and coffee.

Jan. 17th. Midwinter with a vengeance. Rome might be St. Petersburg. Snow heavy and a hard frost. Even the Fountain of the Tritone hung all over with long spears and pendicles of ice.—Later, I went out, to walk to and fro on the Pincio Terrace in the

whirling snow, which I enjoyed beyond words. There was a lull, and then I saw the storm clouds sweep up from the Maremma, across the Campagna and blot out Rome bit by bit. Walking to and fro I composed the lyric, beginning:

> "There is a land of dream:
> I have trodden its golden ways:
> I have seen its amber light
> From the heart of its sun-swept days:
> I have seen its moonshine white
> On its silent waters gleam—
> Ah, the strange, sweet, lonely delight
> Of the Valleys of Dream!"

Returning by the Pincian Gate, about 5.45 there was a strange sight. Perfectly still in the sombre Via di Mura, with high walls to the right, but the upper pines and cypresses swaying in a sudden rush of wind: to the left a drifting snow-storm: to the right wintry moonshine: vivid sweeping pulsations of lightning from the Campagna, and long low muttering growls of thunder. (The red light from a window in the wall.)

Jan. 19th. After dinner read a good deal of Beddoes to Lill.... How like Poe the first stanza of 'The Old Ghost': every now and again there is a gleam of rare moon-white beauty, as in the lovely 3rd stanza of 'The Ballad of Human Life'—the first quatrain of the 2nd stanza of 'Dial Thoughts,' and that beautiful line in the fantastic and ultra-Shelleyian 'Romance of the Lily,'

> 'As Evening feeds the waves with brooks of
> quiet life.'

Jan. 22nd. In the evening read through Elihu Vedder's *Primitive Folk*. There is a definite law in the evolution of sexual *morale*, I am sure, if one could only get at it. The matter is worth going into, both for Fundamental and Contemporary and

Problematical Ethics.

Jan. 27th. Elizabeth and I went to the opening lecture of the Archæological Society, at the Hotel Marini. Lord Dufferin in the Chair. Mr. Porter, U. S. Minister, delivered an address, mainly on Cicero.... Lord Dufferin afterwards told us incidentally that a friend of his had gone into a book shop in the Corso and asked for *Max O'Rell: En Amérique*. The bookseller said he neither had the book nor had he heard of it: now the visitor persisted and the bookseller in despair exclaimed, '*Dio mio*, Signor, I never even heard of *Marc Aurèle* having been in America!'

Jan. 30th. After lunch we went for a drive in the Campagna.... Delighting in the warm balmy air, the superb views, the space and freedom, the soft turfy soil under foot, the excited congregation of larks twittering as they wheeled about, soon to pair, and one early songster already trilling his song along the flowing wind high overhead.

Between 9 P.M. and 12 P.M. my ears were full of music. Wrote the Sospiri, 'The Fountain of the Aqua Paola'; 'Ruins'; 'High Noon at Midsummer on the Campagna'; 'Sussurri'; 'Breath of the Grass'; 'Red Poppies'; and the lyric Spring.

Jan. 31st. Wrote to-day. 'The Mandolin' (*Sospiri di Roma*) (115 lines). In afternoon wrote 'All' Ora della Stella' (Vesper Bells), partly from memory of what I have heard, several times, and partly modified by a poem I chanced to see to-day, Fogazzaro's 'A Sera.'

February 2nd. Second day of the Carnival. Wrote all forenoon and part of afternoon. Took up and revised 'The Fountain of the Aqua Paola' and added so largely to it as to make it a new poem. It ended with 'Eternal Calm.' Also wrote 'The Fallen Goddess'—about 250 lines in length. In the evening wrote 'Bats' Wings' (26 ll) and 'Thistledown' (Spring on the Campagna) (71 ll).

Such bursts of uncontrollable poetic impulse as

came to me to-day, and the last three days, only come rarely in each year. It was in such a burst last year (1889?) that I wrote 'The Weird of Michael Scott' (each part at a single sitting).

Feb. 4th. Wrote the Sospiro 'To my Dream.'

Feb. 5th. Between 10 P.M. and 1.30 A.M. wrote the poem which I think I will call 'Fior di Memoria' (about 175 lines).

Feb. 7th. We went to Ettore Roesler Franz's studio. His water-colour drawings of (mediæval) Rome as it was from the middle of the century to within the last 7 or 10 years very charming and deeply interesting and valuable—and at the same time infinitely sad. Those of the Prati di Castello and the Tiber Bank and Stream especially so: instead of this lost beauty we have hideous jerry buildings, bad bridges, monotonous and colourless banks, and dull municipal mediocrity and common-place everywhere.

There might be a Weeping Wall in Rome as well as in Jerusalem. Truly enough there will soon be absolute truth in Bacon's noble saying 'The souls of the living are the beauty of the world'—for the world will be reduced to the sway of the plumber and builder, and artificial gardener and Bumbledom.

In evening wrote "Primo Sospiro di Primavera."

8th. In forenoon wrote "The White Peacock" (56 lines)—a study in Whites for Théodore Roussel. Also "The Swimmer of Nemi" (Red and White) 42 lines. In evening revised the "Swimmer of Nemi" and partly rewrote or recast. It is much improved in definite effect; and gains by the deletion of 9 or 10 lines, pretty in themselves but not in perfect harmony. Wrote the poem commemorating the strange evening of 17th Jan.... called it "A Winter Evening" (35 lines). *Later.* Wrote the poem called "Scirocco" (June), 67 lines. To bed about 12.30.

10th. Gave first sitting to Charles Holroyd for his Etching of me.

11th. Gave Charles Holroyd a second sitting. Between 9 and 2 A.M. wrote

"The Naked Rider" (70 lines)
"The Wind at Fidenae" (38 lines)
"The Wild Mare" (32 lines)
"A Dream at Ardea" (In Maremma) 215 lines.

12th. Wrote "La Velia" (38 lines).

15th. Agnes and Lill, Charles Holroyd and the P—s and I went to Tusculum by morning train. Very warm as soon as we got to Frascati. Lovely Tramontana day. Took a donkey to carry the wine and provisions: or Lill, if necessary. After a long walk, lunched in the Theatre at Tusculum. Wreathed the donkey with ivy and some early blooms, and then I rode on it on to the stage, à la Bacchus, flasks of Frascati under either arm.

Most glorious sunset. The view from the height above Tusculum simply superb, and worth coming to see from any part of the world.

17th. Yesterday was one of the most glorious days possible in Rome. Cloudless sky: fresh sweet breeze: deliciously warm. Went with A. to Porto d'Anzio again, and walked along the coast northward. Sea unspeakably glorious: blue, sunlit, with great green foam-crested waves breaking on the sands, and surging in among the hollow tufa rocks and old Roman remains. Lay for a long time at the extreme end of the Arco Muto. One of the red letter days in one's life.

Stayed up all night (till Breakfast) writing: then revising. Between 8 P.M. and 4 A.M. wrote poem after poem with unbroken eagerness. The impulse was an irresistible one, as I was tired and not, at first, strongly inclined to write, though no sooner had I written the Italian "Dedicatory Lines" than it all came upon me. In all, besides these, I wrote "Al Far della Notte" (31 lines): "Clouds, from the Agro Romano" (31): "The Olives of Tivoli" (30): "At Veii" (86): "The Bather" (68): "De Profundis" (26): and

"Ultimo Sospiro" (37).

18th. Beautiful day. Felt none the worse for being up all night. Wrote article on Ibsen's 'Rosmersholm' for Y. F. P. Wrote "Spuma dal Mare" (41 lines).



WILLIAM SHARP
After a pastel drawing by Charles Ross, 1891

In "Spuma dal Mare" I have attempted to give something of the many-coloured aspects of the sea. It is absurd to keep on always speaking of it as blue, or

green, or even grey. The following portion is as true as practicable, whatever other merits they may have:

> Here the low breakers are rolling thro' shallows,
> Yellow and muddied, the line of topaz
> Ere cut from the boulder:
> Save when the sunlight swims through them slantwise,
> When inward they roll,
> Long billows of amber,
> Crown'd with pale yellow
> And gray-green spume.
> Here wan gray their slopes
> Where the broken lights reach them,
> Dull gray of pearl, and dappled and darkling,
> As when, 'mid the high
> Northward drift of the clouds,
> Sirocco bloweth
> With soft fanning breath.

20th. In morning wrote out Dedicatory and other Preliminary Pages, etc., etc., for my "Sospiri di Roma" and after lunch took the complete MS. to Prof. Garlanda of the Societa Laziale, who will take them out to the Establishment at Tivoli to-day. Holroyd came with final proof of his etching of me.

24th. Wrote "The Shepherd in Rome" (66 lines).

25th. Wrote "Sorgendo La Luna" (47 ll.).

27th. Wrote poem "In July: on the Campagna" (26 ll.). Wrote poem "August Afternoon in Rome" (59 ll.).

Charles M. Ross (Norwegian painter), and Julian Corbett (author of "The Life of Drake") called on me today. Mr. Ross wants to paint me in pastel and has asked me to go to-morrow for that purpose."

In mid-March I went to Florence in advance of my husband; and he and Mr. Corbett spent a few

days together at the Albergo Sybilla Tivoli—where their sitting-room faced the Temple of Vesta—so that he could superintend there the printing of his "Sospiri." The two authors worked in the morning, and took walks in the afternoon. The Diary records one expedition:

> *March 23.* After lunch J. C. and I caught the train for Palombaria Marcellina meaning to ascend to Palombara: but we mistook the highest and most isolated mountain town, in the Sabines and after two hours of an exceedingly wild and rugged and sometimes almost impossible mule-path, etc., we reached the wonderfully picturesque and interesting San Polo dei Cavalieri. Bought a reed pipe from a shepherd who was playing a Ranz des Vaches among the slopes just below San Polo. The mediæval castle in the middle of the narrow crooked picturesque streets very fine. Had some wine from a comely woman who lived in the lower part of the castle. Then we made our way into the Sabines by Vicovaro, and Castel Madama, and home late to Tivoli, very tired.

Certain tales told to him by the Italian woman, and the picturesque town and its surroundings formed the basis of the story "The Rape of the Sabines" which appeared later in *The Pagan Review*. At the end of March he left Rome, to his great regret; he joined me at Pisa and thence we journeyed to Provence and stayed awhile at Arles, whence he wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

30: 3: 91.

GENTO CATARINO,

> You see I address you à la Provençale already! We left Italy last week, and came to Provence. Marseilles, I admit, seemed to me an unattractive place after Rome—and indeed all of Provence we

have seen as yet is somewhat chill and barren after Italy. No doubt the charm will grow. For one thing, Spring is very late here this year....

Arles we like much. It is a quaint and pleasant little town: and once I can get my mind free of those haunting hill-towns of the Sabines and Albans I love so much—(is there any hill range in the world to equal that swing of the Apennines stretching beyond Rome eastward, southward, and southwestward?)—I shall get to love it too, no doubt. But oh, Italy, Italy! Not Rome: though Rome has an infinite charm, even now when the jerry-builder is fast ruining it: but "greater Rome," the Agro Romano! When I think of happy days at the Lake of Nemi, high up in the Albans, of Albano, and L'Ariccia, and Castel Gandolfo —of Tivoli, and the lonely Montecelli, and S. Polo dei Cavalieri, and Castel Madama, and Anticoli Corrado, etc., among the Sabines—of the ever new, mysterious, fascinating Campagna, from the Maremma on the North to the Pontine Marshes, my heart is full of longing. I love North Italy too, all Umbria and Tuscany: and to know Venice well is to have a secret of perpetual joy: and yet, the Agro Romano! How I wish you could have been there this winter and spring! You will find something of my passion for it, and of that still deeper longing and passion for the Beautiful, in my "Sospiri di Roma," which ought to reach you before the end of April, or at any rate early in May. This very day it is being finally printed off to the sound of the Cascades of the Anio at Tivoli, in the Sabines—one of which turns the machinery of the Socièta Laziale's printing-works. I do hope the book will appeal to you, as there is so much of myself in it. No doubt it will be too frankly impressionistic to suit some people, and its unconventionality in form as well as in matter will be a cause of offence here and there. You shall have one of the earliest copies.

Yesterday was a fortunate day for arrival. It was a great festa, and all the women were out in their

refined and picturesque costumes. The Amphitheatre was filled, tier upon tier, and full of colour (particularly owing to some three or four hundred Zouaves, grouped in threes or fours every here and there) for the occasion of "a grand Bull-Fight." It was a brilliant and amusing scene, though (fortunately) the "fight" was of the most tame and harmless kind: much less dangerous even for the most unwary of the not very daring Arlesians than a walk across the remoter parts of the Campagna....

Letters from Mr. Meredith and Miss Blind, in acknowledgment of the privately published volume of poems, greatly pleased their author:

BOX HILL, April 15, 1891.

DEAR SHARP,

I have sent a card to the Grosvenor Club. I have much to say for the Sospiri, with some criticism. Impressionistic work where the heart is hot surpasses all but highest verse. *When*, mind. It can be of that heat only at intervals. In the 'Wild Mare' you have hit the mark. It is an unrivalled piece.

But you have at times (I read it so) insisted on your impressions. That is, you have put on your cap, sharpened your pencil, and gone afield as the Impressionistic poet. Come and hear more. I will give you a Crown and a bit of the whip—the smallest bit.

Give my warm regards to your wife.

Yours ever,
GEORGE MEREDITH.

May 18, 1891.

DEAR WILL,

I got the copy you sent me of *Sospiri di Roma*.... Your nature feeling is always so intense and genuine that I would have liked my own mood to be more completely in harmony with yours before writing to you about what is evidently so spontaneous an

outcome of your true self. I should have wished to identify myself with this joy in the beauty of the world which bubbles up fountainlike from every one of these sparkling Roman transcripts, why called "Sospiri" I hardly know. One envies you the ebullient delight which must have flooded your veins before you could write many of these verses, notably "Fior di Primavera," "Red Poppies," and "The White Peacock": the effect of colour and movement produced in these last two seems to be particularly happy, as also the descriptions of the sea of roses in the first which vividly recalled to me the prodigal wealth of blossom on the Riviera. I thoroughly agree with what George Meredith says of the sketch of "The Wild Mare," the lines of which seem as quiveringly alive as the high strung nerves of these splendid creatures.

"August Afternoon in Rome" is also an admirable bit of impressionism and, if I remember, just that effect—

> Far in the middle-flood, adrift, unoar'd,
> A narrow boat, swift-moving, black,
> Follows the flowing wave like a living thing.

By and by if I should get to some "place of nestling green for poets made" I hope to get more deeply into the spirit of your book.

Come to see me as soon as ever you and Lill can manage it, either separately or together.

Always yours,
MATHILDE BLIND.

Concerning certain criticisms on *Sospiri di Roma* he wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

1st May, 1891.

... Whether coming with praise or with blame and cast me to the perdition of the unrighteous, the critics all seem unable to take the true standpoint—

> namely, that of the poet. What has he attempted, and how far has he succeeded or failed? That is what should concern them. It is no good to any one or to me to say that I am a Pagan—that I am "an artist beyond doubt, but one without heed to the cravings of the human heart: a worshipper of the Beautiful, but without religion, without an ethical message, with nothing but a vain cry for the return, or it may be the advent, of an impossible ideal." Equally absurd to complain that in these "impressions" I give no direct "blood and bones" for the mind to gnaw at and worry over. Cannot they see that all I attempt to do is to fashion anew something of the lovely vision I have seen, and that I would as soon commit forgery (as I told some one recently) as add an unnecessary line, or "play" to this or that taste, this or that critical opinion. The chief paper here in Scotland shakes its head over "the nude sensuousness of 'The Swimmer of Nemi,' 'The Naked Rider,' 'The Bather,' 'Fior di Memoria,' 'The Wild Mare' (whose 'fiery and almost savage realism!' it depreciates—tho' this is the poem which Meredith says is 'bound to live') and evidently thinks artists and poets who see beautiful things and try to fashion them anew beautifully, should be stamped out, or at any rate left severely alone....
>
> In work, creative work above all, is the sovereign remedy for all that ill which no physician can cure: and there is a joy in it which is unique and invaluable.

For a time, however, creative work had to be put aside. The preparation of *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* was a hard grind that lasted till mid-August. At Whitby, on the 13th, according to his diary he "wrote 25 pp. digest of Severn's novel and worked at other things. Later I wrote the concluding pages, finishing the book at 2 A.M. I can hardly

believe that this long delayed task is now accomplished. But *at last* "Severn" is done!"

The final revision occupied him till the 28th August, and in order to finish it before we went abroad on the 27th he wrote "all morning till 1 P.M.; again from 9 P.M. all night unbrokenly till 7 A.M. Then read a little to rest my brain and wrote four letters. Had a bath and breakfast and felt all right."

The 24th has the interesting entry: "Met old Charles Severn at the Italian Restaurant near Portland Road Station and had a long talk with him. He confirmed his previous statement (end of September last year) about Keats having written "The Ode to the Nightingale" under "The Spaniards on Hampstead Heath."

September found us in Stuttgart in order that my husband should collaborate with the American novelist Blanche Willis Howard. The first days were spent in wandering about the lovely hillsides around the town, which he described to Mrs. Janvier:

JOHANNES STRASSE 33,

3: 9: 91.

... I know that you would revel in this glowing golden heat, and in the beautiful vinelands of the South. Southern Germany in the vintage season is something to remember with joy all one's life. Yesterday it seemed as if the world above were one vast sea of deep blue wherever a great glowing wave of light straight from the heart of the sun was flowing joyously. I revel in this summer gorgeousness, and drink in the hot breath of the earth as though it were the breath of life. Words are useless to depict the splendour of colour everywhere —the glimmer of the golden-green of the vines, the immeasurable sunfilled flowers, the masses of ripening fruit of all kinds, the hues on the hill-slopes

and in the valleys, on the houses and the quaint little vineyard-cots with their slanting red roofs. In the early afternoon I went up through the orchards and vineyards on the shoulder of the Hasenberg. It was a glory of colour. Nor have I ever seen such a lovely purple bloom among the green branches—like the sky of faerieland—as in the dark-plum orchards. There was one heavily laden tree which was superb in its massy richness of fruit: it was like a lovely vision of those thunder-clouds which come and go in July dawns. The bloom on the fruit was as though the west wind had been unable to go further and had let its velvety breath and wings fade away in a soft visible death or sleep. The only sounds were from the myriad bees and wasps and butterflies: some peasants singing in the valley as they trimmed the vines: and the just audible sussurrus of the wind among the highest pines on the Hasenberg. There was the fragrance of a myriad odours from fruit and flower and blossom and plant and tree and fructifying soil—with below all that strange smell as of the very body of the living breathing world. The festival of colour was everywhere. As I passed a cottar's sloping bit of ground within his vineyards, I saw some cabbages high up among some trailing beans, which were of the purest and most delicate blue, lying there like azure wafts from the morning sky. Altogether I felt electrified in mind and body. The sunflood intoxicated me. But the beauty of the world is always bracing—all beauty is. I seemed to inhale it—to drink it in—to absorb it at every pore—to become *it*—to become the heart and soul within it. And then in the midst of it all came my old savage longing for a vagrant life: for freedom from the bondage we have involved ourselves in. I suppose I was a gipsy once—and before that "a wild man o' the woods."

A terrific thunderstorm has broken since I wrote the above. I have rarely if ever seen such continuous lightning. As it cleared, I saw a remarkably beautiful

sight. In front of my window rose a low rainbow, and suddenly from the right there was slung a bright steel-blue bolt, seemingly hurled with intent right through the arch. The next moment the rainbow collapsed in a ruin of fading splendours....

I have had a very varied, and, to use a much abused word, a very romantic life in its external as well as in its internal aspects. Life is so unutterably precious that I cannot but rejoice daily that I am alive: and yet I have no fear of, or even regret at the thought of death.... There are many things far worse than death. When it comes, it comes. But meanwhile we are alive. The Death of the power to live is the only death to be dreaded....

His Diary also testifies to his exultant mood:

Wednesday, 2:9:1891.—Another glorious day. This flood of sunshine is like new life: it *is* new life. I rejoice in the heat and splendour of it. It seems to get into the heart and brain, and it intoxicates with a strange kind of rapture.... How intensely one lives sometimes, even when there is little apparently to call forth quintessential emotion. This afternoon was a holiday of the soul. And yet how absolutely on such a day one realises the savage in one. I suppose I was a gipsy once: a 'wild man' before: a wilder beast of prey before that. We all hark back strangely at times. To-day I seemed to remember much.... What a year this has been for me: the richest and most wonderful I have known. Were I as superstitious as Polycrates I should surely sacrifice some precious thing lest the vengeful gods should say "Thou hast lived too fully: Come!..."

The following extracts from William's Diary indicate the method of the collaboration used by the two authors:

Sunday 6th. Sept. 1891.—Blanche Willis Howard,

or rather, the Frau Hof-Arzt Von Teuffel, arrived last night. She sent round word that she could conveniently receive me in the afternoon, but as it was not to have our first talk-over about our long projected joint novel, Elizabeth came with me so as to make Frau Von T.'s acquaintanceship.... She is a charming woman, and I like her better than ever. As I am here to write a novel in collaboration with her, and not to fall in love, I must be on guard against my too susceptible self....

Monday 7th.—At 3 o'clock I went to Frau Von Teuffel's, and stayed till 5.45. We had a long talk, and skirmished admirably—sometimes "fluking" but ever and again taking our man: in other words, we gained what we were after, to some extent—indirectly as well as directly. She agrees to my proposal that we call the book *A Fellowe and His Wife*. The two chief personages are to be Germans of rank, from the Rügen seaboard. I am to be the "faire wife," and have decided to live at Rome, and to be a sculptor in ivory, and to have rooms in the Palazzo Malaspina. Have not yet decided about my name. My favourite German name is Hedwig, but Frau Von T. objected that English and American readers would pronounce it 'Hed-wig.' She suggested Edla: but that doesn't 'fetch' me. I think Freyda (or perhaps Olga) would suit.

Tuesday, 8th.—This morning I began our novel *A Fellowe and His Wife*. I wrote some nine pages of MS. being the whole of the first letter written by Freia (or Ilse) from Rome.

Thursday, 10th.—In the evening I went round to Môrike Strasse. We had a long talk about the book and its evolution, and ultimately decided to attempt the still more difficult task of telling the whole story in the letters of Odo and Ilse only. Of course this is much more difficult: but if we can do it, so much the more credit to our artistic skill and imaginative insight.... (It was also decided that Frau v. Teuffel should write Odo's letters, and her collaborator,

Ilse's. In addition to the novel W. S. dramatised the story in a five-act play.)

1st October, 1891.—Wrote to-day the long first scene of Act III. of *A Fellowe*. In afternoon E. and I went out in the town. I bought Maurice Maeterlinck's *La Princesse Maleine* and *Les Aveugles*, and in the late afternoon read right thro' the latter and skimmed the former. Some one has been writing about him recently and comparing him to Webster. In method greatly, and in manner, and even in conceptive imagination, he differs from Webster: but he is his Cousin-German. It is certainly hopelessly uncritical to say as Octave Mirbeau did last year in a French paper or magazine that Maeterlinck is another Shakespeare. He is not even remotely Shakespearian. He is a writer of singular genius; and I shall send for everything he has written. Reading these things of his excited me to a high degree. It was the electric touch I needed to produce my *Dramatic Interludes* over which I have been brooding. I believe that much of the imaginative writing of the future will be in dramatic prose of a special kind....

Friday, 2nd.—I went to bed last night haunted by my story "The Summons." To-day at 10.30 or nearer 11 I began to write it, and wrote without a break till 5.30, by which time "A Northern Night," as I now call it, was entirely finished, 'asides' and all. Both there and when I issue the *Dramatic Interludes* (five in all) I shall send them forth under my anagram, H. P. Siwäarmill. The volume will be a small one. The longest pieces will be the "Northern Night," and "The Experiment of Melchior van Hoëk": the others will be "The Confessor," "The Birth of a Soul" and "The Black Madonna."

Saturday 3rd.—... This late afternoon wrote the Dramatic Study, "The Birth of a Soul." Though not 'picturesque' it touches a deeper note than "A Northern Night," and so is really the more impressive.

Tuesday, 6th.—... P. S. After writing this Entry for

Tuesday, shortly before 12, I began to write the opening particulars of Scene II. of Act IV., and went on till I finished the whole scene, shortly before 2 A.M.

Wednesday, 7th. Finished before 1 A.M. my Play, *A Fellowe*, by writing the longish Scene III. of Act IV. Went out with Lill in the afternoon. The town all draped in black for the death of the King of Saxony. Wrote to Frank Harris (from here, as H. P. Siwäarmill) with "The Birth of a Soul." ...

Friday, 9th.—In late evening thought out (but only so far as leading lines and general drift) the drama "The Gipsy-Christ." (Being The Passion of Manuel van Hoëk)....

CHAPTER XII

WALT WHITMAN

The Pagan Review

The brilliant summer was followed by a damp and foggy autumn. My husband's depression increased with the varying of the year. While I was on a visit to my mother he wrote to me, after seeing me in the morning:

GROSVENOR CLUB, Nov. 9th, 1891.

" ... I have been here all day and have enjoyed the bodily rest, the inner quietude, and, latterly, a certain mental uplifting. But at first I was deep down in the blues. Anything like the appalling gloom between two and three-thirty! I could scarcely read, or do anything but watch it with a kind of fascinated horror. It is going down to the grave indeed to be submerged in that hideous pall.... As soon as I can make enough by fiction or the drama to depend thereon we'll leave this atmosphere of fog and this environment of deadening, crushing, paralysing, death-in-life respectability. Circumstances make London thus for us: for me at least—for of course we carry our true atmosphere in ourselves—and places and towns are, in a general sense, mere accidents....

I have read to-day Edmond Schérer's *Essais* on Eng. Literature: very able though not brilliant—reread the best portions of Jules Breton's delightful autobiography, which I liked so much last year ... all George Moore's New Novel, *Vain Fortune*.

I had also a pleasant hour or so dipping into Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other old dramatists: refreshed my forgotten acquaintanceship with that silly drama "Firmilian": and, generally, enjoyed an irresponsible ramble thro' whatever came to hand. I am now all right again and send you this little breath, this little 'Sospiro di Guglielmo,' to give you, if perchance you need it, a tonic stimulus. No, you don't need it!"

His health was so seriously affected by the fogs that it became imperative that he should get into purer air so he decided to fulfil his intention of going to New York even though he had been forced to relinquish all ideas of lecturing. There were various publishing matters to attend to, and many friends to visit. In a letter to Mrs. Janvier, announcing his

projected visit, he tells her of the particular work he had on hand:

"You will be the first to hear my new imaginative work. Although in a new method, it is inherently more akin to "Romantic Ballads" than to "Sospiri," but it is intense dramatic prose. There is one in particular I wish to read to you—three weeks from now." And he adds, "Do you not long for the warm days—for the beautiful living pulsing South? This fierce cold and gloom is mentally benumbing.... Yes you are right: there are few women and perhaps fewer men who have the passion of Beauty—of the thrilling ecstasy of life."

During his short stay in New York he was made the welcome guest of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Stedman; and he delighted in this opportunity of again meeting his good friends Mr. and Mrs. Richard Stoddart, Mr. Alden, Mr. Howells, etc. But his chief interest was a memorable visit to Walt Whitman, in whose fearless independent, mental outlook, and joy in life, in whose vigorous individual verse, he had found incentive and refreshment. Armed with an introduction from Mr. Stedman he pilgrimaged to Camden, New Jersey, on January 23rd, and found the veteran poet in bed propped up with pillows, very feeble, but bright-eyed and mentally alert. William described the visit in a letter to me:

"During a memorable talk on the literature of the two countries past and to come, the conversation turned upon a vivid episode. 'That was when you were young?' I asked. The patriarchal old poet—who lay in his narrow bed, with his white beard, white locks, and ashy-grey face in vague relief, in the afternoon light, against the white pillows and coverlet—looked at me before he answered, with that half audacious, wholly winsome glance so

characteristic of him, ‘Now, just you tell me when you think that was!’

“Then, with sudden energy, and without waiting for a reply, he added, ‘Young? I’m as young now as I was then! What’s this grey tangle’ (and as he spoke he gave his straggling beard an impatient toss),’and this decrepit old body got to do with that, eh? I never felt younger, and I’m glad of it—against what’s coming along. *That’s* the best way to shift camp, eh? That’s what I call Youth!’”

When the younger man bade him farewell Whitman gave him a message to take back with him across the seas. “He said to me with halting breath: ‘William Sharp when you go back to England, tell those friends of whom you have been speaking, and all others whom you may know and I do not that words fail me to express my deep gratitude to them for sympathy and aid truly enough beyond acknowledgment. Good-bye to you and to them—the last greetings of a tired old poet.’”

The impression made on my husband, by the fearless serene attitude of the great poet found expression in the few lines that flashed into his mind, when on March 29th he read in a London evening paper of the death of Walt Whitman:

IN MEMORIAM

He laughed at Life’s Sunset-Gates
With vanishing breath,
Glad soul, who went with the sun
To the Sunrise of death.

While William was in New York Mr. Stedman was asked by Mr. J. W. Young to approach his guest with a request that he should “lecture” at Harvard upon a subject of contemporary Literature. “Quite a number

of Harvard men are anxious to see and hear Mr. Sharp if he will consent to come to Cambridge."

It was with genuine regret that, owing to his doctor's strict prohibition, William felt himself obliged to refuse this flattering request. He had also been asked by Mr. Palmer "the leading theatrical Boss in the States to sell to him the rights of my play on 'A Fellowe and his Wife,'" a proposal which he declined.

On his return to England he wrote to Mr. Janvier:

"DEAR OLD MAN,

> "I have read your stories (as I wrote the other day) with particular pleasure, apart from personal associations. You have a delicate and delightful touch that is quite your own, and all in all I for my part fully endorse what Mr. Howells wrote about you recently in Harpers' and said as emphatically in private. So—amico caro—"go in and win!"
>
> I am settling down in London for a time, and am more content to abide awhile now that the writing mood is at last upon me again—and strong at that!
>
> I have not yet put my hand to any of the commissioned stories I must soon turn to—but tell *la sposa* that I have finished my "Dramatic Vistas" (two or three of which I read to her), and even venture to look with a certain half-content upon the last of the series—"The Lute-Player"—which has been haunting me steadily since last October, but which I could not express aright till the other day...."

The immediate outcome of his visit to America was the publication, by Messrs. Chas. Webster & Co., of his *Romantic Ballads* and *Sospiri di Roma* in one volume entitled *Flower O' the Vine*. It was prefaced by a flattering Introduction by Mr. Janvier, to whom the author wrote in acknowledgment:

PARIS, 23d April, 1892.

... Many thanks for your letter, my dear fellow, and for the "Introduction," which I have just read. I thank you most heartily for what you say there, which seems to me, moreover, if I may say so, at once generous, fittingly reserved, and likely to win attention. You yourself occupy such a high place in Letters oversea that such a recommendation of my verse cannot but result to my weal. I have been so deep in work and engagements, that I have been unable to attend to any correspondence of late—and have, I fear, behaved somewhat churlishly to friends across the water, and particularly to my dear friends at 27th Avenue. But now the *pressure* of work is over for the moment: my London engagements or their ghosts are vainly calling to me d'Outre-Manche: I am keeping down my too cosmopolitan acquaintanceship in Paris to the narrowest limit: and on and after the second of May am going to reform and remain reformed. If you don't object to a little "roughing," you would enjoy being with me and *mes camarades* this coming week. We like extremes, so after a week or so of the somewhat feverish Bohemianism of literary and artistic Paris, we shall be happy at our 'gipsy' encampment in the Forest of Fontainebleau (at a remote and rarely-visited but lovely and romantic spot between the Gorge de Franchard and the Gorge d'Apremont). Spring is now here in all her beauty: and there is a divine shimmer of green everywhere. Paris itself is *en fête* with her vividly emerald limes and sycamores, and the white and red spires of the chestnuts must make the soul of the west wind that is now blowing rejoice with gladness. The Seine itself is of a paler green than usual, and is suggestive of those apple-hued canals and conduits of Flanders and by the 'dead cities' of north-east Holland. I forget if you know Paris—but there is one of its many fountains that has an endless charm for me: that across the Seine, between the Quai des Grands Augustins and the Bld. St. Germain

—the Fontaine St. Michel—I stood watching the foaming surge and splash of it for some time yesterday, and the pearl-grey and purple-hued doves that flew this way and that through the sunlit spray. It brought, as it always does, many memories of beloved Rome and Italy back to me. I turned—and saw Paul Verlaine beside me: and I was in Paris again, the Paris of Paris, the Aspasia of the cities of the World, the only city whom one loves and worships (and is betrayed by) as a woman. Then I went round to Leon Vanier's, where there were many of *les Jeunes*—Jean Moréas, Maurice Barrès, Cazals, Renard, Eugène Holland, and others (including your namesake, Janvier). To-night I *ought* to go to the weekly gathering of a large number of *les Jeunes* at the Café du Soleil d'Or, that favourite meeting place now of *les décadents*, *les symbolistes*, and les everything else. But I can't withstand this flooding sunshine, and sweet wind, and spraying of waters, and toss-toss and shimmer-shimmer of blossoms and leaves; so I'll probably be off. *This* won't be off if I don't shut up in a double sense.

My love to 'Kathia' and to you, dear fellow Pagans.

Ever yours rejoicingly,

WILLIAM SHARP.

Tell K. that when I have 'reformed' I'll write to her. Don't let her be impertinent, and say that this promise will be fulfilled *ad Græcas Kalendas*!

P. S. Here are my proposed 'coming-movements.'

(1) Lill joins me in Paris about 10 days hence, and remains to see the two Salons, etc.

(2) From the middle of May till the middle (14th) of July we shall be in London.

(3) Then Lill goes with friends to Germany, to Bayreuth (for Wagnerian joys) and I go afoot and aboat among the lochs and isles and hills of the

western Scottish Highlands.

(4) We meet again in Stirling or Edinburgh, early in August—and then, having purchased or hired a serviceable if not a prancing steed, we go off for three weeks vagabondage. The steed is for Lill and our small baggage and a little tent. We'll sometimes sleep out: sometimes at inns, or in the fern in Highlander's cottages. Thereafter I shall again go off by myself to the extreme west "where joy and melancholy are one, and where youth and age are twins" as the Gaelic poet says.

(5) The rest of September visiting in Scotland.

(6) Part of October in London then (O Glad Tidings)

(7) Off for 6 months to the South: first to the Greek side of Sicily: then to Rome (about Xmas) for the Spring. Finally: a Poor-house in London.

The reply came swiftly:

NEW YORK, 6: 5: 92.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Your letter of April 3rd is like a stirring fresh wind. The vigour of it is delightful, and a little surprising, considering what you had been about. I will not cast stones at you—and, if you ran on schedule time, you have been reformed for four days. Your announcement that you intend to stay reformed is fine in its way. What a noble imagination you have! I am glad that you tolerate my 'introduction.' As Kate wrote you, I was very wretched—unluckily for you—when it was written. I wish that it were better in itself and more worthy of you. But the milk is spilled. The book will look very well, I think.... Your programme for the ensuing year fills me with longing. Even the London poorhouse at the end of it

don't alarm me. Colonel Newcome was brought up in a poorhouse—or a place of that nature; and, even without such a precedent I should be willing to go to a poor-house for a while after such a glorious year. Joy and good luck attend you, my dear fellow, as you go upon your gay way!...

Always yours,

T. A. J.

A Fellowe and his Wife had in the early spring been published in America and England, and also in the Tauchnitz Collection, and had a flattering reception in both countries. It had been preceded in February by the *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* published by Messrs. Sampson Low & Co.

Among various articles written during the early summer for the *Academy* were one on Philip Marston, and one on Maeterlinck; and in the July number of the *Forum* was an appreciation of Thomas Hardy—to whom he had made a flying visit in March.

In acknowledgment he received the following note from the novelist:

MAX GATE, DORCHESTER,

July, 1892.

MY DEAR SHARP,

It did give me a great deal of pleasure to read the article in the *Forum*, and what particularly struck me was your power of grasping the characteristics of this district and people in a few hours visit, during which, so far as I could see, you were not observing anything. I wish the execution of the novels better justified the generous view you take.

Yours sincerely,

THOMAS HARDY.

Our delightful plans for the autumn were not carried out; for, during a visit to the art critic, J. Stanley Little, at Rudgwick, Sussex, my husband saw a little cottage which attracted him and we decided to take it as a *pied-à-terre*. Pending negotiations we stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Caird at Northbrook, Micheldever, where W. S. began to plan out the scheme of a new quarterly Review that was "to be the expression of a keen pagan delight in nature." I quote from his Diary:

"*June 2nd, 1892.* In early forenoon, after some pleasant dawdling, began to write the Italian story, "The Rape of the Sabines," which I shall print in the first instance in my projected *White Review* as by James Marazion. After tea wrote about a page or so more of story. Then went a walk up to One-Tree-Hill. Saw several hares. The Cuckoo was calling till after 9 o'clock. Noticed that the large white moths fluttered a long time in one spot above the corn. Wild pigeons go to roost sooner than rooks, apparently. Got back about 9.30, and then finished "The Rape of the Sabines" (about 4,500 words).

"*Friday 3rd.* After breakfast went for a brisk walk of over four miles. Then worked, slowly, till lunch, at opening of "The Pagans" (afterwards to be called "Good-Bye, my Fancy"). Then walked to the station by the fields and back by the road (another 4 miles). Then worked about an hour more on "The Pagans." Have done to-day, in all, from 1,200 to 1,500 words of it. While walking in the afternoon thought out "The Oread" and also the part of it which I shall use in the *White Review* by Charles Verlayne.

Saty 4th. Did rest of "The Pagans." In afternoon did first part of "The Oread."

Sunday 5th. Finished "Oread."

Tuesday 7th. Went down to Rudgwick, Sussex, by appointment, and agreed to take the cottage on a 3-years' lease."

Regretfully the wanderings in the Highlands had to be postponed although the projector of the Review went for a time to Loch Goil with a friend and I to Bayreuth. In August we settled in the little eight-roomed cottage, near Rudgwick, with a little porch, an orchard and garden, and small lawn with a chestnut tree in its midst. We remained at Phenice Croft two years and took much pleasure in the little green enclosure that was our own. The views from it were not extensive. A stretch of fields and trees lay in front of the house, and from the side lawn we could see an old mill whose red brick roof had been weathered to picturesque shades of green. Phenice Croft stood at the edge of a little hamlet called Buck's Green, and across the road from our garden gate stood the one shop flanked by a magnificent poplar tree, that made a landmark however far we might wander. It was a perpetual delight to us. William Sharp settled down at once to the production of his quarterly to be called, finally, *The Pagan Review*, edited by himself as W. H. Brooks. As he had no contributors, for he realised he would have to attract them, he himself wrote the whole of the Contents under various pseudonyms. It was published on August 15th, 1892; the cover bore the motto "Sic transit gloria Grundi" and this list of contents:

The Black Madonna By W. S. Fanshawe

[This dramatic Interlude was afterwards included in *Vistas*.]

The Coming of Love By George Gascoign

[Republished posthumously in *Songs Old and New*.]

The Pagans: a Romance By William Dreeme

[Never finished.]

An Untold Story	By Lionel Wingrave
[Sonnets afterwards printed in *Songs Old and New*.]	
The Rape of the Sabines	By James Marazion
The Oread	By Charles Verlayne
Dionysos in India	By William Windover
Contemporary Record.	
Editorial.	

The Editorial announced a promised article on "The New Paganism" from the pen of H. P. Siwäarmill, but it was never written.

As the *Foreword* gives an idea, not only of the Editor's project, but also of his mental attitude at that moment—a sheer revelling in the beauty of objective life and nature, while he rode for a brief time on the crest of the wave of health and exuberant spirits that had come to him in Italy after his long illness and convalescence—I reprint it in its entirety.

> Editorial prefaces to new magazines generally lay great stress on the effort of the directorate, and all concerned, to make the forthcoming periodical popular.
>
> We have no such expectation: not even, it may be added, any such intention. We aim at thorough-going unpopularity: and there is every reason to believe that, with the blessëd who expect little, we shall not be disappointed.
>
> ⁂
>
> In the first place, *The Pagan Review* is frankly pagan: pagan in sentiment, pagan in convictions, pagan in outlook. This being so, it is a magazine only for those who, with Mr. George Meredith, can exclaim in all sincerity—

> "O sir, the truth, the truth! is't in the skies,
> Or in the grass, or in this heart of ours—
> But O, the truth, the truth!..."—

and at the same time, and with the same author, are not unready to admit that truth to life, external and internal, very often

> "... is not meat
> For little people or for fools."

To quote from Mr. Meredith once more:

> "... these things are life:
> And life, they say, is worthy of the Muse."

But we are well aware that this is just what "they" *don't* say. "They," "the general public," care very little about the "Muse" at all; and the one thing they never advocate or wish is that the "Muse" should be so indiscreet as to really withdraw from life the approved veils of Convention.

Nevertheless, we believe that there is a by no means numerically insignificant public to whom *The Pagan Review* may appeal; though our paramount difficulty will be to reach those who, owing to various circumstances, are out of the way of hearing aught concerning the most recent developments in the world of letters.

⁂

The Pagan Review conveys, or is meant to convey, a good deal by its title. The new paganism is a potent leaven in the yeast of the "younger generation," without as yet having gained due recognition, or even any sufficiently apt and modern name, any scientific designation. The "new paganism," the "modern epicureanism," and kindred appellations, are more or less misleading. Yet, with most of us, there is a fairly definite idea of what we signify thereby. The religion of our forefathers has not only

ceased for us personally, but is no longer in any vital and general sense a sovereign power in the realm. It is still fruitful of vast good, but it is none the less a power that was, rather than a power that is. The ideals of our forefathers are not our ideals, except where the accidents of time and change can work no havoc. A new epoch is about to be inaugurated, is, indeed, in many respects, already begun; a new epoch in civil law, in international comity, in what, vast and complex though the issues be, may be called Human Economy. The long half-acknowledged, half-denied duel between Man and Woman is to cease, neither through the victory of hereditary overlordship nor the triumph of the far more deft and subtle if less potent weapons of the weaker, but through a frank recognition of copartnery. This new comradeship will be not less romantic, less inspiring, less worthy of the chivalrous extremes of life and death, than the old system of overlord and bondager, while it will open perspectives of a new-rejoicing humanity, the most fleeting glimpses of which now make the hearts of true men and women beat with gladness. Far from wishing to disintegrate, degrade, abolish marriage, the "new paganism" would fain see that sexual union become the flower of human life. But, first, the rubbish must be cleared away; the anomalies must be replaced by just inter-relations; the sacredness of the individual must be recognised; and women no longer have to look upon men as usurpers, men no longer to regard women as spiritual foreigners.

⁂

These remarks, however, must not be taken too literally as indicative of the literary aspects of *The Pagan Review*. Opinions are one thing, the expression of them another, and the transformation or reincarnation of them through indirect presentment another still.

This magazine is to be a purely literary, not a

philosophical, partisan, or propagandist periodical. We are concerned here with the new presentment of things rather than with the phenomena of change and growth themselves. Our vocation, in a word, is to give artistic expression to the artistic "inwardness" of the new paganism; and we voluntarily turn aside here from such avocations as chronicling every ebb and flow of thought, speculating upon every fresh surprising derelict upon the ocean of man's mind, or expounding well or ill the new ethic. If those who sneer at the rallying cry, "Art for Art's sake," laugh at our efforts, we are well content; for even the lungs of donkeys are strengthened by much braying. If, on the other hand, those who, by vain pretensions and paradoxical clamour, degrade Art by making her merely the more or less seductive panoply of mental poverty and spiritual barrenness, care to do a grievous wrong by openly and blatantly siding with us, we are still content; for we recognise that spiritual byways and mental sewers relieve the Commonwealth of much that is unseemly and might breed contagion. *The Pagan Review*, in a word, is to be a mouthpiece—we are genuinely modest enough to disavow the definite article—of the younger generation, of the new pagan sentiment, rather, of the younger generation. In its pages there will be found a free exposition of the myriad aspects of life, in each instance as adequately as possible reflective of the mind and literary temperament of the writer. The pass-phrase of the new paganism is ours: *Sic transit gloria Grundi*. The supreme interest of Man is —Woman: and the most profound and fascinating problem to Woman is, Man. This being so, and quite unquestionably so with all the male and female pagans of our acquaintance, it is natural that literature dominated by the various forces of the sexual emotion should prevail. Yet, though paramount in attraction, it is, after all, but one among the many motive forces of life; so we will hope not to fall into the error of some of our French

confrères and be persistently and even supernaturally awake to one functional activity and blind to the general life and interest of the commonwealth of soul and body. It is *Life* that we preach, if perforce we must be taken as preachers at all; Life to the full, in all its manifestations, in its heights and depths, precious to the uttermost moment, not to be bartered even when maimed and weary. For here, at any rate, we are alive; and then, alas, after all,—

"how few Junes
Will heat our pulses quicker..."

⁂

"Much cry for little wool," some will exclaim. It may be so. Whenever did a first number of a new magazine fulfil all its editor's dreams or even intentions? "Well, we must make the best of it, I suppose. 'Tis nater, after all, and what pleases God," as Mrs. Durbeyfield says in "Tess of the Durbervilles."

⁂

Have you read that charming *roman à quatre*, the *Croix de Berny*? If so, you will recollect the following words of Edgar de Meilhan (*alias* Théophile Gautier), which I ("I" standing for editor, and associates, and pagans in general) now quote for the delectation of all readers, adversely minded or generously inclined, or dubious as to our real intent—with blithe hopes that they may be the happier therefor: "Frankly, I am in earnest this time. Order me a dove-coloured vest, apple-green trousers, a pouch, a crook; in short, the entire outfit of a Lignon Shepherd. I shall have a lamb washed to complete the pastoral."

⁂

This is "the lamb."

THE EDITOR.

The Review was well subscribed for, and many letters came to the Editor and his secretary (myself) that were a source of interest and amusement. Mr. Richard Whiteing—who knew the secret of the Editorship wrote: "I want to subscribe to *The Pagan Review* if you will let me know to whom to send my *abonnement* for the half year. I think, you know, you will have to put some more clothes on before the end of the year. You are certainly the liveliest and most independent little devil of a review I ever saw in a first number."

The Editor, however, swiftly realised that there could be no continuance of the Review. Not only could he not repeat such a *tour de force*, and he realised that for several numbers he would have to provide the larger portion of the material—but the one number had served its purpose, as far as he was concerned for by means of it he had exhausted a transition phase that had passed to give way to the expression of his more permanent self.

To Thomas A. Janvier the Editor wrote:

RUDGWICK, SUSSEX.

DEAR MR. JANVIER,

For though we are strangers in a sense I seem to know you well through our friend in common, Mr. William Sharp!

I write to let you know that *The Pagan Review* breathed its last a short time ago. Its end was singularly tranquil, but was not unexpected. Your friend Mr. Sharp consoles me by talking of a certain resurrection for what he rudely calls "this corruptible": if so the P/R will speak a new and wiser tongue, appear in a worthier guise, and put on immortality as a Quarterly.

In the circumstances, I return, with sincerest thanks, the subscription you are so good as to send.

Also the memorial card of our late lamented friend—I mean the P/R, not W. S. Talking of W. S., what an admirable fellow he is! I take the greatest possible interest in his career. I read your kind and generous estimate of him in *Flower o' the Vine* with much pleasure—and though I cannot say that I hold quite so high a view of his poetic powers as you do, I may say that perusal of your remarks gave me as much pleasure as, I have good reason for knowing, they gave to him. He and I have been 'delighting' over your admirably artistic and charming stories in *Harper's*. By the way, he's settling down to a serious 'tussle.' He has been "a bad boy" of late: but about a week previous to the death of the Pagan/Review he definitively reformed—on Sept. 11th in the early forenoon, I believe. I hope earnestly he may be able to live on the straight henceforth: but I regret to say that I see signs of backsliding. Still, he may triumph; the spirit is (occasionally) willing. But, apart from this, he is now becoming jealous of such repute as he has won, and is going to deserve it, and the hopes of friends like yourself. Mrs. Brooks' love to Catherine and yourself: Mine, Tommaso Mio,

You know you have ...

W. H. BROOKS.

Elizabeth A. Brooks was so pleased to receive your letter.

One or two young writers sent in MS. contributions and these of course he had to return. One came from Mr. R. Murray Gilchrist with whom he had come into touch through his editorship of the Literary Chair in *Young Folk's Paper*. To him he wrote:

RUDGWICK, SUSSEX, 10: 92.

MY DEAR SIR,

As it is almost certain that for unforeseen private reasons serial publication of *The Pagan Review* will be

held over till sometime in 1893, I regret to have to return your MS. to you. I have read *The Noble Courtesan* with much interest. It has a quality of suggestiveness that is rare, and I hope that it will be included in the forthcoming volume to which you allude.... It seems to me that the story would be improved by less—or more hidden—emphasis on the mysterious aspect of the woman's nature. She is too much the "principle of Evil," the "modern Lilith." If you do not use it, I might be able—with some alterations of a minor kind—to use it in the P/R when next Spring it reappears—if such is its dubious fate.

Yours very truly,

W. H. BROOKS.

P. S. It is possible that you may surmise—or that a common friend may tell you—who the editor of the P/R is: if so, may I ask you to be reticent on the matter.

PHENICE CROFT, RUDGWICK,

22: 10: 92.

DEAR MR. GILCHRIST,

Although I do not wish the matter to go further I do not mind so sympathetic and kindly a critic knowing that "W. S." and "W. H. Brooks" are synonymous.

I read with pleasure your very friendly and cordial article in *The Library*. By the way, it may interest you to know that the "Rape of the Sabines" and—well, I'll not say what else!—is also by W. H. Brooks. But this, no outsider knows.... *The Pagan Review* will be revived next year, but probably as a Quarterly: and I look to you as one of the younger men of notable talent to give a helping hand with your pen.

I suppose you come to London occasionally. I hope when you are next south, you will come and give me the pleasure of your personal acquaintance. I can offer you a lovely country, country fare, a bed,

and a cordial welcome.

Yours sincerely,
WILLIAM SHARP.

Intimation had also to be sent to each subscriber; with it was enclosed a card with the following inscription:

The Pagan Review.

On the 15th September, still-born *The Pagan Review*.

Regretted by none, save the affectionate parents and a few forlorn friends, *The Pagan Review* has returned to the void whence it came. The progenitors, more hopeful than reasonable, look for an unglorious but robust resurrection at some more fortunate date. "For of such is the Kingdom of Paganism."

W. H. BROOKS.

And at the little cottage a solemn ceremony took place. The Review was buried in a corner of the garden, with ourselves, my sister-in-law Mary and Mr. Stanley Little as mourners; a framed inscription was put to mark the spot, and remained there until we left Rudgwick.

CHAPTER XIII

ALGIERS

Vistas

Many schemes were mentally cartooned for the autumn and winter's work; but all our plans were suddenly upset by an unlooked for occurrence. While in Rome I had had a severe attack of Roman fever; and I had never quite recovered therefrom. The prolonged rains in the hot autumn, the dampness of the clay soil on which lay the hamlet of Buck's Green, made me very ill again with intermittent low fever. It was deemed imperative that I should not spend the whole winter in England, but go in search of a dry warm climate. But we had not the necessary funds. So instead of devoting himself to his dream-work, as he had hoped, my husband laid it temporarily aside and settled himself to write between October and Xmas, two exciting boys' serial stories for *Young Folk's Paper*, and thus procured sufficient money to enable us to cross to North Africa. "The Red Rider" and "The Last of the Vikings" were crowded with startling adventures. The weaving of sensational plots offered no difficulties to him, but an enjoyment. He did not consider the achievement of any real value, and did not wish that particular kind of writing to be associated with his name. His impressions of Algeria and Tunisia were chronicled in a series of articles, such as "Cardinal Lavigerie," "The March of Rome," "Rome in Africa," etc.; also in a series of letters to a friend from which I select one or two:

BISKRA, 2d Feb., 1893.

"Here we are in the Sahara at last! I find it quite

hopeless to attempt to give you any adequate idea of the beauty and strangeness and the extraordinary fascination of it all. The two days' journey here was alone worth coming to Africa for! We left Mustapha shortly before dawn on Tuesday, and witnessed a lovely daybreak as we descended the slopes to Agha: and there we saw a superb sunrise streaming across the peaks and ranges of the Djurdjura of Kabylia (the African Highlands) and athwart the magnificent bay. The sea was dead calm, and in parts still mirrored the moon and a few stars: then suddenly one part of it became molten gold, and that nearest us was muffled into purple-blue wavelets by the dawn-wind. The sound of it washing in, almost at the feet of the palms and aloes and Barbary-figtrees was delicious. We had a long and delightful day's journey till sunset. Our route was through Grande Kabylie, and the mountain scenery in particular was very impressive. At many places we had a long stop: but everywhere here railway-travelling is more like journeying in a carriage, the rate of speed not being much more, with ample facilities for seeing everything en route. The Kabyles are the original inhabitants of Mauritanian Africa—and both in language and appearance these Berbers differ markedly from the Moors and the nomadic Arabs. They are the hardiest and most industrious though also the most untameable, of the native races. They live in innumerable little villages scattered among the mountains and valleys and plains of the Djurdjura country.

"The sun sank over the uplands of Kabylia as we mounted towards the ancient Roman outpost-city, Setif. Setif stands about 3,500 ft. high: and crossing the plateaux beyond it was like making an excursion through Scotland in midwinter. Still, despite the snow on the hills, and even along the roads of Setif itself, the cold was not so severe as we expected.

"At four next morning we steamed slowly out of Setif in full moonlight. An hour or so later dawn

broke as we passed a series of Arab encampments, and then came another sunrise over a wild and desolate country. We were now entirely in Mahommedan lands, for there are comparatively few Europeans south of the city of Constantine.

"At a place called El Guerrah we stopped for half an hour for déjeuner. Soon thereafter we passed the Salt Lakes, covered with wild-fowl, flamingoes, and other birds. It was hereabouts that we first saw some camels. Once more we mounted, and soon were high among the Aurès mountains, perhaps the most delightful hill-region of North Africa, with certainly the finest population, Berbers like the Kabyles, but Berber-aristocrats—Berbers refined by potent inherited strains from the Romans of old. From Batna onwards the journey was an endless delight. We came more and more into the East, and soon grew wholly accustomed to Arab encampments, herds of camels, Moors and Negroes coming in with herds of bouricoes (little donkeys), wild black goats and gaunt sheep, Nomads travelling southward or eastward, picturesque Saharians or Spahis dashing past on grey Arab horses, and semi-nude agriculturous Berbers. At last the desert (the hill-desert) was entered. Here one can realise the full significance of the French epithet *tourmenté*: and, as one fares further, of the Biblical phrase, the abomination of desolation. The whole country seemed under the curse of barrenness: nothing but gaunt ribbed mountains, gaunt ribbed hills, gaunt ribbed sand-plains—this, or stony wastes of an arid desolation beyond words. But though the country did not become less awful in this respect, it grew wilder and stranger as we neared Elkantara. I never saw scenery so *terrific*. The entrance to the last Gorge was very exciting, for beyond the narrow outlet lay the Sahara and all torrid Africa! North of this last outpost of the colder zone the date-palm refuses to flourish: and here, too, the Saharan Arab will not linger: but in a quarter of a mile one passes from this

arid waste into African heat and a superb oasis of date-palms. It is an indescribable sensation—that of suddenly swinging through a narrow and fantastic mountain-gorge, where all is gloom and terror, and coming abruptly upon the full splendour of the sunswept Sahara, with, in the immediate foreground, an immense oasis of date-palms, all green and gold! The vista—the vast perspectives—the glory of the sunflood! From that moment, one can hardly restrain one's excitement. Very soon, however, we had fresh and unexpected cause for excitement. The train slowly came to a stop, and crowds of Arabs came up. The line had been destroyed for more than half a mile—and we were told we must walk across the intervening bit of desert, and ford the Oued-Merjarla, till we reached the train sent to meet us. We could see it in the distance—a black blotch in the golden sunlight. One account was that some revolted Arabs (and some of the outlying tribes are said to be in a chronic state of sullen ill will) had done the mischief: another, and more probable, that the hill-courses had swollen the torrent of the Oued-Biskra, which had rent asunder the desert and displaced the lines. The Arabs carried our baggage, and we set forth across our first Sahara-stretch. Despite the heat, the air was so light and delicious that we enjoyed the experience immensely. The river (or rather barren river-bed with a pale-green torrent rushing through a deep cleft in the sandy grit) was crossed on a kind of pontoon-bridge. Soon after this the sun sank. We were in the middle of a vast plain, almost surrounded by a series of low, pointed hills, which became a deep purple. Far to the right was a chott (or salt lake) and of lucent silver. For the rest, all was orange-gold, yellow-gold, green-gold, with, high over the desert, a vast effulgence of a marvellous roseate flush. Then came the moment of scarlet and rose, saffron, and deepening gold, and purple. In the distance, underneath the dropping sparkle of the Evening Star, we could discern the first palms of the

oasis of Biskra. There was nothing more to experience till arrival, we thought: but just then we saw the full moon rise out of the Eastern gloom. And what a moon it was! Never did I see such a splendour of living gold. It seemed incredibly large, and whatever it illumed became strange and beautiful beyond words.

"Then a swift run past some ruined outlying mud-walls and Arab tents, some groups of date-palms, a flashing of many lights and clamour of Eastern tongues—and we were in Biskra: El Biskra-ed-Nokkel, to give it its full name (the City of the Palms)! We found pleasant quarters in the semi-Moorish Hotel on Sahara. It has cool corridors, with arched alcoves, on both sides, so that at any time of day one may have coolness somewhere. In the courtyard are seats where we can have coffee and cigarettes under the palms, beside two dear little tame gazelles....

"This morning we had many novel and delightful glimpses of oriental life. In one narrow street the way was blocked by camels lying or squatting right across the road. As they are laden, they open their mouths, snarlingly, and give vent to an extraordinary sound—part roar, part grunt of expostulation....

"We came across a group of newly arrived camels from the distant Oasis of Touggourt, laden with enormous melons and pumpkins: and, hopping and running about, two baby camels! They were extraordinary creatures, and justified the Arab saying that the first camel was the offspring of an ostrich and some now extinct kind of monster.... Oh, this splendid flood of the sun!

CONSTANTINE, 12th Feb., 1893.

"It would be useless to attempt to give you any idea of all we have seen since I last wrote. The impressions are so numerous and so vivid until one attempts to seize them: and then they merge in a labyrinth of memories. I sent you a P/c from Sidi

Okba—the memory of which with its 5,000 swarming Arab population has been something of a nightmare-recollection ever since. I can well believe how the City of Constantine was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. It is impossible to conceive anything grander. Imagine a city hanging down the sides of gorges nearly 1,000 feet in depth—and of the most fantastic and imposing aspect. In these terrible gorges, which have been fed with blood so often, the storks and ravens seem like tiny sparrows as they fly to and fro, and the blue rock-doves are simply wisps of azure....

Last night I had such a plunge into the Barbaric East as I have never had, and may never have again. I cannot describe, but will erelong tell you of those narrow thronged streets, inexplicably intricate, fantastic, barbaric: the Moorish cafés filled with motley Orientals—from the turban'd Turk, the fez'd Jew, the wizard-like Moor, to the Kabyl, the Soudanese, the desert Arab: the strange haunts of the dancing girls: the terrible street of the caged women—like wild beasts exposed for sale: and the crowded dens of the Haschisch-eaters, with the smoke and din of barbaric lutes, tam-tams, and nameless instruments, and the strange wild haunting chanting of the ecstatics and fanatics. I went at last where I saw not a single European: and though at some risk, I met with no active unpleasantness, save in one Haschisch place, where by a sudden impulse some forty or fifty Moors suddenly swung round, as the shriek of an Arab fanatic, and with outstretched hands and arms cursed the *Gaiour-kelb* (dog of an infidel!): and here I had to act quickly and resolutely. Thereafter one of my reckless fits came on, and I plunged right into the midst of the whole extraordinary vision—for a kind of visionary Inferno it seemed. From Haschisch-den to Haschisch-den I wandered, from strange vaulted rooms of the gorgeously jewelled and splendidly dressed prostitutes to the alcoves where lay or sat or moved

to and fro, behind iron bars, the caged "beauties" whom none could reach save by gold, and even then at risk; from there to the dark low rooms or open pillared places where semi-nude dancing girls moved to and fro to a wild barbaric music.... I wandered to and fro in that bewildering Moorish maze, till at last I could stand no more impressions. So I found my way to the western ramparts, and looked out upon the marvellous nocturnal landscape of mountain and valley—and thought of all that Constantine had been —"

CARTHAGE,
Sunday, 19th Feb.

"How strange it seems to write a line to London from this London of 2,000 years ago! The sea breaks at my feet, blue as a turquoise here, but, beyond, a sheet of marvellous pale green, exquisite beyond words. To the right are the inland waters where the Carthaginian galleys found haven: above, to the right, was the temple of Baal: right above, the temple of Tanit, the famous Astarte, otherwise "The Abomination of the Sidonians." Where the Carthaginians lived in magnificent luxury, a little out of the city itself, is now the Arab town of Sidi-ban-Saïd—like a huge magnolia-bloom on the sunswept hillside. There is nothing of the life of to-day visible, save a white-robed Bedouin herding goats and camels, and, on the sea, a few felucca-rigged fisherboats making for distant Tunis by the Strait of Goletta. But there is life and movement in the play of the wind among the grasses and lentisks, in the hum of insects, in the whisper of the warm earth, in the glow of the burning sunshine that floods downward from a sky of glorious blue. *Carthage*—I can hardly believe it. What *ivresse* of the mind the word creates!"

The following letter was received shortly after our return:

19 St. Mary Abbotts Terrace, W.,
7th March, 1893.

My dear Sharp,

I did not reply to your kind letter because I could not divest myself of a certain suspicion of the postal arrangements of the desert. I admit however there was little warrant for misgiving since they are evidently civilised enough to keep the natives well supplied with copies of *The Island*. The thought of the studious Sheik painfully spelling out that work with the help of his lexicon is simply fascinating, and I have made up my mind to read *The Arabian Nights* in the original by way of returning the compliment. But if I talk any more about myself I shall forget the immediate purpose of this letter which is to ask if you and Mrs. Sharp are back again; and, if you are, how and when we may see you. I think this was about the date of your promised return. We shall all be delighted to see you and to hear about your journey. You are more than ever Children of To-morrow in my esteem, to be able not only to dare such trips but to do them. When I read your letter I felt more than ever a child of yesterday. Do write and give us a chance of seeing you as soon as you can.

Ever yours,
R. Whiteing.

Mr. Whiteing was one of the many friends who came to our cottage for week-end visits in the ensuing spring and summer. Among others whom we welcomed were Mrs. Mona Caird, Miss Alice Corkran, Mr. George Cotterell, Mr. and Mrs. Le Gallienne, the Honble Roden Noel, Mr. Percy White, Dr. Byres Moir, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rinder, Mr. R. A. Streatfield, Mr. Laurence Binyon, my brother R. Farquharson Sharp, and my sister-in-law Mary, or Marik, who for many years acted as my husband's

secretary and whose handwriting became familiar to many correspondents who afterwards received letters in handwriting from Fiona Macleod.

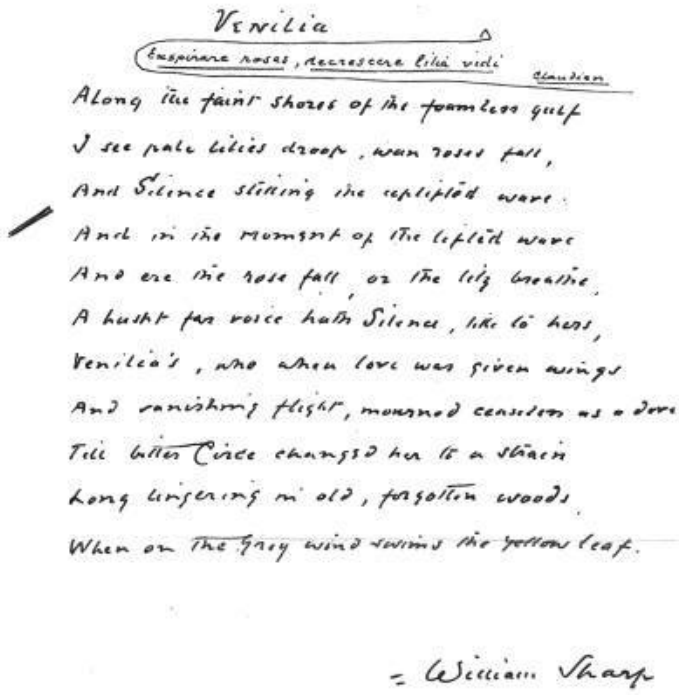
The Diary for December 1893 has the following entries:

> "We came back to a lovely English Spring, the finest for a quarter of a century it is said. In May E. went to Paris for the Salon: I went to Ventnor and Freshwater. Wrote my long article for *Harpers'* on 'The March of Rome in North Africa.'
>
> "At the end of July we went to Scotland: first for three weeks to St. Andrew's: then to Mrs. Glasford Bells' at Tirinie, near Aberfeldy in Perthshire: then to Corrie, in Arran, for over a fortnight. Then E. visited friends, and I went to Arrochar, etc. Then at my mother's in Edinburgh: and on my way south I stopped with R. Murray Gilchrist at Eyam, in Derbyshire.
>
> "In the autumn I arranged with Frank Murray of Derby to publish *Vistas*. He could afford to give me only £10, but in this instance money was a matter of little importance. *Harpers'* gave me £50 for "The March of Rome." Knowles asked me to do "La Jeune Belgique" for the September number which I did, and he commissioned other work. On the head of it, too, Elkin Matthews and John Lane have commissioned an extension of the essay, and translation, for a volume to be issued in the spring. In *Good Words*, "Froken Bergliot," a short story, was much liked: later, in December, "Love in a Mist" (written June /92) still more so. African articles commissioned by *Harpers*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Art Journal*, *Good Words*, and provisionally two others.
>
> "Have written several stories and poems. Also done the first part of a Celtic romance called *Pharais*, from the word of Muireadach Albarmach, "Mithil domb triall gu tigh na Pharais." Have mentally

cartooned *Nostalgia* (a short one vol. romance) *The Woman of Thirty* (do. novel), *Ivresse* (which I have proposed to Lady Colin Campbell for our collaboration in preference to *Eve and I*): "Passée," "Hazard of Love": a collection of short stories, collectively called *The Comedy of Woman*: and other volumes in romance, fiction, poetry, and drama. Have done part of *Amor* (in Sonnets mostly as yet): and the first part of "The Tower of Silence." Have thought out "Demogorgon": also, projected a dramatic version of *Anna Karenina*.

"Some time ago signed an agreement with Swan Sonnenschin & Co. to write a new life of Rossetti. It will be out, I hope, next spring. Been getting slowly on with it.

"Besides the bigger things I am thinking of, e. g. in poetic drama "Demogorgon": in fiction "The Lunes of Youth" (Part 1 of the Trilogy of *The Londoners*), and the *Women* series, have thought out *The Literary Ideal* etc.—and also the philosophical "The Brotherhood of Rest." Besides, a number of short stories: some with a definite end in view, that of coherent book-publication. In the background are other works: e. g. *Darthûla*, thought out nearly fully, which I would like to make my *chef d'œuvre*. In all, I have actually on hand eight books, and innumerable stories, articles, etc.


Venilia

Exspirare rosas, decrescere lilia vidi Claudian

Along the faint shores of the foamless gulf
I see pale lilies droop, wan roses fall,
And Silence stilling the cephiséd wave.
And in the moment of the cephiséd wave
And ere the rose fall, or the lily breathe,
A hushed far voice hath Silence, like to hers,
Venilia's, who when love was given wings
And vanishing flight, mourned caressless as a dove
Till bitter Circe changed her to a shade
Long lingering in old, forgotten woods,
When on the grey wind swims the yellow leaf.

= William Sharp

Fac-simile of an autograph poem by William Sharp

The things first to be done now are

Books 1 Finish new Life of Rossetti
2 Finish Pharais
3 Write Nostalgia
4 Collaborate in Ivresse

then, The Brotherhood of Rest

and, The Comedy of Woman

and, The
Lunes of Youth

(Articles) "The Literary Ideal": Flemçen: "Tunisia": "The Province of Constantine": "The Province of Oran": "Lyric Japan": "Chansons D'Amour": etc. etc.

(Short Stories) "The late Mrs. Pygmalion" etc. etc."

Vistas was published early in 1894 by Mr. Frank Murray of Derby in "his Regent Series," of which *Frangipani* by R. Murray Gilchrist was the first number. The English edition of *Vistas* is dedicated to *Madame Elspeth H. Barzia*—an anagram on my name.

In the Dedication to H. W. Alden (author of "God in His World") in the American edition—which contains an extra '*Interlude*' entitled "The Whisperer"—the intention of the book is thus explained:

"You asked me what my aim was in those dramatic interludes which, collectively, I call *Vistas*. I could not well explain: nor can I do so now. All are vistas of the inner life of the human soul, psychic episodes. One or two are directly autopsychical, others are renderings of dramatically conceived impressions of spiritual emotion: to two or three no quotation could be more apt than that of the Spanish novelist, Emilia Pardo Bazàn: 'Enter with me into the dark zone of the human soul.' These *Vistas* were written at intervals: the most intimate in the spiritual sense, so long ago as the spring of 1886, when during recovery from a long and nearly fatal illness 'Lilith' came to me as a vision and was withheld in words as soon as I could put pen to paper. Another was written in Rome, after a vain effort to express adequately in a different form the episode of death-menaced and death-haunted love among those remote Scottish wilds where so much of my

childhood and boyhood and early youth was spent.... I came upon for the first time 'La Princesse Maleine' and 'L'Intruse.'

"One or two of the *Vistas* were written in Stuttgart in 1891, others a year or so later in London or elsewhere—all in what is, in somewhat unscholarly fashion, called the Maeterlinckian formula. Almost from the first moment it seemed clear to me that the Belgian poet-dramatist had introduced a new and vital literary form. It was one that many had been seeking—stumblingly, among them, the author of *Vistas*—but Maurice Maeterlinck wrought the crude material into a form fit for swift and dextrous use, at once subtle and simple. The first which I wrote under this impulse is that entitled 'Finis.' The latest or latest but one ('The Whisperer,' now added to this Edition) seems to me, if I may say so, as distinctively individual as 'The Passing of Lilith,' and some, at least of my critics have noticed this in connection with 'The Lute Player.' In all but its final form, it embodies a conception that has been with me for many years, ever since boyhood: a living actuality for me, at last expressed, but so inadequately as to make me differ from the distinguished critic who adjudged it the best of the *Vistas*. To me it is the most obvious failure in the book, though fundamentally, so near and real emotionally."

END OF PART ONE

PART II

FIONA MACLEOD

I too will set my face to the wind and throw my handful of seed on high,
It is loveliness I seek, not lovely things.
F. M.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PSEUDONYM

Pharais

The summer of 1893 was hot and sunny: and we delighted in our little garden with its miniature lawns, its espalier fruit trees framing the vegetable garden, and its juvenile but to us fascinating flower beds. Horsham, our nearest town, was seven miles distant and the village of Rudgwick lay a mile away up a steady ascent beyond the station. William Sharp

was happy once more to be resident in the country, although the surroundings were not a type of scenery that appealed to him. But, as he wrote to a friend, it was not so much the place that he liked "as what is in it conducive to that keen perturbation, elation, excitement of mind, which is life worth living."

At Phenice Croft his imagination was in a perpetual ferment. Out of the projected work that he had noted in his diary, out of those subjects that lay in his mind to germinate and mature, or to wither and be rejected, grew one or two achievements; and in particular after the completion of *Vistas*, a romance of the Isles, *Pharais*, about which his friend Mr. Cotterell in acknowledging a copy of these Dramatic Interludes, wrote to the author:

"*Vistas* should mark a point in your career from which you should go forward to greater things. I am eager to see the Celtic romance."

The quiet and leisure at Phenice Croft, the peace, the "green life" around were unspeakably welcome to my husband. Once again, he saw visions and dreamed dreams; the psychic subjective side of his dual nature predominated. He was in an acutely creative condition; and, moreover he was passing from one phase of literary work to another, deeper, more intimate, more permanent. So far, he had found no adequate method for the expression of his "second self" though the way was led thereto by *Sospiri di Roma* and *Vistas*.

The *Sospiri di Roma* was the turning point. Those unrhymed poems of irregular meter are filled not only with the passionate delight in life, with the sheer joy of existence, but also with the ecstatic worship of beauty that possessed him during those spring months we spent in Rome, when he had cut himself adrift for the time from the usual routine of

our life, and touched a high point of health and exuberant spirits. There, at last, he had found the desired incentive towards a true expression of himself, in the stimulus and sympathetic understanding of the friend to whom he dedicated the first of the books published under his pseudonym. This friendship began in Rome and lasted throughout the remainder of his life.

And though this newer phase of his work was at no time the result of collaboration, as certain of his critics have suggested, he was deeply conscious of his indebtedness to this friend, for—as he stated to me in a letter of instructions, written before he went to America in 1896, concerning his wishes in the event of his death—he realised that it was "to her I owe my development as 'Fiona Macleod' though, in a sense of course, that began long before I knew her, and indeed while I was still a child," and that, as he believed, "without her there would have been no 'Fiona Macleod.'"

Because of her beauty, her strong sense of life and of the joy of life; because of her keen intuitions and mental alertness, her personality stood for him as a symbol of the heroic women of Greek and Celtic days, a symbol that, as he expressed it, unlocked new doors in his mind and put him "in touch with ancestral memories" of his race. So, for a time, he stilled the critical, intellectual mood of William Sharp to give play to the development of this new found expression of subtler emotions, towards which he had been moving with all the ardour of his nature.

From then till the end of his life there was a continual play of the two forces in him, or of the two sides of his nature: of the intellectually observant, reasoning mind—the actor, and of the intuitively

observant, spiritual mind—the dreamer, which differentiated more and more one from the other, and required different conditions, different environment, different stimuli, until he seemed to be two personalities in one. It was a development which, as it proceeded, produced a tremendous strain on his physical and mental resources; and at one time between 1897-8 threatened him with a complete nervous collapse.

And there was for a time distinct opposition between these two natures which made it extremely difficult for him to adjust his life, for the two conditions which were equally imperative in their demands upon him. His preference, naturally, was for the intimate creative work which he knew grew out of his inner self; though the exigencies of life, his dependence on his pen for his livelihood—and, moreover the keen active interest 'William Sharp' took in all the movements of the day, literary and political, at home and abroad—required of him a great amount of applied study and work.

During those two years at Phenice Croft, to which he always looked back with deep thankfulness, he was the dreamer—he was testing his new powers, living his new life, and delighting in the opportunity for psychic experimentation. And for such experimentation the place seemed to him to be peculiarly suited. To me it seemed "uncanny," and to have a haunted atmosphere—created unquestionably by him—that I found difficult to live in, unless the sun was shining. This uncanny effect was felt by more than one friend; by Mr. Murray Gilchrist, for instance, whose impressions were described by his host in one of the short "Tragic Landscapes."

Pharais was the first of the books written and published under the pseudonym of "Fiona Macleod."

The first reference to it is in the afore noted diary: "Have also done the first part of a Celtic romance called *Pharais*." The next is in a letter written to Mrs. Janvier from St. Andrews, on 12th August, 1893, before the author had decided on the use of a pseudonym:

> " ... The white flowers you speak of are the moondaisies, are they not?—what we call moonflowers in the west of Scotland and ox-eye daisies in England, and marguerites in France?... It is very strange that you should write about them to me just as I was working out a scene in a strange Celtic tale I am writing, called *Pharais*, wherein the weird charm and terror of a night of tragic significance is brought home to the reader (or I hope so) by a stretch of dew-wet moonflowers glimmering white through the mirk of a dusk laden with sea mists. Though this actual scene was written a year or two ago—and one or two others of the first part of *Pharais*—I am going to re-write it, your letter having brought some subtle inspiration with it. *Pharais* is a foil to the other long story I am working at. While *it* is full of Celtic romance and dream and the glamour of the mysterious, the other is a comedy of errors—somewhat in the nature, so far, of "A Fellowe and His Wife" (I mean as to style). In both, at least the plot, the central action, the germinal *motif*, is original: though I for one lay little stress on extraneous originality in comparison with that inner originality of individual life.... I have other work on the many occupied easels in the studio of my mind: but of nothing of this need I speak at present. Of minor things, the only one of any importance is a long article on a subject wherein I am (I suppose) the only specialist among English men of letters—the Belgian literary Renaissance since 1880. It is entitled "La Jeune Belgique," and will appear in (I understand) the September number of *The Nineteenth Century*...."

> " ... We must each 'gang our ain gait.' I'm singularly indifferent to what other people think in any matter where I feel strongly myself. Perhaps it is for this reason that I am rarely 'put out' by adverse criticism or opinion—except on technical shortcomings. I do a lot of my own work here lying out on the sand-dunes by the sea. Yesterday I had a strange experience. I was writing in pencil in *Pharais* of death by the sea—and almost at my feet a drowned corpse was washed in by the tide and the slackening urgency of the previous night's gale. The body proves to be that of a man from the opposite Forfar coast. It had been five days in the water, and death had played havoc with his dignity of lifeless manhood. I learned later that his companion had been found three days ago, tide-drifted in the estuary of the Tay. It was only a bit of flotsam, in a sense, but that poor derelict so sullenly surrendered of the sea changed for me, for a time, the aspect of those blithe waters I love so well. In the evening I walked along the same sands. The sea purred like a gigantic tigress, with a whisper of peace and rest and an infinite sweet melancholy. What a sepulchral fraud....
>
> "Life seems to move, now high and serene and incredibly swift as an albatross cleaving the upper air, now as a flood hurled across rocks and chasms and quicksands. But it is all life—even the strangely still and quiet backwaters, even, indeed, the same healthful commonplace lagoons where one havens so gladly often...."

Three months later, he wrote to Mr. Richard Stoddart and proposed for serial publication in *Lippincotts* a romance to be called *Nostalgia*—which was never written. In the same letter he speaks of "another story, *Pharais*," which he describes as "written deeply in the Celtic spirit and from the Celtic standpoint." Neither suggestion was accepted;

and the author decided to issue *Pharais* as soon as possible in book form, and not under his own name.

When in the following year the book was published the author, forgetting that he had ever written Mrs. Janvier about it, sent a copy of it to her, and said merely that it was a book in which he was interested. Whereupon she wrote and asked if the book were not his own, and he replied:

> " ... Yes, *Pharais is mine*. It is a book out of my heart, out of the core of my heart. I wrote it with the pen dipped in the very ichor of my life. It has reached people more than I dreamt of as likely. In Scotland especially it has stirred and created a new movement. Here, men like George Meredith, Grant Allen, H. D. Traill, and Theodore Watts hailed it as a 'work of genius.' Ignored in some quarters, abused in others, and unheeded by the 'general reader,' it has yet had a reception that has made me deeply glad. It is the beginning of my true work. Only one or two know I am 'Fiona Macleod.' Let you and my dear T.A.J. preserve my secret. I trust you.
>
> "You will find more of me in *Pharais* than in anything I have written. Let me add that you will find *The Mountain Lovers*, at which I am now writing when I can, more elemental still, while simpler.... By blood I am part Celt, and partly so by upbringing, by Spirit wholly so.... One day I will tell you of some of the strange old mysteries of earlier days I have part learned, part divined, and other things of the spirit. You can understand how I cannot do my true work, in this accursed London."

A little later he wrote:

> " ... I resent too close identification with the so-called Celtic renaissance. If my work is to depend solely on its Gaelic connection, then let it go, as go it must. My work must be beautiful in itself—Beauty is

a Queen and must be served as a Queen.

" ... You have asked me once or twice about F. M., why I took her name: and how and when she came to write *Pharais*. It is too complex to tell you just now.... The name was born naturally: (of course I had associations with the name Macleod.) It, Fiona, is very rare now. Most Highlanders would tell you it was extinct—even as the diminutive of Fionaghal (Flora). But it is not. It is an old Celtic name (meaning "a fair maid") still occasionally to be found. I know a little girl, the daughter of a Highland clergyman, who is called Fiona. *All* my work is so intimately wrought with my own experiences that I cannot tell you about *Pharais*, etc., without telling you my whole life."

As a matter of fact *Pharais* was not the first written expression of the new work. It was preceded by a short story entitled "The Last Fantasy of James Achanna" that in the autumn of 1893 was sent to *The Scots Observer*. It was declined by Mr. Henley who, however, wrote a word of genuine encouragement. He accepted Mr. Henley's decision, and the story was never reprinted in its first form. It was re-written several times; it was included in *The Dominion of Dreams* as "The Archer." During the writing of *Pharais* the author began to realise how much the feminine element dominated in the book, that it grew out of the subjective, or feminine side of his nature. He, therefore, decided to issue the book under the name of *Fiona Macleod*, that "flashed ready made" into his mind. Mrs. Janvier wrote later and asked why he, a man, chose to send forth good work under the signature of a woman. He answered:

" ... I can write out of my heart in a way I could not do as William Sharp, and indeed I could not do so if I were the woman Fiona Macleod is supposed to

be, unless veiled in scrupulous anonymity....

"This rapt sense of oneness with nature, this *cosmic ecstasy* and elation, this wayfaring along the extreme verges of the common world, all this is so wrought up with the romance of life that I could not bring myself to expression by my outer self, insistent and tyrannical as that need is.... My truest self, the self who is below all other selves, and my most intimate life and joys and sufferings, thoughts, emotions and dreams, *must* find expression, yet I cannot save in this hidden way."

He was wont to say "Should the secret be found out, Fiona dies." Later in the year he wrote: "Sometimes I am tempted to believe I am half a woman, and so far saved as I am by the hazard of chance from what a woman can be made to suffer if one let the light of the common day illuminate the avenues and vistas of her heart...."

A copy of *Vistas* and one of *Pharais* were sent to George Meredith, who wrote in acknowledgment to the author:

BOX HILL, July 5, 1894.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

'Vistas' gave me pleasure, and a high lift at times. There is the breath in it. Only beware of a hurried habit of mind that comes of addiction to Impressionist effects. They engender that mood in readers ultimately.

'Pharais' is in many respects most admirable—pure Celtic salt. I should have written to thank the writer before this: but I am at work up to an hour of the dinner bell day by day at the finish of this novel—and not too happy about it.

Will you beg Miss Macleod's excuse of me for the moment? Her book is one to fly sure to the mark. I hope you will come to me in September, when I shall

be back there.

Give my warm respects to your wife.

Ever faithfully yours,

GEORGE MEREDITH.

The following letter to Mr. Grant Allen is one of the earliest that were signed with the pseudonym:

1894.

GRANT ALLEN, ESQ.:

DEAR SIR,

I have only now ascertained that you are in England. I was informed that you were in the south of France. Some short time ago I asked Mr. Frank Murray of Derby to forward to you a copy of my just published romance *Pharais*. I now write to ask if you will accept it as a slight token of homage from the youngest and latest of Celtic writers to the most brilliant champion of the Celtic genius now living. I do not, however, send it by way of inveigling you to write about it, much as any word of yours would mean to me both in service and honour: but primarily because of your deep and vivid sympathy not only with nature but with the Celtic vision of nature—and, also, let me add, because of the many delightful hours I have enjoyed with your writings.

Faithfully yours,

FIONA MACLEOD.

Mr. Grant Allen replied:

THE CROFT, HINDHEAD.

DEAR MADAM,

I thank you for your book, and still more for your charming and too flattering letter. *Pharais* strikes me as a beautiful and poetical piece of work. It is instinct with the dreamy Celtic genius, and seems to come to us straight from the Isles of the Dead. That shadowy Ossianic spirit, as of your misty straits and

your floating islands, reminds me exactly of the outlook from the western mountains over the summer-blue belted sea as I saw it once on an August morning at Oban. Too shadowy, sometimes, and too purely poetical, I fear, for your Saxon readers. But the opening sentences are beautiful, and the nature-studies and the sense of colour throughout are charming. Now, after so much praise, will you forgive a few questions and a word of criticism? You are, I take it, a young writer, and so an older hand may give you a hint or two. Don't another time interlard your English with Gaelic. Even a confirmed Celtomaniac like myself finds it a trifle distracting. Don't say "the English," and "the Gaelic." Give a little more story to less pure poetry. Of course I recognise that your work is an idyll, not a novel, a cameo, not a woodcut; but even so, it seems to me a trifle too dreamy. Forgive this frankness, and remember that success still lies in the lap of the Saxon. Also that we Celts have our besetting sins, and that perfection in literature lies in avoiding excess in any direction, even that of one's own best qualities. Now a question or two—because you interest me. How in English letters would you write *Pharais* phonetically, or as near it as our clumsy southern lips can compass? (I have not "the Gaelic," and my Celtic blood is half Irish, half Breton.) And how "Fiona?" Is it something like Feena? And are you Miss or Mrs.? And do you live in Edinburgh? If ever you come south, we hope you will let us know; for my wife read your book before I did, and interested me in it by sketching the story for me. Now see how long a letter I have written unto you, going the Apostle one better, with my own left hand: only the busiest man in England could have found time to do it.

Faithfully yours,

GRANT ALLEN.

Questions as to the identity of the author were

already ‘in the air’; “F. M’s” answer to Mr. Allen shows that the author felt ‘her’ security menaced:

KILCREGGAN, ARGYLL,
1894.

DEAR MR. GRANT ALLEN,

You are very kind indeed—both to write to me, you who are so busy, and to promise to do anything you can for my book. It is very good of you. Truly, it is the busiest people who find time to do what is impossible to idle folk....

I have just had a letter of deeply gratifying praise and recognition from Mr. George Meredith, who says he finds my work ‘rare and distinctive.’ He writes one phrase, memorable as coming from him: “Be sure that I am among those readers of yours whom you kindle.”

Permit me, dear Mr. Allen, to make a small request of you. If you are really going to be so kind as to say anything about my book I trust you will not hint playfully at any other authorship having suggested itself to you—or, indeed, at my name being a pseudonym. And, sure, it will be for pleasure to me if you will be as scrupulous with Mr. Meredith or anyone else in private, as in public, if chance should ever bring my insignificant self into any chit-chat.

My name is really Fiona (i. e. Fionnaghal—of which it is the diminutive: as Maggie, Nellie, or Dair are diminutives of Margaret, Helen, or Alasdair).

I hope to have the great pleasure of seeing Mrs. Allen and yourself when (as is probable) I come south in the late autumn or sometime in November.

Sincerely and gratefully yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

ST. ANDREWS, 1894.

DEAR MR. GRANT ALLEN,

How generous you are! If it were not for fear of what you say about my Gaelic phrases I should quote one to the effect that the wild bees that make the beautiful thoughts in your brain also leave their honey on your lips.

Your *Westminster* review has given me keen pleasure—and for everything in it, and for all the kind interest behind it, I thank you cordially.

What you say about the survival of folklore as a living heritage is absolutely true—*how* true perhaps few know, except those who have lived among the Gaels, of their blood, and speaking the ancient language. The Celtic paganism lies profound and potent still beneath the fugitive drift of Christianity and Civilisation, as the deep sea beneath the coming and going of the tides. No one can understand the islander and remote Alban Gael who ignores or is oblivious of the potent pagan and indeed elementally barbaric forces behind all exterior appearances. (This will be more clearly shown in my next published book, a vol. of ten Celtic tales and episodes—with, I suppose, a more wide and varied outlook on life, tho' narrow at that!—than either of its predecessors.) But excuse this rambling. Your review is all the more welcome to me as it comes to me during a visit to friends at St. Andrews, and to me, alas, the East Coast of Scotland is as foreign and remote in all respects as though it were Jutland or Finland....

Again with thanks, dear Mr. Allen,

Most sincerely yours,

FIONA MACLEOD.

P. S. In his letter Mr. Sharp says (writing to me in his delightful shaky Gaelic) that 'both Grant and Nellie Allen are *clach-chreadhain*.' It took me some time to understand the compliment. *Clach-chreadh* means 'stone of clay'—i. e. *a Brick*!

That Mr. Grant Allen was half persuaded as to the

identity of the author is shown in the following invitation:

THE CROFT, HINDHEAD,
July 12, 1894.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Kindly excuse foolscap, I am out of note-paper, and on this remote hilltop can't easily get any. As for the type-writing, I am reduced to that altogether, through writer's cramp, which makes my right hand useless even for this machine, which I am compelled to work with my left hand only.—As to *Pharais*, I will confess I read it with some doubt as to whether it was not your own production; and after I had written my letter to Miss Macleod, I took it to my wife and said, "Now, if this is William Sharp, what a laugh and a crow he will have over me!" Le Gallienne, who is stopping with us, was sure it was yours; but on second thoughts, I felt certain, in spite of great likeness of style, there was a feminine touch in it, and sent on my letter. All the same, however, I was not quite satisfied you were not taking us in, especially as your book with Blanche Willis Howard had shown one how womanly a tone you could adopt when it suited you; and I shan't feel absolutely at rest on the subject till I have seen the "beautiful lassie" in person. If she turns out to be W. S. in disguise, I shall owe you a bad one for it; for I felt my letter had just that nameless tinge of emotion one uses towards a woman, and a beginner, but which would be sadly out of place with an old hand like yourself, who has already won his spurs in the field of letters.

We shall be glad to make your cousin's acquaintance (supposing her to exist) in October. It will afford us the opportunity we have long desired of asking you and Mrs. Sharp to come and see us in our moorland cottage, all up among the heather. Indeed, we have had it in our minds all summer to invite you—you are of those whom one would wish

to know more intimately. I have long felt that the Children of To-morrow ought to segregate somehow from the children of to-day, and live more in a world of their own society.

With united kindest regards, and solemn threats of vengeance if you are still perpetrating an elaborate hoax against me,

I am ever
Yours very sincerely,
GRANT ALLEN.

Unfortunately, there was an imperative reason for bringing our residence at Rudgwick to a close. The damp, autumnal days in the little cottage on its clay soil, and the fatigue of constantly going up and down to town in order to do the work of the Art critic for the *Glasgow Herald*—which I for some time had undertaken—proved too severe a strain on me, and I found that in the winter months I could not remain at Phenice Croft without being seriously ill. So with great reluctance we decided to give it up at midsummer. I was anxious that we should seek for another cottage, on a main line of railway, and on sandy soil; but my husband feared to make another experiment and preferred that we should make our headquarters in London once again, and that he should go into the country whenever the mood necessitated. But his regret was deep. Phenice Croft had seen the birth of Fiona Macleod; he had lived there with an intensity of inner life beyond anything he had ever experienced. He knew that life in town would create difficulties for him, yet it seemed the wisest compromise to make. Our difficulty of choice was mainly one of ways and means; a considerable part of the ordinary work was in my hands, and I found it difficult to do it satisfactorily away from London. He expressed his regret in a letter to Mr.

Murray Gilchrist:

PHENICE CROFT,
27th March, 1894.

MY DEAR GILCHRIST,

You would have heard from me before this—but I have been too unwell. Besides, I have had extreme pressure of matters requiring every possible moment I could give. My wife's health, too, has long been troubling me: and we have just decided that (greatly to my disappointment) we must return to Hampstead to live. Personally, I regret the return to town (or half town) more than I can say: but the matter is one of paramount importance, so there is nothing else to be done. We leave at midsummer. As for me, one of my wander-fits has come upon me: the Spring-madness has got into the blood: the sight of green hedgerows and budding leaves and the blue smoke rising here and there in the woodlands has wrought some chemic *furor* in my brain. Before the week is out I hope to be in Normandy—and after a day or two by the sea at Dieppe, and then at beautiful and romantic Rouen, to get to the green lanes and open places, and tramp 'towards the sun.' I'll send you a line from somewhere, if you care to hear.

And now, enough about myself. I have often meant to write to you in detail about your *Stone-Dragon*....

I believe in you, camerado mio, but you must take a firm grip of the reins; in a word, be the driver, not the driven. I think you ought to be able to write a really romantic romance. I hope *The Labyrinth* may be this book: if not, then it will pave the way. But I think you should see more of actual life: and not dwell so continually in an atmosphere charged with your own imaginings—the glamour through which you see life in the main at present.

Probably you are wise to spend the greater part of each year as you do: but part of the year should be

spent otherwise—say in a town like London, or Paris, or in tramping through alien lands, France or Belgium, Scandinavia, or Germany, or Italy, or Spain: if not, in Scotland, or Ireland, or upon our Isles, or remote counties.

It is because I believe in you that I urge you to beware of your own conventions. Take your pen and paper, a satchel, and go forth with a light heart. The gods will guide *you* to strange things, and strange things to you. You ought to *see* more, to *feel* more, to *know* more, at first hand. Be not afraid of excess. "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," says Blake, and truly.... Meanwhile let me send you a word of sunshine. To be alive and young and in health, is a boon so inestimable that you ought to fall on your knees among your moorland heather and thank the gods. Dejection is a demon to be ruled. We cannot always resist his tyranny, but we can always refuse to become bondagers to his usurpation. Look upon him as an Afreet to be exorcised with a cross of red-hot iron. He is a coward weakling, after all: take him by the tail and swing him across the moor or down the valley. Swing up into your best.

Be brave, strong, self-reliant. Then you live.

Your friend

WILLIAM SHARP.

We took a small flat in South Hampstead (Rutland House, Greencroft Gardens) that stood high enough for us to see, on clear days, the line of the Surrey hills from the windows, and to give us a fine stretch of sky above the chimney pots.

The night before leaving Phenice Croft, a lovely still evening, he wrote the little poem,

THE WHITE PEACE

It lies not on the sunlit hill

Nor in the sunlit gleam
Nor ever in any falling wave
Nor ever in running stream—

But sometimes in the soul of man
Slow moving through his pain
The moonlight of a perfect peace
Floods heart and brain.

and sent it to me in a letter (for I had gone to town in advance of him), and told me:

> "Before I left I took up a handful of grassy turf, and kissed it three times, and then threw it to the four quarters—so that the Beauty of the Earth might be seen by me wherever I went and that no beauty I had seen or known there should be forgotten. Then I kissed the chestnut tree on the side lawn where I have seen and heard so much: from the springing of the dream flowers, to the surge of the sea in *Pharais*."

Thence he went to Scotland and wrote to me from Kilcreggan, where he was staying with his mother and sisters till I could join him:

> "I told you about Whistlefield? how it, and all the moorland parts about here just now, is simply a boggy sop, to say nothing of the railway works. I hope we'll have fine weather in Iona: it will be lovely there if we go....
>
> (By the way Mr. Traill had a gratifying notice of *Pharais* in the *Graphic* a week or two ago.)
>
> I have made friends here with a Celtic Islesman from Iona who is settled here: and have learned some more legends and customs etc. from him—also got a copy of an ancient MS. map of Iona with all its fields, divisions, bays, capes, isles, etc. He says my pronunciation of Gaelic is not only surprisingly good, but is distinctively that of the Isles.
>
> I have learned the rune also of the reading of the

> spirit. The 'influence' itself seems to me purely hypnotic. I was out with this man McC—— on Saty. night last in a gale, in a small two-sailed wherry. We flew before the squalls like a wild horse, and it was glorious with the shriek of the wind, the heave and plunge of the boat, and the washing of the water over the gunwales. Twice 'the black wind' came down upon us out of the hills, and we were nearly driven under water. He kept chanting and calling a wild sea-rune, about a water-demon of the isles, till I thought I saw it leaping from wave to wave after us. Strangely, he is a different man the moment others are present. He won't speak a word of Gaelic, nor be 'Celtic' in any way, nor even give the word as to what will be doing in the isles at this time or any other. This, however, I have noticed often: and all I have ever learned has been in intimacy and privily and more or less casually. On Sunday and Monday he avoided me, and would scarce speak: having given himself away and shown his Celtic side—a thing now more than ever foreign to the Celtic nature, which has become passionately reticent. But a few words in Gaelic, and a private talk, put all right again. Last night I got the rune of the 'Knitting of the Knots' and some information about the *Dalt* and the *Cho-Alt* about which I was not clear. He has seen the Light of the Dead, and his mother saw (before her marriage, and before she even saw the man himself) her husband crossing a dark stream followed by his four unborn children, and two in his arms whom afterwards she bore still-born...."

To me the summer was memorable because of my first visit to Iona. While there he wrote part of *The Sin-Eater*, and its prefatory dedication to George Meredith, and projected some of the St. Columba tales; he renewed impressions of his earlier days on the sacred isle, and stored new experiences which he afterwards embodied in his long essay on Iona

published in *The Divine Adventure* volume.

From that Isle of Dreams "Fiona" wrote to Mrs. Tynan-Hinkson:

ISLE OF IONA,
September, 1894.

DEAR MRS. HINKSON,

I am, in summer and autumn, so much of a wanderer through the Isles and Western Highlands that letters sometimes are long in reaching me. But your kind note (and enclosure) has duly followed me from Edinburgh to Loch Goil in eastern Argyll and thence deviously here. It will be a great pleasure to me to read what you have to say in the *Illus. London News* or elsewhere, and I thank you. I wish you could be here. Familiar with your poetry as I am, I know how you would rejoice not only in the Iona that is the holy Icolmkill but also in the Iona that is Ithona, the ancient Celtic Isle of the Druids. There is a beauty here that no other place has, so unique is it. Of course it does not appeal to all. The Sound of Iona divides the Island from the wild Ross of Mull by no more than a mile of water; and it is on this eastern side that the village and the ancient Cathedral and ruined Nunnery etc. stand. Here it is as peaceful as, on the west side, it is wild and grand. I read your letter last night, at sunset, while I was lying on the Cnoc-an-Angeal, the hillock on the west where the angel appeared to St. Columba. To the north lay the dim features of the Outer Hebrides: to the west an unbroken wilderness of waves till they fall against Labrador: to the south, though invisible, the coastline of Ireland. There was no sound, save the deep hollow voice of the sea, and a strange reverberation in a hollow cave underground. It was a very beautiful sight to see the day wane across the ocean, and then to move slowly homeward through the gloaming, and linger awhile by the Street of the Dead near the ruined Abbey of Columba. But these

Isles are so dear to me that I think everyone must feel alike!

I remain
Sincerely yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

P. S. I enclose a gillieflower from close to St. Columba's tomb.

In November came a letter from Mr. Stedman:

137 WEST 78TH ST.,
NEW YORK.

MY DEAREST FRIEND BEYOND SEAS,

For this in truth you now are. An older poet and comrade than you once held that place in my thoughts, but Time and Work have somehow laid the sword between us—and neither of us is to blame. I never so well obeyed Emerson's advice to recruit our friendship (as we grow older) as when I won, I scarcely know how or why, your unswerving and ever increasing affection. In truth, again, it has been of the greatest service to me, during the most trying portion of my life—the period in which you have given me so much warmth and air—and never has it been of more worth than now you might well think otherwise.

My birthday began for me with the "Sharp Number" of *The Chapbook*. I don't know what fact of it gave me the more pleasure (it came at a time when I had a-plenty to worry me)—the beautiful autographic tribute to myself or the honour justly paid to my dear Esquire-at-arms, whose superb portrait is the envy of our less fortunate Yankee-torydons. The last five years have placed you so well to the front, on both sides of the Atlantic, that I can receive no more satisfying tributes than those which you have given me before the world. I feel, too, that it is only during these years that you have come to your full literary strength, there is nothing which the

author of your “Ballads” and of “Vistas” cannot do.

It is a noteworthy fact which you will be glad to hear, that your letter lay by my plate, when I came down to breakfast on the morning of October the eight! The stars in their courses must be in league with you....

Mrs. Stedman sends her love, and says that your portrait is that of a man grown handsomer, and, she trusts, more discreet and ascetic! The month and this letter are now ending with midnight.

Ever affectionately yours

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

The Chap-book was a little semi-monthly issue published by Messrs. Stone and Kimball, Chicago. No. 9, the “William Sharp” number, appeared on the 15th of September, three days after that author’s birthday. It contained the reproduction of an autograph signed poem, by William Sharp “To Edmund Clarence Stedman in Birthday Greeting 8th October”; an appreciation of William Sharp’s Poems by Bliss Carmen; “The Birth of a Soul” one of the Dramatic Interludes afterwards included in *Vistas*, and a portrait of the Author.

Notwithstanding the paramount interest to the author of the “F. M.” expression of himself as, “W. S.” he was not idle. After a visit to Mr. Murray Gilchrist in the latter’s home on the Derbyshire moors, W. S. wrote his story “The Gypsy Christ,” founded on a tradition which he had learned from his gipsy friends, and set in a weird moorland surroundings. In *Harper’s* there appeared a description of the night-wanderers on the Thames’ embankment, pathetic frequenters of “The Hotel of the Beautiful Star.” The July number of *The Portfolio* consisted of a monograph by him on “Fair Women in Painting and Poetry” (afterwards published in

bookform by Messrs. Seeley) which he, at first, intended to dedicate to Mr. George Meredith. His 'second thought' was approved of by the novelist, who wrote his acknowledgment:

"You do an elusive bit of work with skill. It seems to me, that the dedication was wisely omitted. Thousands of curdling Saxons are surly almost to the snarl at the talk about 'woman.' Next to the Anarchist, we are hated."

The month of July was saddened by the death of our intimate and valued friend Walter Pater; upon that friend and his work William Sharp wrote a long appreciation which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Another death, at the year-end, caused him great regret, that of Christina Rossetti, whom he had held in deep regard. He felt, as he wrote to her surviving brother: "One of the rarest and sweetest of English singers is silent now. 1882 and 1894 were evil years for English poetry." Later he wrote a careful study of her verse for *The Atlantic Monthly*.

As a Christmas card that year he gave me a little book of old wood-cut illustrations, reproduced and printed on Iona. On the inside of the cover he wrote what he held to be his creed. It is this:

CREDO

"The Universe is eternally, omnipresently and continuously filled with the breath of God.

"Every breath of God creates a new convolution in the brain of Nature: and with every moment of change in the brain of Nature, new loveliness is wrought upon the earth.

"Every breath of God creates a new convolution in the brain of the Human Spirit, and with every

moment of change in the brain of the Human Spirit, new hopes, aspirations, dreams, are wrought within the Soul of the Living.

"And there is no Evil anywhere in the Light of this creative Breath: but only, everywhere, a redeeming from Evil, a winning towards Good."

CHAPTER XV

THE MOUNTAIN LOVERS

The Sin-Eater

It was soon evident that the noise and confused magnetism of the great City weighed disastrously on William Sharp. At the New Year, 1895, he wrote to a friend:

"London I do not like, though I feel its magnetic charm, or sorcery. I suffer here. The gloom, the streets, the obtrusion and intrusion of people, all conspire against thought, dream, true living. It is a vast reservoir of all the evils of civilised life with a climate which makes me inclined to believe that Dante came here instead of to Hades."

The strain of the two kinds of work he was attempting to do, the immediate pressure of the imaginative work became unbearable, "the call of the sea," imperative.

As he has related in "Earth, Fire and Water": "It was all important for me not to leave in January, and in one way I was not ill-pleased for it was a wild winter. But one night I awoke hearing a rushing sound in the street, the sound of water. I would have thought no more of it had I not recognised the

troubled sound of the tide, and the sucking and lapsing of the flow in muddy hollows. I rose and looked out. It was moonlight, and there was no water. When after sleepless hours I rose in the grey morning I heard the splash of waves, I could not write or read and at last I could not rest. On the afternoon of that day the waves dashed up against the house."

An incident showed me that his malaise was curable by one method only. A telegram had come for him that morning, and I took it to his study. I could get no answer. I knocked, louder, then louder, —at last he opened the door with a curiously dazed look in his face. I explained. He answered "Ah, I could not hear you for the sound of the waves!" It was the first indication to me, in words, of what troubled him.

That evening he started for Glasgow en route for Arran, where I knew he would find peace.

"The following morning we (for a kinswoman was with me) stood on the Greenock pier waiting for the Hebridean steamer and before long were landed on an island, almost the nearest we could reach that I loved so well.... That night, with the sea breaking less than a score of yards from where I lay, I slept, though for three nights I had not been able to sleep. When I woke the trouble was gone."

There is a curious point in his telling of this episode. Although the essay is written over the signature of "Fiona Macleod" and belongs to that particular phase of work, nevertheless it is obviously "William Sharp" who *tells* the story, for the "we" who stood on the pier at Greenock is himself in his dual capacity; "his kinswoman" is his other self.

He wrote to me on reaching his destination:

CORRIE, ISLE OF ARRAN,
20: 2: 1895.

"You will have had my telegram of my safe arrival here. There was no snow to speak of along the road from Brodick (for no steamer comes here)—so I had neither to ride nor sail as threatened: indeed, owing to the keen frost (which has made the snow like powder) there is none on the mountains except in the hollows, though the summits and flanks are crystal white with a thin veil of frozen snow.

It was a most glorious sail from Ardrossan. The sea was a sheet of blue and purple washed with gold. Arran rose above all like a dream of beauty. I was the sole passenger in the steamer, for the whole island! What made the drive of six miles more beautiful than ever was the extraordinary fantastic beauty of the frozen waterfalls and burns caught as it were in the leap. Sometimes these immense icicles hung straight and long, like a Druid's beard: sometimes in wrought sheets of gold, or magic columns and spaces of crystal.

Sweet it was to smell the pine and the heather and bracken, and the salt weed upon the shore. The touch of dream was upon everything, from the silent hills to the brooding herons by the shore.

After a cup of tea, I wandered up the heights behind. In these vast solitudes peace and joy came hand in hand to meet me. The extreme loneliness, especially when I was out of sight of the sea at last, and could hear no more the calling of the tide, and only the sough of the wind, was like balm. Ah, those eloquent silences: the deep pain-joy of utter isolation: the shadowy glooms and darkness and mystery of night-fall among the mountains.

In that exquisite solitude I felt a deep exaltation grow. The flowing of the air of the hills laved the parched shores of my heart....

There is something of a strange excitement in the

knowledge that two people are here: so intimate and yet so far-off. For it is with me as though Fiona were asleep in another room. I catch myself listening for her step sometimes, for the sudden opening of a door. It is unawaredly that she whispers to me. I am eager to see what she will do—particularly in *The Mountain Lovers*. It seems passing strange to be here with her alone at last....”

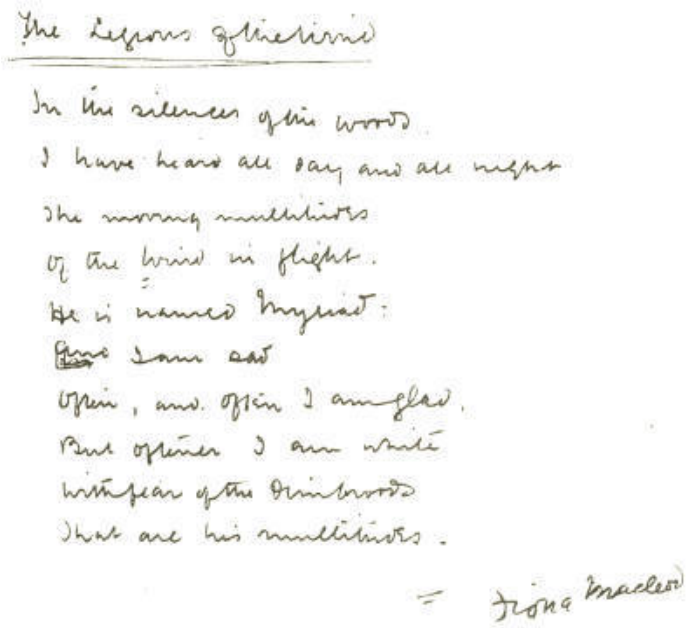
The Mountain Lovers was published in the summer of 1895 by Mr. John Lane. A copy of it was sent to Mr. George Meredith with the following letter:

9 Upper Coltbridge Terrace,
Murrayfield.

Dear Sir,

Will you gratify one of your most loyal readers by the acceptance of the accompanying book? Nothing helped

me so much, or gave me so much enduring pleasure, as your generous message to me about my first book, *Pharais*, which you sent through my cousin, Mr. William Sharp.


The Lesson of the Leaves

In the silences of the woods
I have heard all day and all night
The moving multitudes
Of the wind in flight.
He is named Mystery:
Ever I am sad
Often, and often I am glad,
But oftener I am wild
With fear of the Dim-hoods
That are his multitudes.

= Fiona Macleod

Fac-simile of an autograph "Fiona Macleod" poem by William Sharp

Naturally, I was eager it should appeal to you—not only because I have long taken keener delight in your writings than in those of any living author, but also because you are Prince of Celtland....

I hope you will be able to read, and perhaps care for, *The Mountain Lovers*. It is not a story of the Isles, like *Pharais*, but of the remote hill-country in the far northwest. I know how busy you are: so do not consider it necessary to acknowledge either the book or this letter. Still, if some happy spirit move you, I need not say that even the briefest line from you would be a deep pleasure to

Yours, with gratitude and homage,

FIONA MACLEOD.

Acknowledgment came swiftly:

BOX HILL, July 13, 1895.

DEAR MADAM,

If I could have written on any matter out of my press of work when I received your *Pharais*, there would have been no delay with me to thank you for such a gift to our literature. This book on the "Mountains" promises as richly. Whether it touches equally deep, I cannot yet say. I find the same thrill in it, as of the bard on the three-stringed harp, and the wild western colour over sea and isles; true spirit of the mountains. How rare this is! I do not know it elsewhere. Be sure that I am among those readers of yours whom you kindle. I could write more, but I have not recovered from the malady of the *degoût de la plume*, consequent on excess—and I pray that it may never fall on you. For though it is wisdom at my age to cease to write, it is not well to be taught to cease by distaste. That is a giving of oneself to the enemy. I have to be what I am, and I disclose it to win your pardon for my inexpressiveness when I am warmly sensible of a generous compliment.

I am, Yours most faithful
GEORGE MEREDITH.

It was in 1895 that the Omar Khayyam Club under the Presidentship of Mr. Edward Clodd, who was an old personal friend of Mr. Meredith, elected to hold its summer dinner at the Burford Bridge Hotel. Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Watts-Dunton, Mr. George Gissing and William Sharp were among the guests. Mr. Clodd knew that it would be difficult to persuade Mr. Meredith to be present at the dinner. Nevertheless he lured him to the Hotel, and when coffee was served, (I quote from a contemporary account) "the beautiful face of the great novelist appeared within the doorway, and he was welcomed

with enthusiasm by all present. The president extended to Mr. Meredith the right hand of fellowship on behalf of the Club, in a charming and eloquent speech not devoid of pathos. Mr. Meredith in his reply declared that Mr. Clodd was the most amiable of Chairmen but the most dastardly of deceivers. Never before, he added, had he been on his legs to make a speech in public, now before he knew it he was bustled over the first fence, and found himself overrunning the hounds. 'I have my hands on the fellow at this moment' he continued laughingly 'and I could turn on him and rend him, but I spare him.' After a few graceful and characteristic sentences concerning the Club and its object, and Omar, and expressing his appreciation of his reception Mr. Meredith said in conclusion: 'I thank you from my heart, everyone of you.'"

Much to William Sharp's satisfaction he was elected member of the Omar Khayyam Club in the autumn of the same year. On receipt of the announcement of the fact the new member wrote to the President:

RUTLAND HOUSE,
2d Nov., 1895.

DEAR BROTHER-IN-OMAR,

On my return from Scotland the other day I found a note informing me that I had been elected an Omarian on the nomination of your distinguished self.

My thanks, cher confrère. 'A drop of my special grape to you,' as Omar might say, if he were now among us with a Hibernian accent! Herewith I post to you another babe, born into this ungrateful world so recently as yesterday.... Such as it is, I hope you may like it. "Ecce Puella" itself was written at white heat—and ran in ripples off the brain: and so is

probably readable.

"Fragments from The Lost Journals of Piero di Cosimo" when they appeared (some few years ago) won the high praise of Pater—but perhaps their best distinction is that they took in the cocksure and levelled the Omniscient. One critical wight complained that I was not literal (probably from the lack of knowledge of medieval Italian), which he clinched by the remark that he had compared my version with the original! I see that Silas Hocking has just published a book called "All men are liars." I would fain send a copy to that critic, even now. By the way, my cousin Miss Fiona Macleod wrote to me the other day for your address. I understand she wanted to send you a copy of her new book. If you get it, you should, as a folk-lorist, read the titular story, *The Sin-Eater*.

My wife joins with me in cordial regards, and I am

Sincerely yours,
WILLIAM SHARP.

The President replied:

19 CARLETON ROAD,
TUFNELL PARK
5th Nov.

MY DEAR SHARP,

It is an addition to the pleasant memories of my year of office to know that you are of the elect. You come in with Lang and Gissing. By the way, the next dinner is fixed for the sixth proximo. And it is an addition to a burden of obligation willingly borne which your kind gift imposes. For work such as yours has unending charm for me, because while Science was my first love and is still my dear mistress, I love her more for what she suggests than what she reveals. Facts, unrelated, bore me: only in their significance does one get abiding interest. That is

why your 'Vistas' and such like delicate, throbbing things attract me. Some of these were especially welcome on a recent dull Sunday by our 'cold restless sea,' on which in bright days you promise to come with Allen to look at it from my window. Your delicious story of the critic sent me straight to the Journal of di Cosimo. How well you produce the archaic flavour: the style has a Celtic ring about it. As for 'Ecce Puella' I await the hearing of it from the voice of a 'puella' who likes your work. I was at Meredith's on Sunday week: he keeps wonderfully well for him: his talk is bright as his face is beautiful. He has his fling at me over the Burford Bridge deception, and says that my duplicity cost you all a fine speech. I tell him that the speech we had was good enough for 'the likes of us.' So Fiona Macleod is your cousin! She is of the 'elect.' I take it as most kind of her to send me her new book, which I have as yet but partly read, and am about to acknowledge. She holds a weird, strong pen, and will help the Celt to make further conquest of the dullard Saxons. Meredith and I talked about her "*Mountain Lovers*" when I was with him in August.

Kindest regards to Mrs. Sharp and yourself.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD CLODD.

In the Autumn of 1894 we had come in touch with Professor and Mrs. Patrick Geddes of Edinburgh, and a friendship with far reaching results for "Fiona Macleod" arose between the two men. Both were idealists, keen students of life and nature; cosmopolitan in outlook and interest, they were also ardent Celts who believed in the necessity of preserving the finer subtle qualities and the spiritual heritage of their race against the encroaching predominance of materialistic ideas and aims of the day.

It was the desire and dream of such idealists and thinkers as Professor Geddes, and those associated with him, to preserve and nurture what is of value and of spiritual beauty in the race, so that it should fuse into and work with, or become part of, the great acquisitions and marvellous discoveries of modern thought. To hold to the essential beauty and thought of the past, while going forward eagerly to meet the new and ever increasing knowledge, was the desire of both men. In their aims they were in sympathy with one another; their manner of approach and methods of work were different. Patrick Geddes—biologist—was concerned primarily with the practical and scientific expression of his ideals; William Sharp was concerned primarily with expression through the art of words. Mutually sympathetic, they were eager to find some way of collaboration.

It was the dream of Professor Geddes to restore to Scotland something of its older pre-eminence in the world of thought, to recreate in Edinburgh an active centre and so arrest the tremendous centralising power of the metropolis of London; to replace the stereotyped methods of education by a more vital and synthetic form; and to encourage national art and literature. Towards the carrying out of these aims he had built a University Hall and Settlement for students, artists, etc. Perhaps the most important of his schemes, certainly the most important from the modern scientific point of view was the planning of the Outlook Tower—once an observatory—now an educational museum on the Castle Rock commanding a magnificent view of the city, of the surrounding country, of sea and sky; “an institution that is designed to be a method of viewing the problems of the science of life.” According to Professor Geddes

"Our little scholastic colony in the heart of Edinburgh symbolises a movement which while national to the core, is really cosmopolitan in its intellectual reach."

Grouped with this scientific effort, was the aim to revive the Celtic influence in art and literature; and the little colony contained a number of men and women who were working to that end; notably among the painters were James Cadenhead, Charles Mackie, Robert Burns, John Duncan, also Pittendrigh MacGillivray the sculptor; and among the writers Professor Arthur Thomson, Dr. Douglas Hyde, Nora Hopper, Rosa Mulholland, A. Percival Graves, S. R. Crockett, Elisée Réclus, Alexander Carmichael, Victor Branford, Professor Patrick Geddes, F. M. and W. S.

Into that eager and sympathetic atmosphere of linked thought and aim my husband and I were speedily drawn; and before long a Publishing Firm was established for the issuing of Celtic Literature and Works on Science. To Mr. and Mrs. Geddes was confided the important secret relating to the personality of "Fiona Macleod," to the thoughts and ideals that unlay 'her' projected work. It was arranged that William Sharp should be the Manager in the Firm of Patrick Geddes & Colleagues (which post he very soon relinquished for that of Literary Adviser); an arrangement which made it possible for that particular Colleague to publish three of his "F. M." books under his immediate supervision and from what was then one of the centres of the Celtic movement. This post, naturally, necessitated frequent visits to Edinburgh. For the month of August 1895 we took a flat in the neighbourhood of the University settlement so that we might share actively in the Summer Session.

It was an interesting experience. The students

came from England, Scotland, France, Italy, and Germany; among the lecturers in addition to Professors Geddes and Arthur Thomson were Elisée Réclus the geographer and his brother Elie Réclus, Edmond Demolins and Abbé Klein.

W. S. prepared his lectures in rough outline. His inexperience in such work led him to plan them as though he were drafting out twelve books, with far more material than he could possibly use in the time at his disposal. His subject was "Art and Life" divided into ten lectures:

I. Life & Art: Art & Nature: Nature.

II. Disintegration: Degeneration: Regeneration.

III. The Return to Nature: In Art, in Literature. The Literary Outlook in England & America.

IV. The Celtic Renascence, Ossian, Matthew Arnold, The Ancient Celtic Writers.

V. The Celtic Renascence. Contemporary. The School of Celtic Ornament.

VI. The Science of Criticism: What it is, what it is not. The Critical Ideal.

VII. Ernest Hello.

VIII. The Drama of Life, and Dramatists.

IX. The Ideals of Art—pagan, Mediæval, modern.

X. The Literary Ideal—Pagan, Mediæval. The Modern Ideal.

One lecture only was delivered; for during it he was seized with a severe heart attack and all his notes fell to the ground. It was with the greatest

effort that he was able to bring the lecture to a close: and he realised that he must not attempt to continue the course; the risk was too great. Therefore, while I remained in Edinburgh to keep open house for the entertainment of the students, he went to the little Pettycur Inn at Kinghorn, on the north side of The Firth of Forth, till I was able to join him at Tighnabruaich in the Kyles of Bute where we had taken a cottage with his mother and sisters for September.

Two volumes of short stories were published in the late Autumn. It was the writer's great desire that work should be issued by W. S. and by F. M. about the same time; in part to sustain what reputation belonged to his older Literary self, and in part to help to preserve the younger literary self's incognito. *Ecce Puella* published by Mr. Elkin Matthew for W. S. was a collection of stories &c. that had been written at different times and issued in various magazines, and prefaced by a revised and shortened version of the Monograph on "Fair Women in Painting and Poetry." It contained among other short stories one entitled "The Sister of Compassion," dedicated "to that Sister of compassion for all suffering animals, Mrs. Mona Caird," our dear friend. The other volume contained the first series of barbaric tales and myths of old Celtic days, "recaptured in dreams," that followed in quick succession from the pen of Fiona Macleod. *The Sin-Eater* was the first of the three F. M. books published by the new Scoto-Celtic publishers. The Author was gratified by favourable reviews from important journals, and by letters, from which I select two.

The first is from Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie:

THE OUTLOOK,

13 Astor Place,
May 23d, 1897.

My dear Friend,

The Sin-Eater came in holiday week and was one of my most welcome remembrances. I have read it with deep pleasure, almost with envy; so full is it of the stuff which makes literature. It has the vitality and beauty of a rich and living imagination. The secrets of the spirit are in it, and that fellowship with the profounder experiences which gets at the heart of a race. I have not forgotten your kind words about my own work; words which gave me new heart and hope. For you are the very type of man to whose mind I should like to appeal. The judgment of Mrs. Sharp, which you quote, gave me sincere pleasure. To get the attention of the few for whose opinion one cares most is a piece of great good fortune; to really find one's way to their hearts is best of all. I am looking forward to a good long talk with you. I wish you were here today. This is a divine May; balmy, fragrant, fresh; as if it had never been here before. There is enough *soul* in Miss Macleod's stories to set up a generation of average novelists. The work of the real writer seems to me a miracle; something from the sources of our life. I have found, however, so few among all my good literary friends who feel about literature as I do that I have felt at times as if I had no power of putting into words what lies in my heart. This does not mean that I have missed appreciation; on the contrary, I have had more than I deserve. But most of the younger men here regard literature so exclusively as a craft and so little as a revelation that I have often missed the kind of fellowship which you gave me. The deeper feeling is, however, coming back to us in the work of some of the newest men—Bliss Carman for instance. There is below such a book as "Vistas" a depth and richness of imagination which have rarely been disclosed here. I hope you will find time to send me an occasional letter. You will do me a real service. I am

now at work on a book which I hope will be deeper and stronger than anything I have done yet. There is the stir of a new life here, although it may be long in getting itself adequately expressed.

Yours fraternally,
HAMILTON W. MABIE.

The second is from Sir George Douglas, poet, scholar, and keen critic:

SPRINGWOOD PARK, KELSO,
23:12:95.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Many thanks for your interesting letter and enclosures. I am very glad to find that you think I have understood Miss Macleod's work, and I think it very good of her to have taken my out-spoken criticisms in such good part. Certainly if she thinks I can be of any use to her in reading over the proofs of "The Washer of the Ford," it will be a great pleasure to me. I shall probably be in Italy by the time she names—the end of Feb. but in these days of swift posts I hope that need not matter. What you tell me of Fiona's admirer is very interesting, and from my recollection of the way in which books and the fancied personality of their authors possessed my mind when I was a youth, I can well enter into his infatuation. Fortunately there were no women among my "influences," or I might have been in as bad a case as he! Would not this be a case for telling the secret, under pledges of course, if it were only to prevent mischief? By the way the whole incident seems to me to afford excellent material for literary treatment—not by you perhaps, nor yet by me (for the literary element in the material puts it outside your province, and makes it not quite the theme I like for my own use either) but say, for W.

Yours ever sincerely,
GEORGE DOUGLAS.

I do not quite agree with you as to the inception of Miss Macleod, and possibly this is a matter in which you are not the best possible judge. At any rate, without going into the matter, I fancy that I could establish the existence in works earlier than the Poems of Phantasy of a certain mystical tendency, (German perhaps rather than Celtic in its colouring at that time) but none the less akin to the mysticisms of F. M.

But I may be mistaken....

Our friend, Sir George Douglas, had followed the literary career of William Sharp with careful interest, and gave the same heed to the writings of "Fiona Macleod." After perusal of *The Sin-Eater* he made a careful study of the two methods of work, and wrote to the author to tell him he was finally convinced from internal evidence that William Sharp was the author of these books under discussion. He did not ask for confirmation but wished the author to know his conclusions. The latter, who valued not only the friendship but the critical appreciation of his correspondent, made no denial, but begged that the secret might be guarded. In Sir George Douglas' answer is a reference to a curious incident which had happened while we were at Rudgwick. A letter came from an unknown correspondence containing a proposal of marriage to Fiona Macleod. Whether it was intended as a "draw" or not we could not decide. The proposal was apparently written in all seriousness. Similarities of taste, details of position, profession etc., were carefully given. Acceptance was urged with all appearance of seriousness; therefore the refusal was worded with gravity befitting the occasion.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WASHER OF THE FORD

Owing to the publication of *The Sin-Eater* by a firm identified with the Scoto-Celtic movement the book attracted immediate attention. Dr. Douglas Hyde voiced the Irish feeling when he wrote to my husband: “I think Fiona Macleod’s books the most interesting thing in the new Scoto-Celtic movement, which I hope will march side by side with our own.” This movement was according to William Sharp “fundamentally the outcome of Ossian, and immediately of the rising of the sap in the Irish nation.” Following on the incentive given by such scholars as Windische, Whitly Stokes, Kuno Meyer, and the various Folklore societies, a Gaelic League had been formed by enthusiasts in Ireland, and in Scotland, for the preservation and teaching of the old Celtic tongue; for the study of the old literatures of which priceless treasures lay untouched in both countries, and for the encouragement of natural racial talent. Wales had succeeded in recovering the use of her Cymric tongue; and the expression in music of racial sentiment had become widespread throughout that country. Ireland and the Highlands looked forward to attaining to a similar result; and

efforts to that end were set agoing in schools, in classes, by means of such organisations as the Irish Feis Ceoil Committee, the Irish Literary Society and the Irish National Theatre. Their aim was to preserve some utterance of the national life, to mould some new kind of romance, some new element of thought, out of Irish life and traditions. Among the most eager workers were Dr. Douglas Hyde, Mr. W. B. Yeats, Mr. Standish O'Grady, Mr. George Russell (A.E.), Dr. George Sigerson, and Lady Gregory.

In Scotland much valuable work had been done by such men as Campbell of Islay, Cameron of Brodick, Mr. Alexander Carmichael; by the Gaelic League and the Highland Mod and its yearly gatherings. There were writers and poets also who used the old language and were consequently known within only a small area. No conspicuous modern Celtic work had hitherto been written in the English tongue until the appearance of the writings of Fiona Macleod, and later of Mr. Neil Munro. *The Sin-Eater* was therefore warmly welcomed on both sides of the Irish Channel, and Fiona Macleod, acclaimed as the leading representative of the Highland Gael, "our one and only Highland novelist." *The Irish Independent* pronounced her to be "the poet born," "her work is pure romance—and she strikes a strange note in modern literature, but it has the spirit of the Celt, and is another triumph for the Celtic genius."

In consequence of this reception, and of a special article in *The Bookman*, speculations began to be made concerning the unknown and unseen authoress. *The Highland News* in pursuance of its desire to awake in the Highlands of Scotland an active sympathy with the growing Scoto-Celtic movement, was anxious to give some details concerning the new writer. To that end Mr. John

Macleay wrote to William Sharp to ask if "considering your relation towards Miss Macleod, you might be able to tell me where I could obtain any personal information about her." In reply, a few sparse notes were sent; the author in question was said to have passed her girlhood in the West Highlands; her tastes, her dislike of towns and her love of seclusion, were among the characteristics described.

When, early in 1896, *The Highland News* wrote to several authors to ask their views on the subject of Literature in the Highlands, Mr. Grant Allen, Mrs. Katherine Tynan Hinkson, Fiona Macleod and William Sharp were among those writers whose letters, expressive of interest and sympathy, were published.

The two letters contributed by my husband were written necessarily, each from a slightly different standpoint. He welcomed the opportunity of appearing in print in the two characters for he believed that it would help to shield the secret concerning Fiona Macleod.

The publication by P. Geddes & Coll. of *The Washer of the Ford*—a collection of Tales and Legendary Moralities—aroused a fresh outbreak of curiosity. For instance, a sensational article appeared in *The Highland News* on the vexed question of the identity of the Highland writer, headed: "Mystery! Mystery! All in a Celtic Haze."

According to it: "Highland Celts in Glasgow are, I hear, hot on the scent of what they imagine to be a female James Macpherson. This, of course, is Miss Fiona Macleod. The way which Miss Macleod has led our Glasgow countrymen is strange indeed, and the literary detective has been busy. In the first place, it is asserted that Miss Fiona Macleod does not exist.

No one seems to have seen her. One gentleman called twice at her residence in Edinburgh, and Miss Macleod was out. She has written about Iona, but again in that well watched place her name is unknown. The natural inference, you will admit, is that there is something here to be "fahnd aht," as the Englishman says. Seeing that the non-existence of Miss Fiona Macleod has been thus established, the next point is who wrote those books to which that name is attached. Now, Mr. William Sharp has declared himself to be Miss Fiona Macleod's uncle; he has, too, interested himself in Celtic things. Isn't it the second natural inference that he has written the books? But Mr. Sharp has specifically denied the authorship. Then, of course, it must be Mr. and Mrs. Sharp in collaboration. But again comes denial. Mr. Sharp has addressed the following note to the Glasgow "Evening News," which has been somewhat persistent in casting doubt on the existence of Miss Macleod—"Miss Fiona Macleod is not Mr. William Sharp, Miss Fiona Macleod is not Mrs. William Sharp, Miss Fiona Macleod is—Miss Fiona Macleod." The persecuted author was much disturbed by this effort to draw Fiona Macleod into a controversy, to force her to declare herself. Not only was he indignant at what to him was an unwarrantable interference with the privacy of the individual, and resented the traps that were laid to catch the author should "she" be 'unwary,' it was instrumental also in making him much more determined to guard his secret at all costs. During the months of controversy the subject of it accomplished a considerable amount of work.

He collaborated with me in the preparation of an Anthology of Celtic Poetry; prepared an edition of *Ossian* (P. Geddes & Coll.) for which he wrote a long

introduction; and began to work upon a humourous novel, not, however, finished until 1898.

As F. M. he published *The Washer of the Ford* in April, wrote *Green Fire*, and also a number of Poems, which were subsequently included in *From the Hills of Dream*. His Diary for the New Year has this entry:

> "*Jany 7th, 1896. The British Weekly* has a paragraph given under all reserve that Fiona Macleod is Mrs. William Sharp. Have written—as W. S.—to Dr. R. Nicoll and to Mrs. Macdonell of *The Bookman* to deny this authoritatively."

From the first we decided that it would be advisable to admit that F. M. was my cousin, also, that my husband acted as her adviser and 'right hand' in the matter of publishing.

The arrangements for the two first books were made by W. S. in person. No such precautions were necessary for the books brought out by P. Geddes & Col. as the head of the firm was in the secret. But, as it was well known in Edinburgh and elsewhere that William Sharp was keenly interested in the 'Celtic Movement,' he thought it well to collaborate with me on an Anthology of Celtic Poetry entitled *Lyra Celtica* (and published by the firm), for which he prepared an Introduction and Notes.

On the 6th January, in a letter to Mrs. William Rossetti he wrote "Just back from France where I went so far with my wife on her way to Central Italy. Her health has given way, alas, and she has been sent out from this killing climate for 3 or 4 months at any rate."

At the end of January he wrote to me:

> "Only a brief line to thank you for your letter about *me* and *Fiona*. Every word you say is true and

urgent, and even if I did not know it to be so I would pay the most searching heed to any advice from you, in whose insight and judgment mentally as well as spiritually I have such deep confidence. Although in the main I had come to exactly the same standpoint I was wavering before certain alluring avenues of thought.... If I live to be an elderly man, time enough for one or more of my big philosophical and critical works. Meanwhile—the flame!

The only thing of the kind I will now do—and that not this year—will be the "Introduction to the Study of Celtic Literature": but for that I have the material to hand, and shall largely use in magazines first.... Well, we shall begin at once! February will be wholly given over to finishing *Wives in Exile* and *The Washer of the Ford*."

On the 1st February he left town and settled down to work at the Pettycur Inn, Kinghorn, Fife. His Diary gives the following record of work:

"*Feb. 3rd.* Wrote the Preface to *The Washer of the Ford*.

"*Feb. 7th.* Dictated (1750 words) article on Modern Romantic Art, for the Glasgow Herald—Also *World* article.

"*Feb. 9th.* Wrote 'The Festival of the Birds.'

"*Feb. 10th.* Glasgow Herald Article (1500 words) on The Art of the Goldsmith, and wrote 'The Blessing of the Fishes.'"

In the middle of February William had written to Mr. R. Murray Gilchrist, one of the few friends who then knew the secret of the pseudonym:

MY DEAR GILCHRIST,

Fiona Macleod has suddenly begun to attract a great deal of attention. There have been leaders as well as long and important reviews: and now the

chief North of Scotland paper, *The Highland News*, is printing two long articles devoted in a most eulogistic way to F. M. and her influence "already so marked and so vital, so that we accept her as the leader of the Celtic Renaissance in Scotland." There is, also, I hear, to be a Magazine article on her. This last week there have been long and favourable reviews in the *Academy* and *The New Age*.

I am glad you like my other book, I mean W. S's! [*Ecce Puella*] There are things in it which are as absolutely out of my real self as it is possible to be: and I am glad that you recognise this. I have not yet seen my book of short stories published in America under the title *The Gypsy Christ*, though it has been out some weeks: and I have heard from one or two people about it. America is more indulgent to me just now than I deserve. For a leading American critic writes of *The Gypsy Christ* that, "though it will offend some people and displease others, it is one of the most remarkable volumes I have read for long. The titular story has an extraordinary, even a dreadful impressiveness: 'Madge o' the Pool' is more realistic than 'realism': and alike in the scathing society love-episode, 'The Lady in Hosea,' and in that brilliant Algerian *conte*, 'The Coward,' the author suggests the method and power of Guy de Maupassant."

I hope to get the book soon, and to send you a copy. As I think I told you, the setting of the G/C is entirely that which I knew through you. I have made use of one or two features—exaggerated facts and half facts—which I trust will not displease you. Do you remember my feeling about those gaunt mine-chimneys: I always think of them now when I think of the G/C. Fundamentally, however, the story goes back to my own early experiences—not as to the *facts* of the story, of course.... Then again, Arthur Sherburne Hardy, who is by many considered the St. Beuve of American criticism—in surety and insight—has given his opinion of a book i. e. of all he has seen of it (a comedy of the higher kind) for which Stone

and Kimball have given me good terms—*Wives in Exile*—that it is "quite unlike anything else—at once the most brilliant, romantic, and witty thing I have read for long—to judge from the opening chapters and the scheme. It will stand by itself, I think."

Personally, I think it shows the best handicraft of anything W. S. has done in fiction. It is, of course, wholly distinct in manner and method from F. M.'s work. It *ought* to be out by May. Sunshine and blithe laughter guided my pen in this book. Well, I have given you my gossip about myself: and now I would much rather hear about *you*. I wish you were here to tell me all about what you have been doing, thinking, and dreaming.

Yours,

W. S.

I received the following letter from him in Rome:

LONDON, 21st Feb.

I am sure *The Highland News* must have delighted you. Let me know what you think of Fiona's and W. S.'s letters.... I am so sorry you are leaving Siena.... I follow every step of your movements with keenest interest. But oh the light and the colour, how I envy you!

I am hoping you are pleased with *Lyra Celtica*. It is published today only—so of course I have heard nothing yet from outsiders. Yesterday I finished my Matthew Arnold essay[3]—and in the evening wrote the first part of my F. M. story, "Morag of the Glen"—a strong piece of work I hope and believe though not finished yet. I hope to finish it by tonight. I am so glad you and Mona liked the first of "The Three Marvels of Hy" (pronounced *Eo* or *Hee*) so well. Pieces like "The Festival of the Birds" seem to be born out of my brain almost in an inspirational way. I hardly understand it. Yes, you were in the right place to read it—St. Francis' country. That beautiful strange Umbria! After all, Iona and Assisi

> are not nearly so remote from each other as from London or Paris. I send you the second of the series "The Blessing of the Flies." It, too, was written at Pettycur—as was "The Prologue." ... There is a strange half glad, half morose note in this Prologue which I myself hardly apprehend in full significance. In it is interpolated one of the loveliest of the 'legendary moralities' which I had meant to insert in Section I—that of 'The King of the Earth.' I will send it to you before long....

To a correspondent he wrote about the "Three Marvels of Hy": "They are studies in old Religious Celtic sentiment so far as that can be recreated in a modern heart that feels the same beauty and simplicity of the Early Christian faith."

And to me again: "... I know you will rejoice to hear that there can be no question that F. M's deepest and finest work is in this "*Washer of the Ford*" volume. As for the spiritual lesson that nature has taught me, and that has grown within me otherwise, I have given the finest utterance to it that I can. In a sense my inner life of the spirit is concentrated in the three pieces "The Moon-Child," "The Fisher of Men," and "The Last Supper." Than the last I shall never do anything better. Apart from this intense inner flame that has been burning within me so strangely and deeply of late—I think my most imaginative work will be found in the titular piece "The Washer of the Ford," which still, tho' written and revised some time ago, haunts me! and in that and the pagan and animistic "Annir Choille." We shall read those things in a gondola in Venice?"

He joined me in Venice on the 16th May—glad of sunshine and rest. We journeyed back to England by way of the Lakes, in a time of early roses, and returned to London to find the first copies of *The*

Washer of the Ford awaiting us. Two out of many letters concerning the book that came to him from friends who were in the secret and watched the development of the "F. M." work, were a strong incentive to further effort.

The first is from Mr. Frank Rinder:

MY DEAR WILL,

From my heart I thank you for the gift of this book. It adds to the sum of the precious, heaven-sent things in life. It will kindle the fire of hope, of aspiration and of high resolve in a thousand hearts. As one of those into whose life you have brought a more poignant craving for what is beautiful in word and action, I thank you for writing it.

Your friend,

FRANK.

The second was from Mr. Janvier:

SAINT REMY DE PROVENCE,

June 22, 1896.

MY DEAR WILL,

If *The Washer of the Ford* were the first of Fiona's books I am confident that the sex of its author would not pass unchallenged. A great part of it is essentially masculine—all the "Seanachas," and "The Annir Choille," and the opening of "The Washer": not impossible for a woman to write, but unlikely. Nor would a woman have written "The Annir Choille," I think, as it is written here. Fiona has shown her double sex in this story more completely, it seems to me, than in any other. It is written with a man's sense of decency and a woman's sense of delicacy—and the love of both man and woman is in it to a very extraordinary degree. The fighting stories seem to me to be pure man—though I suppose that there are Highland women (like Scott's "Highland

Widow") capable of their stern savagery. But on these alone, Fiona's sex scarcely could have been accepted unchallenged. But what seems to me to show plainest, in all the stories together, is not the trifle that they are by a man or by a woman but that they have come out of your inspired soul. They seem to be the result of some outside force constraining you to write them. And with their freshness they have a curious primordial flavour—that comes, I suppose, from the deep roots and full essences of life which are their substance of soul. Being basic, elementary, they are independent of time; or even race. In a literary—technically literary—way they seem to me to be quite your most perfect work. I am sensitive to word arrangement, and some of your work has made me rather disposed to swear at you for carelessness. You have not always taken the trouble to hunt for the word that you needed. But these stories are as nearly perfect in finish, I think, as literary endeavour can make them. And they have that effect of flow and ease that can only come—at least, I can imagine it only as arriving—from the most persistent and laborious care. In the detail of make-up, I am especially impressed by the insertion of the Shadow Seers just where the key is changed radically. They are at once your justifying pieces for what has gone before, and an orchestral interlude before the wholly different Seanachas begin. Of all in the book, my strongest affection is for "The Last Supper." It seems to me to be the most purely beautiful, and the profoundest thing that you have done.

I feel that some strong new current must have come into your life; or that the normal current has been in some way obstructed or diverted—for the animating spirit of these new books reflects a radical change in your own soul. The Pagan element is entirely subordinated to and controlled by the inner passions of the soul. In a word you have lifted your work from the flesh-level to the soul-level....

What you say in your letter of worry and ill-health saddens me. It is unjust that your rare power of creation should be hampered in any way. But it seems to me that there must be great consolation in your certain knowledge that you have greatly created, in spite of all.

Always affectionately yours,

T. A. J.

CHAPTER XVII

"RUNES OF THE SORROW OF WOMEN"

Green Fire

During the most active years of the Fiona Macleod writings, the author was usually in a highly wrought condition of mental and emotional tension, which produced great restlessness, so that he could not long remain contentedly anywhere. We spent the summer of 1896 moving about from one place to another that had special interest for him. First we went to Bamborough, for sea-bathing (he was a fine swimmer), and to visit the little Holy Isle of the Eastern Shores, Lindisfarne, Iona's daughter. Thence to the Clyde to be near his mother and sisters. From

Inverness we went to the Falls of Lora, in Ossian's country, and later we moved to one of William's favourite haunts, Loch Tarbert, off Loch Fyne, where our friends Mr. and Mrs. Frank Rinder had taken a house for the summer. There I left him with his secretary-sister, Mary, and returned to London to recommence my work on *The Glasgow Herald*. The two following letters to me told of the progress of his work:

September 23d.

I am now well in writing trim I am glad to say. Two days ago I wrote the long-awaited "Rune of the Passion of Woman" the companion piece in a sense to the 'Chant of Woman' in *Pharais*—and have also done the *Savoy* story "The Archer" (about 4,500 words) and all but done "Ahez the Pale." Today I hope to get on with the "Lily Leven." ...

I must make the most of this day of storm for writing. I had a splendid long sleep last night, and feel 'spiff.' ... I am not built for mixed companies, and like them less and less in proportion as the imperative need of F. M. and W. S. for greater isolation grows. I realise more and more the literal truth of what George Meredith told me—that renunciation of ordinary social pleasures (namely of the ordinary kind in the ordinary way) is a necessity to any worker on the high levels: and unless I work that way I shall not work at all.

26th Sept.

... Yesterday turned out a splendid breezy day, despite its bad opening: one of the most beautiful we have had, altho' too cold for bathing, and too rough for boating. I went off by myself for a long sail—and got back about 4. Later I went alone for an hour or so to revise what had stirred me so unspeakably, namely the third and concluding "Rune of the Sorrow of Women." This last Rune tired me in

preliminary excitement and in the strange semi-conscious fever of composition more than anything of the kind since I wrote the first of the three in *Pharais* one night of storm when I was alone in Phenice Croft.

I have given it to Mary to copy, so that I can send it to you at once. Tell me what you think and feel about it. In a vague way not only you, Mona, Edith and others swam into my brain, but I have never so absolutely felt the woman-soul within me: it was as though in some subtle way the soul of Woman breathed into my brain—and I feel vaguely as if I had given partial expression at least to the inarticulate voice of a myriad women who suffer in one or other of the triple ways of sorrow. For work, and rebuilding energy, I am thankful I came here. You were right: I was not really fit to go off to the Hebrides alone, at the present juncture, and might well have defeated my own end. Tomorrow morning I shall be writing—probably at From the Hills of Dream.

From Tighnabruaich Hotel, a lovely little village in the Kyles of Bute, he wrote to me:

I am glad to be here, for though the weather has changed for the worse I am so fond of the place and neighbourhood. But what I care for most is I am in a strong Fiona mood, though more of dream and reverie—creatively—than of actual writing: indeed it is likely all my work here, or nearly all shall be done through dream and mental-cartooning. I have written "The Snow Sleep of Angus Ogue" for the winter *Evergreen*, and am glad to know it is one of F. M.'s deepest and best utterances.

The Evergreen was a Quarterly started by Prof. Geddes, of which W. S. was Editor. Five numbers only were issued. During the autumn William had prepared for publication by P. Geddes & Coll a re-

issue of the Tales contained in *The Sin-Eater* and *The Washer of the Ford*, in the form of a paper covered edition in three volumes, *Barbaric Tales*, *Spiritual Tales*, *Tragic Romances*. Each volume contained a new tale. Mr. W. B. Yeats considered that "Of the group of new voices none is more typical than the curious mysterious voice that is revealed in these stories of Miss Fiona Macleod.... She has become the voice (of these primitive peoples and elemental things) not from mere observation of their ways, but out of an absolute identity of nature.... Her art belongs in kind, whatever be its excellence in its kind, to a greater art, which is of revelation, and deals with invisible and impalpable things. Its mission is to bring us near to those powers and principalities, which we divine in mortal hopes and passions.

Mr. W. E. Henley had shown considerable interest in the "F. M." Tales, and had written an appreciative letter to the author, who immediately acknowledged it:

1:4:97.

DEAR MR. HENLEY,

I thank you for your kind letter. Any work of recognition from you means much to me. Your advice is wise and sane, I am sure—and you may be certain that I shall bear it in mind. It will be difficult to follow—for absolute simplicity is the most difficult of all styles, being, as it must be, the expression of a mind at once so imaginative in itself, so lucid in its outlook, and so controlled in its expression, that only a very few rarely gifted individuals can hope to achieve the isolating ideal you indicate.

The three latest things I have written are the long short-story "Morag of the Glen," "The Melancholy of Ulad," and "The Archer." I would particularly like to

know what you think of the style and method of "The Archer" (I mean, apart from the arbitrary fantasy of the short supplementary part—which affords the clue to the title)—as there I have written, or tried to write, with the accent of that life as I know it.

F. M.

The central story of "The Archer" was one of the Tales which the author valued most, and rewrote many times. In its final form—"Silas," in the Tauchnitz volume of F. M. Tales—it stands without the opening and closing episodes. Concerning the "fantasy of the short supplementary part" a curious coincidence happened. That arbitrary fantasy is the record of a dream, or vision, which the author had at Tarbert. In a letter from Mr. Yeats received shortly after, the Irish poet related a similar experience which he had had—a vision of a woman shooting arrows among the stars—a vision that appeared also the same night to Mr. Arthur Symons. I remember the exchange of letters that passed between the three writers; unfortunately Fiona's letter to Mr. Symons, and the latter's answer, are not available. But I have two of the letters on the subject which, through the courtesy of Mr. Yeats, I am able to quote; both, unfortunately are undated. F. M. describes a second vision which, however, had no connection with the coincidence.

Mr. Yeats wrote:

TILLYRA CASTLE,
CO. GALWAY.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Many thanks for your letter. You must have written it the very morning I was writing to Miss Macleod. I have just returned from the Arran Islands

where I had gone on a fishing boat, and where I go again at the end of this week. I am studying on the islands for the opening chapter of a story I am about to set out upon. I met two days ago an old man who hears the fairies he says every night and complains much that their singing keeps him awake. He showed me a flute which he had got thinking that if he played it they might be pleased and so cease teasing him. I have met much curious lore here and in Arran.

I have had some singular experiences myself. I invoked one night the spirits of the moon and saw between sleep and waking a beautiful woman firing an arrow among the stars. That night she appeared to Symons who is staying here, and so impressed him that he wrote a poem on her the only one he ever wrote to a dream, calling her the fountain of all song or some such phrase. She was the symbolic Diana. I invoked a different spirit another night and it appeared in dreams to an old French Count, who was staying here, and was like Symons ignorant of my invocations. He locked his door to try to keep it out. Please give my greetings to Miss Macleod.

Yours Sincerely,

W. B. YEATS.

F. M. wrote in acknowledgment of a long critical letter from Mr. Yeats, to whom "she" had sent *The Washer of the Ford*:

TARBERT ON LOCH FYNE.

DEAR MR. YEATS,

Unforeseen circumstances have prevented my writing to you before this, and even now I must perforce be more brief than I would fain be in response to your long and deeply interesting as well as generous letter. Alas, a long pencilled note (partly apropos of your vision of the woman shooting arrows, and of the strange coincidence of something of the same kind on my own part) has long since

been devoured by a too voracious or too trustful gull —for a sudden gust of wind blew the quarto-sheet from off the deck of the small yacht wherein I and my dear friend and confrère of whom you know were sailing, off Skye.... How good of you to write to me as you did. Believe me, I am grateful. There is no other writer whose good opinion could please me more—for I love your work, and take an endless delight in your poetry, and look to you as not only one of the rare few on whose lips is the honey of Magh Mell but as one the dark zone of whose mind is lit with the strange stars and constellations of the spiritual life. Most cordially I thank you for your critical remarks. Even where I do not unreservedly agree, or where I venture to differ (as for example, in the matter of the repetition of the titular words in "The Washer of the Ford" poem) I have carefully pondered all you say. I am particularly glad you feel about the "Annir Choille" as you do. Some people whom I would like to please do not care for it: yet I am sure you are right in considering it one of the most vital things I have been able to do.

With what delight I have read your lovely lovely poem "O'Sullivan Rue to the Secret Rose!" I have read it over and over with ever deepening delight. It is one of your finest poems, I think: though perhaps it can only be truly appreciated by those who are familiar with legendary Celtic history. We read it to each other, my friend and I, on a wonderful sundown "when evening fed the wave with quiet light," off one of the Inner Hebrides (Colonsay, to the South of Oban).... I cannot quite make up my mind, as you ask, about your two styles. Personally, I incline not exactly to a return to the earlier but to a marriage of the two: that is, a little less remoteness, or subtlety, with a little more of rippling clarity. After reading your Blake paper (and with vivid interest and delight) I turned to an early work of yours which I value highly, *Dhoya*: and I admit that my heart moved to *it*. Between them lies, I think, your surest

and finest line of work—with the light deft craft of *The Celtic Twilight*.

I hope you are soon going to issue the promised volume of poems. When my own book of verse is ready—it is to be called *From the Hills of Dream*—it will give me such sincere pleasure to send you a copy. By the bye, I must not forget to thank you for introducing my work to Mr. Arthur Symons. He wrote to me a pleasant letter, and asked me to contribute to the *Savoy*, which I have done. I dare say my friend (who sends you comradely greetings, and says he will write in a day or two) will tell you more from me when he and you meet.

I had a strange vision the other day, wherein I saw the figure of a gigantic woman sleeping on the green hills of Ireland. As I watched, the sun waned and the dark came and the stars began to fall. They fell one by one, and each fell into the woman—and lo, of a sudden, all was bare running water, and the drowned stars and the transmuted woman passed from my seeing. This was a waking dream, an open vision: but I do not know what it means, though it was so wonderfully vivid. In a vague way I realise that something of tremendous moment is being matured just now. We are on the verge of vitally important developments. And all the heart, all the brain, of the Celtic races shall be stirred. There is a shadow of mighty changes. Myself, I believe that new spirits have been embodied among us. And some of the old have come back. We shall perish, you and I and all who fight under the "Lifting of the Sunbeam"—but we shall pioneer a wonderful marvellous new life for humanity. The other day I asked an old islesman where her son was buried. "He was not buried," she said, "for all they buried his body. For a week ago I saw him lying on the heather, and talking swift an' wild with a Shadow." *The Shadows are here.*

I must not write more just now.

My cordial greetings to you,

Sincerely,
FIONA MACLEOD.

No sooner had W. S. returned to London than he fell ill with nervous prostration, and rheumatism. It was soon obvious that he could not remain in town, and that for a short time at any rate he must cease from pen-work. It therefore seemed an opportune moment for him to go to New York, and attend to his publishing interests there, especially as Messrs. Stone & Kimball had recently failed.

Before starting he had read and reviewed with much interest a volume of poems by the American poet, Mrs. Elizabeth Stoddard, and had received a pleased acknowledgment from her husband Richard A. Stoddard:

NEW YORK,
Oct. 30, 1896.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I am greatly obliged to you for what you have written about my wife's poetry, any recognition of which touches me more nearly than anything that could be said about my own verse.... My wife has told you, I presume, how much I enjoyed your wife's *Women's Voices*, just before I went into the Hospital, and how I composed a bit of verse in my head when I couldn't see to feed myself. Do you ever compose in that silent way? I have taught myself to do without pens, ink, and paper, in verse; but I can't do so in prose, which would print itself in the thing I call my mind. Give my kindest regards and warmest good wishes to your Elizabeth, whose charming book is a favourite with *my* Elizabeth as well, as with

Yours sincerely,
R. H. STODDARD.

Later, Mr. Stedman wrote an account of a dinner

given to Mr. Stoddard to which W. S. was invited:

BRONXVILLE, N. Y.,
Feb. 17, 1897.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I have received your long letter of the 25th Jany, and also a shorter one of the 30th written at Mr. George Cotterell's house. I will say at the outset that I feel guilty at seeing the name of that loveable man and true poet; for although a year has passed since the completion of my (Victorian) "Anthology" I have been positively unable to write the letter which I have in my heart for him.

... The most important social matter here this winter relating to our Guild will be a large important dinner to be given on March 25th by the Author's Club and his other friends, to Richard Henry Stoddard. We are going to try to make an exception to the rule that New York is not good to her own, and to render a tribute somewhat commensurate with Stoddard's life long services, and his quality as poet and man. A few invitations are going to be sent to literary men abroad, and I have been able to write about them to Besant, Dobson, Garnett and yourself. Of course I do not expect that you will come over here, and I am quite sure you will write a letter which can be read at the dinner, for I have in mind your personal friendship with Stoddard and affectionate comprehension of his genius and career....

On the 13th of April Mr. Stedman wrote again to report on the proceedings:

Your letter to the Stoddard Banquet was by far the best and most inclusive of the various ones received, and it was read out to the 150 diners and met with high favour. I mailed you the full report of the affair, but believe I have not written you since it came off.

It proved to be the most notable literary occasion yet known in this city—was brilliant, magnetic, enthusiastic throughout. I felt a pride in my office as Chairman. The hall was one of the handsomest in America, the speaking of the most eloquent type, and full of laughter and tears. The Stoddards were deeply gratified by your letter.

E. C. S.

My husband arrived in New York on All Hallow E'en and went direct to the hospitable house of Mr. Alden whence he wrote to me:

METUCHEN, N. J.,
1st Nov., 1896.

... Of course nothing can be done till Wednesday. All America is aflame with excitement—and New York itself is at fever-heat. I have never seen such a sight as yesterday. The whole enormous city was a mass of flags and innumerable Republican and Democratic insignia—with the streets thronged with over two million people. The whole business quarter made a gigantic parade that took 7 hours in its passage—and the business men alone amounted to over 100,000. Everyone—as indeed not only America, but Great Britain and all Europe—is now looking eagerly for the final word on Tuesday night. The larger issues are now clearer: not merely that the Bryanite 50-cent dollar (instead of the standard 100 cent) would have far reaching disastrous effects, but that the whole struggle is one of the anarchic and destructive against the organic and constructive forces. However, this tremendous crisis will come to an end—pro tem. at any rate—on Tuesday night....

During his absence, F. M.'s romance, *Green Fire*, was published. The title was taken from a line in 'Cathal of the Woods,' 'O green fire of life, pulse of the world, O Love!' And the deeper meaning of the

expression ‘Green Life’—so familiar to all who knew ‘Fiona Macleod’—is suggested in a sentence at the close of the book: “Alan knew that strange nostalgia of the mind for impossible things. Then, wrought for a while from his vision of green life, and flamed by another green fire than that born of earth, he dreamed his dream.”

To me, the author wrote from New York:

> “ ... I am indeed glad you like *Green Fire* so well. And you are right in your insight: Annaik *is* the real human magnet. Ynys is an idealised type, what I mean by Ideala or Esclarmoundo, but she did not take hold of me like Annaik. Alan, too, is a variation of the Ian type. But Annaik has for me a strange and deep attraction: and I am sure the abiding personal interest must be in *her*. You are the only one who seems to have understood and perceived this—certainly the only one who has noticed it. Some day I want to tell Annaik’s story in full....”

The author had read much Breton lore during his study of French Literature, and as his interest had for a time been centred on the land of the kindred Celt, he determined to make it the setting of a new Romance. He had never been there, so drew on his imagination for the depiction of the places he knew of by hearsay only. The result, when later he judged the book in cool criticism, he considered to be unsatisfactory as to structure and balance. He realised, that although the Fiona impetus produced the first chapter and the latter part, the plot and melodramatic character of the Breton story are due to W. S.; that the descriptions of nature are written by F. M. and W. S. in fusion, are in character akin to the descriptions in “The Children of Tomorrow,” written by W. S. in his transition stage.

Consequently, when in 1905, he discussed with me what he wished preserved of his writings, he asked my promise that I would never republish the book in its entirety.

In order to preserve what he himself cared for, he rewrote the Highland portion of the book, named it "The Herdsman" and included it in *The Dominion of Dreams*. (In the Uniform Edition, it is placed, together with a series of detached Thought-Fragments from *Green Fire*, in *The Divine Adventure*, Vol. IV.) He never carried out his intention of writing Annaik's story in full. Had he done so it would have been incorporated in a story, partly reminiscent of his early sojourn among the gipsies, and have been called *The Gypsy Trail*.

Some months later Mr. W. B. Yeats wrote to W. S.:

> "I have read 'Green Fire' since I saw you. I do not think it is one of your well-built stories, and I am certain that the writing is constantly too self-consciously picturesque; but the atmosphere, the romance of much of it, of 'The Herdsman' part in particular haunts me ever since I laid it down.
>
> 'Fiona Macleod' has certainly discovered the romance of the remote Gaelic places as no one else has ever done. She has made the earth by so much the more beautiful."

And Mr. George Russell (A. E.) wrote to F. M. from Dublin:

DEAR FIONA MACLEOD,

> My friend, Willie Yeats, has just come by me wrapt in a faery whirlwind, his mouth speaking great things. He talked much of reviving the Druidic mysteries and vaguely spoke of Scotland and you. These stirring ideas of his are in such a blaze of light

that, but for the inspiration of a presence always full of enthusiasm, I would get no ideas at all from him. But when he mentioned your name and spoke of the brotherhood of the Celts and what ties ought to unite them, I remembered a very kindly letter which I had put on one side waiting for an excuse to write again. So I take gladly Yeats' theory of what ought to be and write....

Thoughts inspired by what is written or said are aimed at the original thinker and from every quarter converge on his inner nature. Perhaps you have felt this. It means that these people are putting fetters on you, binding you to think in a certain way (what they expect from you); and there is a danger of the soul getting bent so that after its first battle it fights no more but repeats dream upon dream its first words in answer to their demand and it grows more voice and less soul every day. I read *Green Fire* a few weeks ago and have fallen in love with your haunted seas. Your nature spirit is a little tragic. You love the Mother as I do but you seem for ever to expect some revelation of awe from her lips where I would hide my head in her bosom. But the breathless awe is true also—to "meet on the Hills of Dream," that would not be so difficult. I think you know that? Some time when the power falls on me I'll send a shadow of myself over seas just to get the feeling of the Highlands. I have an intuition that the "fires" are awakening somewhere in the North West. I may have met you indeed and not known you. We are so different behind the veil. Some who are mighty of the mighty there are nothing below and then waking life keeps no memory of their victorious deeds in sleep. And if I saw you your inner being might assume some old Druidic garb of the soul, taking that form because you are thinking the Druidic thought. The inner being is protean and has a thousand changes of apparel. I sat beside a friend and while he was meditating, the inner being started up in Egyptian splendour robed in purple and gold. He had

chanced upon some mood of an ancient life. I write to you of these things judging that you know of them to some extent here: that your inner nature preserves the memory of old initiations, so I talk to you as a comrade on the same quest. You know too I think that these alluring visions and thoughts are of little import unless they link themselves unto our humanity. It means only madness in the end. I know people whose lamps are lit and they see wonderful things but they themselves will not pass from vision into action. They follow beauty only like the dwellers in Tyre whom Ezekiel denounced "They have corrupted their wisdom by reason of their brightness." Leaving these mystic things aside what you say about art is quite true except that I cannot regard art as the "quintessential life" unless art comes to mean the art of living more than the art of the artists.... Sometime, perhaps, if it is in the decrees of the gods (our true selves) we may meet and speak of these things. But don't get enslaved by your great power of expression. It ties the mind a little. There was an old Hermetist who said "The knowledge of It is a divine silence and the rest of all the senses...."

You ask me to give my best. Sometimes I think silence is the best. I can feel the sadness of truth here, but not the joy, and there must always be as exquisite a joy as there is pain in any state of consciousness....

A. E.

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM

The Laughter of Peterkin

On the wanderer's return to England his volume of poems *From the Hills of Dream* was published by P. Geddes & Coll. The first edition was dedicated to our godson Arthur Allhallow, younger son of Prof. and Mrs. Patrick Geddes, who was born on that Hallow E'en the anniversary of our Wedding-day. The volume consists of poems, runes and lyrics, written by F. M. between 1893 and 1896; and a series of "prose rhythms" entitled "The Silence of Amor."

A sympathetic letter from Mr. Ernest Rhys, the Welsh poet, drew a quick response:

MURRAYfiELD, MIDLOTHIAN,
23: 11: 96.

DEAR MR. RHYS,

On my coming from the West to Edinburgh, for a few days, I found your very welcome and charming letter, among others forwarded to me from the Outlook Tower.

It gratifies me very much that you, whose work I so much admire and with whose aims and spirit I am in so keen sympathy, care so well for the "Hills of Dream." These are hills where few inhabit, but comrade always knows comrade there—and so we are sure to meet one another, whether one carry a "London Rose" or a sheaf of half-barbaric Hill-Runes. It may interest you to know that the name which seems to puzzle so many people is (though it does exist as the name "Fiona," not only in Ossian but at the present day, though rarely) the Gaelic diminutive

of "Fionaghal" (i. e. Flora). For the rest—I was born more than a thousand years ago, in the remote region of Gaeldom known as the Hills of Dream. There I have lived the better part of my life, my father's name was Romance, and that of my mother was Dream. I have no photograph of their abode, which is just under the quicken-arch immediately west of the sunset-rainbow. You will easily find it. Nor can I send you a photograph of myself. My last fell among the dew-wet heather, and is now doubtless lining the cells of the wild bees.

All this authentic information I gladly send you!

Sincerely yours,

FIONA MACLEOD.

Early in 1897 Mr. Yeats wrote from Paris to F. M. concerning aims and ideals he was endeavouring to shape into expression for the re-vivifying of Celtic Ireland, and out of which has evolved the Irish National Theatre:

MY DEAR MISS MACLEOD,

I owe you a letter for a long time, and can only promise to amend and be more prompt in future. I have had a busy autumn, always trying to make myself do more work than my disposition will permit, and at such times I am the worst of correspondents. I have just finished a certain speech in *The Shadowy Waters*, my new poem, and have gone to *The Café du Musée de Cluny* to smoke and read the Irish news in the *Times*. I should say I wrote about your book of poems as you will have seen in the *Bookman*. I have just now a plan I want to ask you about? Our Irish Literary and Political literary organisations are pretty complete (I am trying to start a Young Ireland Society, among the Irish here in Paris at the moment) and I think it would be very possible to get up Celtic plays through these Societies. They would be far more effective than

lectures and might do more than anything else we can do to make the Irish Scotch and other Celts recognise their solidarity. My own plays are too elaborate, I think, for a start, and have also the disadvantage that I cannot urge my own work in committee. If we have one or two short direct prose plays, of (say) a mythological and folklore kind, by you and by some writer (I may be able to move O'Grady, I have already spoken to him about it urgently) I feel sure we could get the *Irish Literary Society* to make a start. They have indeed for some time talked of doing my *Land of Heart's Desire*. My own theory of poetical or legendary drama is that it should have no realistic, or elaborate, but only a symbolic and decorative setting. A forest, for instance, should be represented by a forest pattern and not by a forest painting. One should design a scene, which would be an accompaniment not a reflection of the text. This method would have the further advantage of being fairly cheap, and altogether novel. The acting should have an equivalent distance to that of the play from common realities. The plays might be almost, in some cases, modern mystery plays. Your *Last Supper*, for instance, would make such a play, while your story in *The Savoy* would arrange as a strong play of merely human tragedy. I shall try my own hand possibly at some short prose plays also, but not yet. I merely suggest these things because they are a good deal on my mind, and not that I wish to burden your already full hands. My "Shadowy Waters" is magical and mystical beyond anything I have done. It goes but slowly however, and I have had to recast all I did in Ireland some years ago. Mr. Sharp heard some of it in London in its first very monotonous form. I wish to make it a kind of grave ecstasy.

I am also at the start of a novel which moves between the Islands of Aran and Paris, and shall have to go again to Aran about it. After these books I start a long cherished project—a poetical version of the

great Celtic epic tale Deirdre, Cuchullin at the Ford, and Cuchullin's death, and Dermot and Grainne. I have some hopes that Mr. Sharp will come to Paris on his way back to England. I have much to talk over with him, I am feeling more and more every day that our Celtic movement is approaching a new phase. Our instrument is sufficiently prepared as far as Ireland is concerned, but the people are less so, and they can only be stirred by the imagination of a very few acting on all.

My book *The Secret Rose* was to have been out in December but it has been postponed till February. If I have any earlier copies you shall have one. I am specially curious to know what you think of a story called "The Adoration of the Magi" which is a half prophecy of a very veiled kind.

Yours truly,

W. B. YEATS.

The prolonged strain of the heavy dual work added to by an eager experimentation with certain psychic phenomena with which he had long been familiar but wished further to investigate, efforts in which at times he and Mr. W. B. Yeats collaborated —began to tell heavily on him, and to produce very disquieting symptoms of nervous collapse. We decided therefore that he should pass the dead months of the year, as he called December and January, in the South of France. From St. Remy while on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Janvier he wrote to me:

"I am not going to lament that even the desire to think-out anything has left me—much less the wish to write—for I am sure that is all in the order of the day towards betterness. But I do now fully realise that I must give up everything to getting back my old buoyancy and nervous strength—and that prolonged rest and open air are the paramount needs....

However, enough of this, henceforth I hope to have to think of and report on the up-wave only.

I am seated in a little room close to the window—and as I look out I first see the boughs of a gigantic sycamore through which the mistral is roaring with a noise like a gale at sea. Beyond this is a line of cypresses, and apparently within a stone's throw are the extraordinary wildly fantastic mountain-peaks of St. Remy. I have never seen anything like them. No wonder they are called the Dolomites of France. They are, too, in aspect unspeakably ancient and remote.

We are practically in the country, and in every way, with its hill-air and beauty, the change from Tarascon is most welcome.... There is a strange but singularly fascinating blend of north and south here just now. The roar of the mistral has a wild wintry sound, and the hissing of the wood fire is also suggestive of the north: and then outside there are the unmistakable signs of the south and those fantastic unreal like hills. I never so fully recognise how intensely northern I am than when I am in the south...."

The following fragment of a diary—all there is for 1897—gives a record of the work he had in progress: also shows his way of noting (or not noting!) his outgoing expenses:

January 1st, 1897.—A day of extreme beauty at Sainte-Maxime (Var). In the morning wrote letters etc., and then walked into Sainte-Maxime and posted them, and sent a telegram to Elizabeth, to be delivered at dinner time, with New Year greetings and Fair Wishes.

Worked at "Ahez the Pale," and, having finished the revision of it from first to last, did it up with "The Archer," and then sent (with long letter of general instructions about the re-issue of F. M.'s tales in 3 vols., Spiritual Tales, Barbaric Tales, and Tragic

Romances) to Lilian Rea, at the Outlook Tower.

After dinner went a long walk by the sea. Noticed a peculiarity by which tho' the sea was dead calm, and on the eastern side of the littoral of Ste. Maxime made hardly a ripple, the noise on the further side was like that of a rushing train or of a wind among pinewoods. I walked round, and found oily waves beating heavily on the shore. Tidal, possibly. Expenses today: Letters 3.90, Telegrams 5.90, Poor Man 30. Board &c., at hotel.

Total " ".

After his return to London he wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

GROSVENOR CLUB,
March 10, 1897.

... Although I have had an unpleasant mental and physical set-back the last three days, I am steadily (at least I hope so) gaining ground—but I have never yet regained the health or spirits I was in at St. Remy, tho' even there far more worn in mind and body than even *you* guessed. But with the spring I shall get well.

I am heart and soul with Greece in this war of race and freedom—and consider the so-called "Concert" a mockery and a sham. It is a huge Capitalist and Reactionary Bogus Company. Fortunately the tide of indignation is daily rising here—and even the Conservative papers are at one with the Liberal on the central points. Were I a younger man—or rather were I free—I would now be in Greece or on my way to join the Hellenes. As you will see by enclosed, I am one of the authors who have sent a special message to the Athenian President of the Chamber. It is a stirring time, and in many ways....

March 22d.

... What a whirl of excitement life is, just now. I am all on fire about the iniquities of this Turkish-

> Finance triumph over honour, chivalry, and the old-time sense that the world *can* be well lost. There are many other matters, too, for deep excitement—international, national, literary, artistic, personal. It is the season of sap, of the young life, of green fire. Heart-pulses are throbbing to the full: brains are effervescing under the strong ferment of the wine of life: the spiral flames of the spirit and the red flower of the flesh are fanned and consumed and recreated and fanned anew every hour of every day....
>
> This is going to be a strange year in many ways: a year of spiritual flames moving to and fro, of wild vicissitudes for many souls and for the forces that move through the minds of men. The West will redden in a new light—the 'west' of the forlorn peoples who congregate among our isles in Ireland —'the West' of the dispeopled mind.
>
> The common Soul is open—one can see certain shadows and lights as though in a mirror.... [The letter ends abruptly.]

Towards the end of April I went to Paris to write upon the two "Salons," and my husband, still very unwell, went to St. Margaret's Bay, whence he wrote to me:

> Sunday (on the shore by the sea, and in the sunshine). I wonder what you are doing today? I feel very near you in spirit as I always do when I have been reading, hearing, or seeing any beautiful thing —and this forenoon I have done all three, for I am looking upon the beauty of sunlit wind-swept sea, all pale green and white, and upon the deep blue sky above the white cliffs, upon the jackdaws and gulls dense black or snowy against the azure, upon the green life along and up the cliff-face, upon the yellow-green cystus bushes below—and am listening to the sough of the wind, soft and balmy, and the rush and break of the sunlit waves among the pebbly reaches just beyond me—and have been reading

Maeterlinck's two essays, "The Deeper Life" and "The Inner Beauty."

I am longing to be regularly at work again—and now feel as if at last I can do so....

More and more absolutely, in one sense, are W. S. and F. M. becoming two persons—often married in mind and one nature, but often absolutely distinct. I am filled with a passion of dream and work....

Friendship, deepening into serene and beautiful flame, is one of the most ennobling and lovely influences the world has....

WILFION.

P. S. Again some more good tidings. Constables have accepted my giving up *The Lily Leven* indefinitely—and instead have agreed to my proposal to write a child's book (dealing with the Celtic Wonderworld) to be called *The Laughter of Peterkin*....

From Paris I went to St. Remy for a short visit to our friends the Janviers, and my birthday found me still there. My husband had been considerably perplexed how he was to celebrate the day for me from a distance. On the early morning of the 17th of May the waiter brought me my coffee and my letters to my room as usual, and told me gravely that a large packet had arrived for me, during the night, with orders that it should not be delivered to me till the morning. Should it be brought up stairs? The next moment the door was pushed open and in came the radiant smiling unexpected apparition of my Poet! In a little town an event of this sort is soon known to everyone, and that evening when he and I went for a walk, and sauntered through the little boulevards, we found we were watched for and greeted by everyone, and heads were popped out of windows just to see "les amants."

After his equally rapid return to town he wrote to me:

> "It seems very strange to be here and at work again—or rather it is the interlude that seems so strange and dreamlike. This time last week it was not quite certain if I could get away, as it depended partly upon finishing the Maeterlinck Essay and partly upon the postponement of due date for the monograph on Orchardson. Then Richard Whiteing came in. Then at last I said that since fortune wouldn't hurry up it could go to the devil—and I would just go to my dear wife: and so I went. And all is well. Only a week ago today since I left! How dramatic it all is—that hurried journey, the long afternoon and night journey from Paris, the long afternoon and night journey to Tarascon—the drive at dawn and sunrise through beautiful Provence—the meeting you—the seeing our dear friends there again. And then that restful Sunday, that lovely birthday!"

And again a few days later:

> "Herewith my typed copy of your Wilfion's last writing. Called 'The Wayfarer' though possibly, afterwards, 'Where God is, there is Light,' it is one of the three Spiritual Moralities of which you know two already, 'The Fisher of Men' and 'The Last Supper.' In another way, the same profound truth is emphasised as in the other two—that Love is the basic law of spiritual life. 'The Redeemer liveth' in these three: Compassion, Beauty, Love—the three chords on which these three harmonies of Fiona's inner life have been born...."

"The Wayfarer" was published in *Cosmopolis*, and afterwards included in *The Winged Destiny*.

On the 10th of June the author went for a night to Burford Bridge, in order to have some talks with

George Meredith. While there he began to write "*The Glory of the King*," and two days later he finished it on reaching home.

In the summer of 1897 he visited Ireland for the first time. In Dublin he met Mr. George Russell—whose beautiful verse was first published over the initials A. E.—Mr. Standish O'Grady and other writers with whom he had been in correspondence; and he greatly enjoyed a visit to Mr. Edward Martin at Tillyra Castle in Galway.

Among several enthusiastic letters I received the following:

> ... I find it almost impossible to attempt to tell you the varied and beautiful delights of this lovely place. ... The country is strange and fascinating—at once so austere, so remote, so unusual, and so characteristic....
>
> Lord Morris, and Martin and I go off today "to show me the beauties of the wild coast of Clare." It is glorious autumnal weather, with unclouded sky, and I am looking forward to the trip immensely. We leave at 11, and drive to Ardrahan, and there get a train southward into County Clare, and at Ennis catch a little loopline to the coast. Then for two hours we drive to the famous Cliffs of Moher, gigantic precipices facing the Atlantic—and then for two hours move round the wild headlands of Blackhead—and so, in the afternoon, to the beautiful Clare 'spa' of Lisdoonvarna, where we dine late and sleep. Next day we return by some famous Round Tower of antiquity, whose name I have forgotten. Another day soon we are to go into Galway, and to the Aran Isles.
>
> On Thursday Yeats arrives, also Dr. Douglas Hyde, and possibly Standish O'Grady—and Lady Gregory, one of the moving spirits in this projected new Celtic Drama. She is my host's nearest

neighbour, and has a lovely place (Coole Park) about five miles southwest from here, near Gort. I drove there, with Sir N. G. yesterday, in a car, through a strange fascinating austere country.

The people here are distinct from any I have seen —and the women in particular are very striking with their great dark eyes, and lovely complexions and their picturesque 'snoods.'

The accent is not very marked, and the voices are low and pleasant, and the people courteous to a high degree.

In the evening we had music—and so ended delightfully my first delightful day in the west....

I forgot to tell you that I arrived late—and of course at Athenry only—some 14 miles from here. I had to wait some time till a car could be got—and what a drive I had! The man said that "Plaze God, he would have me at Tull-lyra before the gintry had given me up entoirely"—and he was as good as his word! The night was dark, and the roads near Athenry awful after the recent gale and rains—and it was no joke to hold on to the car. Whenever we came to a particularly bad bit (and I declared afterwards that he took some of the stone dykes at a leap) he cried—"Now thin yer honour, whin I cry *Whiroo!* you hould on an' trust to God"—and then came his wild *Whiroo!* and the horse seemed to spring from the car, and the jarvey and I to be flying alongside, and my rope-bound luggage to be kicking against the stars—and then we came down with a thud, and when I had a gasp of refound breath I asked if the road was as smooth and easy all the way, whereat my friend laughed genially and said "Be aisy at that now—shure we're coming to the bad bit soon!" ...

Not far from here is a fairy-doctor, I am going to see him some day. It is strange that when one day Lady Gregory took one of Russell's mystical drawings (I think of the Mōr Reega) and showed it to an old

woman, she at once exclaimed that that was the "photograph" of the fairy queen she had often seen, only that the strange girdle of fan-flame was round her waist and not on her head as in the drawing. An old man here also has often met "the secret people," and when asked to describe one strange "fairy lord" he has encountered more than once, it was so like G. R's drawing that that was shown him among several others, and he at once picked it out!

It is a haunted land.

In haste (and hunger),

WILF.

P. S. I have been thinking much over my long-projected consecutive work (i. e. as W. S.)—in five sequel books—on the drama of life as seen in the evolution of the dreams of youth—begun, indeed, over ten years ago in Paris—but presciently foregone till ten maturing years should pass.

But now the time has come when I may, and should, and indeed, now, *must*, write this *Epic of Youth*. That will be its general collective name—and it will interest you to know the now definitely fixt names of these five (and all very long) books; each to be distinct and complete in itself, yet all sequently connected: and organic and in the true sense dramatic evolution of some seven central types of men and women from youth to maturity and climax, along the high and low, levels.

Name: *The Epic of Youth.*
I. The Hunters of Wisdom.
II. The Tyranny of Dreams.
III. The Star of Fortune.
IV. The Daughters of Vengeance.
V. The Iron Gates.

This will take five years to do—so it is a big task to set, before the end of 1902!—especially as I have other work to do, and F. M.'s, herself as ambitious. But method, and maturer power and thought, can accomplish with far less nervous output, what

otherwise was impossible, and only at a killing or at least perilous strain.

So wish me well!

But the pressure of health, of the needs of daily livelihood, and of the more dominating ambitions of F. M. prevented the fulfilment of this scheme.

Many times he talked of it, drafted out portions of it—but it remained unaccomplished, and all that exists of it is the beginning chapters of the first book written in Paris ten years before, and then called *Cæsar of France*.

London proved to be impossible to him owing to the excitable condition of his brain. Therefore he took rooms in Hastings whence he wrote to me:

Nov. 21, 1897.

I am so glad to be here, in this sunlight by the sea. Light and motion—what a joy these are. The eyes become devitalised in the pall of London gloom....

There is a glorious amplitude of light. The mind bathes in these illimitable vistas. Wind and Wave and Sun: how regenerative these elder brothers are.

Solomon says there is no delight like wisdom, and that wisdom is the heritage of age: but there is a divine unwisdom which is the heritage of youth—and I would rather be young for a year than wise for a cycle. There are some who live without the pulse of youth in the mind: on the day, in the hour, I no longer feel that quick pulse, I will go out like a blown flame. To be young; to keep young: that is the story and despair of life....

Among the Christmas publications of 1897 appeared *The Laughter of Peterkin* by Fiona Macleod. This book, issued by Messrs. Archibald Constable and illustrated by Mr. Sunderland Rollinson, was a new

departure for the author, an interlude in the midst of more strenuous original work, for it was the re-telling of three old tales of Celtic Wonderland: “The Four White Swans,” or “The Children of Lir,” “The Fate of the Sons of Turenn,” and “Darthool and the Sons of Usna.”

Some years later, after the publication of Lady Gregory’s “Gods and Fighting Men,” Mr. Alfred Nutt wrote to F. M. and suggested that she should again turn her attention to the re-telling of some of the beautiful old Celtic tales and legends. My husband, however, realised that he had far more dreams haunting the chambers of his mind than he could have time to give expression to. Therefore, very regretfully, he felt constrained to forego what otherwise would have been a work of love.

CHAPTER XIX

WIVES IN EXILE

Silence Farm

The production of the Fiona Macleod work was accomplished at a heavy cost to the author as that side of his nature deepened and became dominant.

The strain upon his energies was excessive: not only from the necessity of giving expression to the two sides of his nature; but because of his desire, that, while under the cloak of secrecy F. M. should develop and grow, the reputation of William Sharp should at the same time be maintained. Moreover each of the two natures had its own needs and desires, interests and friends. The needs of each were not always harmonious one with the other, but created a complex condition that led to a severe nervous collapse. The immediate result of the illness was to cause an acute depression and restlessness that necessitated a continual change of environment. In the early part of 1898 he went in turn to Dover, to Bournemouth, Brighton, and St. Margaret's Bay. He was much alone, except for the occasional visit of an intimate friend; for I could go to him at the week-ends only, as I had the work in London to attend to. The sea, and solitude, however, proved his best allies.

To Mrs. Janvier he wrote:

> ... I am skirting the wood of shadows. I am filled with vague fears—and yet a clear triumphant laughter goes through it, though whether of life or death no one knows. I am also in a duel with other forces than those of human wills—and I need all my courage and strength. At the moment I have recovered my physic control over certain media. It cannot last more than a few days at most a few weeks at a time: but in that time *I am myself*....
>
> Let there be peace in your heart: peace and hope transmuted into joy: in your mind, the dusking of no shadow, the menace of no gloom, but light, energy, full life: and to you in your whole being, the pulse of youth, the flame of green fire....

At the end of April he wrote to R. Murray

Gilchrist from St. Margaret's Bay:

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I know you will have been sorry to hear that I have been ill—and had to leave work, and home. The immediate cause was a severe and sudden attack of influenza which went to membranes of the head and brain, and all but resulted in brain fever. This evil was averted—but it and the possible collapse of your friend Will were at one time, and for some days, an imminent probability.

I have now been a fortnight in this quiet sea-haven, and am practically myself again. Part of my work is now too hopelessly in arrears ever to catch up. Fortunately, our friend Miss F. M. practically finished her book just before she got ill too—and there is a likelihood that *There is But One Love* [published in the following year under the title of *The Dominion of Dreams*] will come out this Spring. A few days will decide....

Your friend and Sunlover,

(in the deep sense you know I mean—for I have suffered much, but am now again fronting life gravely and with laughing eyes),

WILL.

and again after his return to London:

RUTLAND HOUSE.

MY DEAR ROBERT,

... After months of sickness, at one time at the gates of death, I am whirled back from the Iron Gates and am in the maelstrom again—fighting with mind and soul and body for that inevitable losing game which we call victory. Well, the hour waits: and for good or ill I put forth that which is in me. The

Utmost for the Highest. There is that motto for all faithful failures....

I am busy of course. And so, too, our friend F. M.—with an elixir of too potent life. The flame is best: and the keener, the less obscured of smoke. So I believe: upon this I build. *Cosmopolis* will ere long have "The Wayfarer" of hers—*Good Words* "The Wells of Peace"—*Harpers*, something—*Literature* a spiritual ballad—and so forth. But her life thought is in another and stranger thing than she has done yet. [4] ... Your friend W. S. is busy too, with new and deeper and stronger work. The fugitive powers impel. I look eagerly to new work of yours: above all to what you colour with yourself. I care little for anything that is not quick with that volatile part of one which is the effluence of the spirit within. Write to me soon: by return best of all. You can help me—as I, I hope, can help *you*.

It is only the fullest and richest lives that know what the *heart* of loneliness is.

You are my comrade, and have my love,

WILL.

Two, among the many letters he wrote to me during that Spring—so full of suffering for him and anxiety for me—are, I think, very indicative of the two phases of his nature. The first relates to views we held in common; the second gives an insight into the primitive elemental soul that so often swayed him, and his work.

March 29, 1898.

... Yes, in essentials, we are all at one. We have both learned and unlearned so much, and we have come to see that we are wrought mysteriously by forces beyond ourselves, but in so seeing we know that there is a great and deep love that conquers even disillusion and disappointment....

Not all the wishing, not all the dreaming, not all

the will and hope and prayer we summon can alter that within us which is stronger than ourselves. This is a hard lesson to learn for all of us, and most for a woman. We are brought up within such an atmosphere of conventional untruth to life that most people never even perceive the hopeless futility in the arbitrary ideals which are imposed upon us—and the result for the deeper natures, endless tragic miscarriage of love, peace, and hope. But, fortunately, those of us who to our own suffering *do* see only too clearly, can still strike out a nobler ideal —one that does not shrink from the deepest responsibilities and yet can so widen and deepen the heart and spirit with love that what else would be irremediable pain can be transmuted into hope, into peace, and even into joy.

People talk much of this and that frailty or this or that circumstance as being among the commonest disintegrants of happiness. But far more fatal for many of us is that supreme disintegrant, the Tyranny of Love—the love which is forever demanding *as its due* that which is wholly independent of bonds, which is as the wind which bloweth where it listeth or where it is impelled, by the Spirit. We are taught such hopeless lies. And so men and women start life with ideals which seem fair, but are radically consumptive: ideals that are not only bound to perish, but that could not survive. The man of fifty who could be the same as he was at twenty is simply a man whose mental and spiritual life stopped short while he was yet a youth. The woman of forty who could have the same outlook on life as the girl of 19 or 20 would never have been other than one ignominiously deceived or hopelessly self-sophisticated. This ought not to be—but it must be as long as young men and women are fed mentally and spiritually upon the foolish and cowardly lies of a false and corrupt conventionalism.

No wonder that so many fine natures, men and women, are wrought to lifelong suffering. They are

started with impossible ideals: and while some can never learn that their unhappiness is the result, not of the falling short of others, but of the falsity of those ideals which they had so cherished—and while others learn first strength to endure the transmutations and then power to weld these to far nobler and finer uses and ends—for both there is suffering. Yet, even of that we make too much. We have all a tendency to nurse grief. The brooding spirit craves for the sunlight, but it will not leave the shadows. Often, *Sorrow* is our best ally.

The other night, tired, I fell asleep on my sofa. I dreamed that a beautiful spirit was standing beside me. He said: "My Brother, I have come to give you the supreme gift that will heal you and save you." I answered eagerly: "Give it me—what is it?" And the fair radiant spirit smiled with beautiful solemn eyes, and blew a breath into the tangled garden of my heart—and when I looked there I saw the tall white Flower of Sorrow growing in the Sunlight."

(To E. A. S.)

ST. MARGARET'S BAY,

May, 1898.

I have had a very happy and peaceful afternoon. The isolation, with sun and wind, were together like soft cream upon my nerves: and I suppose that within twenty minutes after I left the station I was not only serenely at peace with the world in general, but had not a perturbing thought. To be alone, alone 'in the open' above all, is not merely healing to me but an imperative necessity of my life—and the chief counter agent to the sap that almost every person exercises on me, unless obviated by frequent and radical interruption.

By the time I had passed through the village I was already 'remote' in dreams and thoughts and poignant outer enjoyment of the lovely actualities of sun and wind and the green life: and when I came to

my favourite coign where, sheltered from the bite of the wind, I could overlook the sea (a mass of lovely, radiant, amethyst-shadowed, foam-swept water), I lay down for two restful happy hours *in which not once a thought of London or of any one in it, or of any one living*, came to me. This power of living absolutely in the moment is worth not only a crown and all that a crown could give, but is the secret of youth, the secret of life.

O how weary I am of the endless recurrence of the ordinary in the lives of most people—the beloved routine, the cherished monotonies, the treasured certainties. I grudge them to none: they seem incidental to the common weal: indeed they seem even made for happiness. But I know one wild heart at least to whom life must come otherwise, or not at all.

Today I took a little green leaf o' thorn. I looked at the sun through it, and a dazzle came into my brain—and I wished, ah I wished I were a youth once more, and was 'sun-brother' and 'star-brother' again —to lie down at night, smelling the earth, and rise at dawn, smelling the new air out of the East, and know enough of men and cities to avoid both, and to consider little any gods ancient or modern, knowing well that there is only 'The Red God' to think of, he who lives and laughs in the red blood....

There is a fever of the 'green life' in my veins—below all the ordinary littlenesses of conventional life and all the common place of exterior: a fever that makes me ill at ease with people, even those I care for, that fills me with a weariness beyond words and a nostalgia for sweet impossible things.

This can be met in several ways—chiefly and best by the practical yoking of the imagination to the active mind—in a word, to work. If I can do this, well and good, either by forced absorption in contrary work (e. g. Cæsar of France), or by letting that go for the time and let the more creative instinct have free play: or by some radical change of

environment: or again by some irresponsible and incalculable variation of work and brief day-absences.

At the moment, I am like a man of the hills held in fee: I am willing to keep my bond, to earn my wage, to hold to the foreseen: and yet any moment a kestrel may fly overhead, mocking me with a rock-echo, where only sun and wind and bracken live—or an eddy of wind may have the sough of a pine in it—and then, in a flash—there's my swift brain-dazzle in answer, and all the rapid falling away of these stupid half-realities, and only a wild instinct to go to my own....

It was in this mood that he wrote to a friend:

... but then, life is just like that. It is glad only 'in the open,' and beautiful only because of its dreams. I wish I could live all my hours out of doors: I envy no one in the world so much as the red deer, the eagle, the sea-mew. I am sure no kings have so royal a life as the plovers and curlews have. All these have freedom, rejoice continually on the wind's wing, exalt alike in sun and shade: to them day is day, and night is night, and there is nothing else.

His sense of recovery was greatly heightened by a delightful little wander in Holland in May, with Mr. Thomas A. Janvier, a jovial, breezy companion. Of all he saw the chief fascination proved to be Eiland Marken, as he wrote to me:

We are now in the south Zuyder Zee, with marvellous sky effects, and low lines of land in the distance. Looking back at Eiland Marken one sees six clusters of houses, at wide intervals, dropped casually into the sea.

We had a delightful time in that quaintest of old world places, where the women are grotesque, the men grotesquer, and the children grotesquest—as for

the tubby, capped, gorgeous-garbed, blue-eyed, yellow-haired, imperturbable babies, they alone are worth coming to see....

The following is a letter from his other self:

23d July, 1898.

MY DEAR MR. RHYS,

On my coming to Edinburgh for a few days I find the book you have so kindly sent to me. It is none the less welcome because it comes as no new acquaintance: for on its appearance a friend we have in common sent it to me. Alas, that copy lies among the sea-weed in a remote Highland loch; for the book, while still reading in part, slipped overboard the small yacht in which I was sailing, and with it the MS. of a short story of mine appropriately named "Beneath the Shadow of the Wave"! The two may have comforted each other in that solitude: or the tides may have carried them southward, and tossed them now to the Pembroke Stacks, now to the cliffs of Howth. Perhaps a Welsh crab may now be squeaking (they do say that crabs make a whistling squeak!) with a Gaelic accent, or the deep-sea congers be reciting Welsh ballads to the young-lady-eels of the Hebrides. Believe me, your book has given me singular pleasure. I find in it the indescribable: and to me that is one of the tests, perhaps the supreme test (for it involves so much) of imaginative literature. A nimble air of the hills is there; the rustle of remote woods; the morning cry, that is so ancient, and that still so thrills us.

I most eagerly hope that you will recreate in beauty the all but lost beauty of the old Cymric singers. There is a true originality in this, as in anything else. The green leaf, the grey wave, the mountain wind—after all, are they not murmurous in the old Celtic poets, whether Alban or Irish or Welsh: and to translate, and recreate anew, from these, is but to bring back into the world again a lost

wandering beauty of hill-wind or green leaf or grey wave. There is, I take it, no one living who could interpret Davyth ap Gwilym and other old Welsh singers as you could do. I long to have the Green Book of 'the Poet of the Leaves' in English verse, and in English verse such as that into which you could transform it....

F. M.

The Welsh poet replied:

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,
27th Dec., 1898.

DEAR "FIONA MACLEOD,"

'I believe I never wrote to thank you for your story in the *Dome*, which I read eventually in an old Welsh tower. It was the right place to read such a fantasy of the dark and bright blindness of the Celt: and I found it, if not of your very best, yet full of imaginative stimulus.

Not many weeks ago, in very different surroundings, Mr. Sharp read me a poem—two poems—of yours. So I feel that I have the sense, at least, of your continued journeys thro' the divine and earthly regions of the Gael, and how life looks to you, and what colours it wears. What should we do were it not for that sense of the little group of simple and faithful souls, who love the clay of earth because heaven is wrapt in it, and stand by and support their lonely fellows in the struggle against the forces upon forces the world sends against them? I trust at some time it may be my great good fortune to see you and talk of these things, and hear more of your doings.

ERNEST RHYS.

From the little rock-perched, sea-girt Pettycur Inn, my husband wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

THE HOUSE OF DREAMS,

20th Dec., 1898.

... It has been a memorable time here. I have written some of my best work—including two or three of the new things for *The Dominion of Dreams*—viz. "The Rose of Flame," "Honey of the Wild Bees," and "The Secrets of the Night."

What a glorious day it has been. The most beautiful I have ever seen at Pettycur I think. Cloudless blue sky, clear exquisite air tho' cold, with a marvellous golden light in the afternoon. Arthur's Seat, the Crags and the Castle and the 14 ranges of the Pentlands all clear-cut as steel, and the city itself visible in fluent golden light. The whole coast-line purple blue, down to Berwick Law and the Bass Rock, and the Isle of May 16 miles out in the north sea.

And now I listen to the gathering of the tidal waters under the stars. There is an infinite solemnity —a hush, something sacred and wonderful. A benediction lies upon the world. Far off I hear the roaming wind. Thoughts and memories crowd in on me. Here I have lived and suffered—here I have touched the heights—here I have done my best. And now, here, I am going through a new birth.

'*Sic itur ad astral!*'

During the years that F. M. developed so rapidly her creator felt the necessity pressing hard on him to sustain, as far as he could, the reputation of W. S. He valued such reputation as he had and was anxious not to let it die away; yet there was a great difference in the method of production of the two kinds of work. The F. M. writing was the result of an inner impulsion, he wrote because he had to give expression to himself whether the impulse grew out of pain or out of pleasure. But W. S., divorced as much as could be from his twin self, wrote because he cared to, because the necessities of life demanded

it. He was always deeply interested in his critical work, for he was a constant student of Literature in all its forms, and of the Literature of different countries—in particular of France, America and Italy. This form of study, this keen interest, was a necessity to W. S.; but fiction was to him a matter of choice. He deliberately set himself to write the two novels *Wives in Exile* and *Silence Farm*, because he felt W. S. ought to produce some such work as a normal procedure and development; and also he felt it imperative to show some result of the seclusion he was known to seek for purposes of work. He was deeply interested in both books. *Wives in Exile* was the easier to write, as it gave an outlet to the vein of whimsicality in him, to his love of fun. He delighted in the weaving of any plot, or in any extravaganza. The book was a great relief and rest to him and was a real tonic to his mind.

A little later, when he realised that something more was expected of him and was too ill to attempt anything in the shape of comedy, he therefore set himself to write a tragic tale of the Lowlands, founded on a true incident. Into this he put serious interested work, but there was one consideration that throughout had a restraining effect on him—he never forgot that the book should not have obvious kinship to the work of F. M., that he should keep a considerable amount of himself in check. For there was a midway method, that was a blending of the two, a swaying from the one to the other, which he desired to avoid, since he knew that many of the critics were on the watch. Therefore, he strained the realistic treatment beyond what he otherwise would have done, in order to preserve a special method of presentment. Nevertheless, that book was the one he liked best of all the W. S. efforts, and he considered

that it contained some of his most satisfactory work. *Wives in Exile* was published in June of 1896 by Mr. Grant Richards, and *Silence Farm* in 1897.

The following letter from Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton was a great pleasure. It is, I believe, the only written expression of what the author terms the "inwardness of *Aylwin*":

THE PINES, PUTNEY HILL,
Oct. 19, 1898.

MY DEAR SHARP,

I had no idea that you were in England, and had no means of finding your address.

You read only a portion of *Aylwin*—as far, I think, as the discovery that Winifred had been the model of Wilderspin. I always intended to send you other portions, but procrastination ruined my good intentions. You and my dear friend Mrs. Sharp were very kind to it, I remember, and this encourages me to hope that when you come to read it in its entirety, you will like it better than ever. Although it is of course primarily a love-story, and, as such, will be read by the majority of readers, it is intended to be the pronouncement of something like a new gospel—the gospel of love as the great power which stands up and confronts a materialistic cosmogony and challenges it and conquers it. This gospel of course is more fully expressed in "The Coming of Love" of which I send you a copy. "The Coming of Love" is of course a sequel to *Aylwin*, although, for certain reasons, it preceded in publication the novel. *Aylwin* appears in the last year of the present century, and I had a certain object in delaying it for a little while longer because I believe that should it have more than an ephemeral existence as to which I am of course very doubtful, it will appeal fifty years hence to fifty people where it now only appeals to one. I cannot think that, when a man has felt the love-passion as deeply as Aylwin feels it, he will find it

possible, whatever physical science may prove, to accept a materialistic theory of the universe. He must either commit suicide or become a maniac.... Henry Aylwin and Percy Aylwin, the Tarno Rye of "The Coming of Love," spring from the same Romany ancestors and they inherited therefore the most passionate blood in the Western World. Each of them is driven to a peculiar spiritualistic cosmogony by the love of a girl—Winifred Wynne and Rhona Boswell, though the two girls are the exact opposite of each other in temperament.

But you really must let me get a glimpse of you somehow before you leave England again.

Your affectionate

"AYLWIN."

CHAPTER XX

THE DOMINION OF DREAMS

For the January number of *The Fortnightly Review* for 1899 "Fiona" wrote a long study on "A Group of Celtic Writers" and what she held to be "the real Celticism." The writers specially noted are W. B. Yeats, Dr. Douglas Hyde, George Russell (A. E.), Nora Hopper, Katherine Tynan Hinkson, and Lionel Johnson. With regard to the Celtic Revival the writer

considered that “there has been of late too much looseness of phrase concerning the Celtic spirit, the Celtic movement, and that mysterious entity Celticism. The ‘Celtic Renascence,’ the ‘Gaelic glamour,’ these, for the most part, are shibboleths of the journalist who if asked what it is that is being re-born, or what differentiating qualities has the distinction of Gaelic from any other ‘glamour,’ or what constitutes ‘glamour’ itself, would as we say in the North, be fair taken aback.... What is called ‘the Celtic Renascence’ is simply a fresh development of creative energy coloured by nationality, and moulded by inherited forces, a development diverted from the common way by accident of race and temperament. The Celtic writer is the writer the temper of whose mind is more ancient, more primitive, and in a sense more natural than that of his compatriot in whom the Teutonic strain prevails. The Celt is always remembering; the Anglo Saxon has little patience which lies far behind or far beyond his own hour. And as the Celt comes of a people who grew in spiritual outlook as they began what has been revealed to us by history as a ceaseless losing battle, so the Teuton comes of a people who has lost in the spiritual life what they have gained in the moral and the practical—and I use moral in its literal and proper sense. The difference is a far greater one than may be recognised readily. The immediate divergence is, that with the Celt ancestral memory and ancestral instinct constitute a distinguishable factor in his life and his expression of life, and that with his Teutonic compatriot vision, dream, actuality and outlook, are in the main restricted to what in the past has direct bearing upon the present, and to what in the future is also along the line of direct relation to the

present.... All that the new generation of Celtic or Anglo-Celtic (for the most part Anglo-Celtic) writers hold in conscious aim, is to interpret anew 'the beauty at the heart of things,' not along the line of English tradition but along that of racial instinct, coloured and informed by individual temperament."

Naturally the article was favourably commented upon in Ireland. The immediate result in the English press was the appearance in *The Daily Chronicle* of January 28th of a long unsigned article entitled "Who is Fiona Macleod: A Study in two styles" to suggest that in response to the cry of "Author!" so repeatedly made, "we may, in our search for Miss Macleod, turn to Mr. William Sharp himself and say with literal truth 'Thou art beside thyself!'"

The writer advanced many proofs in support of his contention, drawn from a close study of the writings and methods of work of W. S. and F. M.; and asked, in conclusion: "Will Mr. Sharp deny that he is identical with Miss Macleod? That Miss Macleod is Mr. Sharp, I, for one, have not a lingering doubt and I congratulate the latter on the success, the real magic and strength of the work issued under his assumed name." At first the harassed author ignored the challenge; but a few months later F. M. yielded to the persuasion of her publishers—who had a book of hers in the press—and wrote a disclaimer which appeared in *The Literary World* and elsewhere.

In April 1899 *The Dominion of Dreams* was published by Messrs. A. Constable & Co.

To Mr. Frank Rinder the author wrote:

MY DEAR FRANK,

Today I got three or four copies of *The Dominion*

of Dreams. I wish you to have one, for this book is at once the deepest and most intimate that F. M. has written.

Too much of it is born out of incurable heartache, "the nostalgia for impossible things." ... My hope is that the issues of life have been woven to beauty, for its own sake, and in divers ways to reach and help or enrich other lives.... "The Wells of Peace" must, I think, appeal to many tired souls, spiritually athirst. That is a clue to the whole book—or all but the more impersonal part of it, such as the four opening stories and "The Herdsman"; this is at once my solace, my hope and my ideal. If ever a book (in the deeper portion of it) came out of the depths of a life it is this: and so, I suppose it shall live—for by a mysterious law, only the work of suffering, or great joy, survives, and that in degree to its intensity....

F. M.'s influence is now steadily deepening and, thank God, along the lines I have hoped and dreamed.... In the writings to come I hope a deeper and richer and truer note of inward joy and spiritual hope will be the living influence. In one of the stories in this book, "The Distant Country" occurs a sentence that is to be inscribed on my gravestone when my time comes.

"Love is more great than we conceive and Death is the keeper of unknown redemptions."

Lovingly,

WILL.

To another correspondent he wrote:

... Well, if it gains wide and sincere appreciation I shall be glad: if it should practically be ignored I shall be sorry: but, beyond that, I am indifferent. I know what I have tried to do: I know what I have done: I know the end to which I work: I believe in the sowers who will sow and the reapers who will reap, from some seed of the spirit in this book: and knowing this, I have little heed of any other

considerations. Beauty, in itself, for itself, is my dream: and in some expression of it, in the difficult and subtle art of words, I have a passionate absorption."

In a letter to Mr. Macleay W. S. explained that Fiona's new book is the logical outcome of the others: the deeper note, the *vox humana*, of these. I think it is more than merely likely that *this* is the last book of its kind. I have had to live my books—and so must follow an inward law—that is truth to art as well as to life I think. There is, however, a miscellaneous volume (of 'appreciations,' and mystical studies) and also a poetic volume which I suppose should be classed with it. I imagine that, thereafter, her development will be on unexpected lines, both in fiction and the drama: judging both from what I know and what I have seen. In every sense I think you are right when you speak of 'surprise' as an element in what we may expect from her.... I suppose some of that confounded controversy about Miss M. and myself will begin again....

To Mr. W. B. Yeats the author wrote about the book, and described our plans for the summer:

Monday, 1899.

MY DEAR YEATS,

... As you well know, all imaginative work is truly alive only when it has died into the mind and been born again. The mystery of dissolution is the common mean of growth. Resurrection is the test of any spiritual idea—as of the spiritual life itself, of art, and of any final expression of the inward life.... I have been ill—and seriously—but am now better, though I have to be careful still. All our plans for Scandinavia in the autumn are now over—partly by

> doctor's orders, who says I must have hill and sea air native to me—Scotland or Ireland. So about the end of July my wife and I intend to go to Ireland. It will probably be to the east coast, Mourne Mountains coast. I hope you like *The Dominion of Dreams*. Miss Macleod has received two or three very strange and moving letters from strangers, as well as others. The book of course can appeal to few—that is, much of it. But, I hope, it will sink deep. We leave our flat about 20th of July. Shall you be in town before then? I doubt if I'll ever live in London again. It is not likely. I do not know that I am overwhelmingly anxious to live anywhere. I think you know enough of me to know how profoundly I feel the strain of life—the strain of double life. Still, there is much to be done yet. But for that ...
>
> Your friend,
> WILLIAM SHARP.

Mr. Yeats' Review of *The Dominion of Dreams* in the *Bookman* (July 1899) was carefully critical; it was his desire "to discover the thoughts about which her thoughts are woven. Other writers are busy with the way men and women act in joy and sorrow, but Miss Macleod has rediscovered the art of the mythmaker and gives a visible shape to joys and sorrows, and makes them seem realities and men and women illusions. It was minds like hers that created Aphrodite out of love and the foam of the sea, and Prometheus out of human thought and its likeness to the leaping fire." And then he pointed out that "every inspiration has its besetting sin, and perhaps those who are at the beginning of movements have no models and no traditional restraints. She has faults enough to ruin an ordinary writer. Her search for these resemblances brings her beyond the borders of coherence.... The bent of nature that makes her turn from circumstance and personalities to symbols

and personifications may perhaps leave her liable to an obsession for certain emotional words which have for her a kind of symbolic meaning, but her love of old tales should tell her that the old mysteries are best told in simple words."

At first this criticism caused the author much emotional perturbation; but later, when he reconsidered the statements, he admitted that there was reason for the censure.

"Fiona" then asked the Irish poet to indicate the passages he took most exception to, and Mr. Yeats sent a carefully annotated copy of the book under discussion. And I may add that a number of the revisions that differentiate the version in the Collected Edition from the original issue are the outcome of this criticism. The author's acknowledgment is dated the 16th September 1899:

MY DEAR MR. YEATS,

> I am at present like one of those equinoctial leaves which are whirling before me as I write, now this way and now that: for I am, just now, addressless, and drift between East and West, with round-the-compass eddies, including a flying visit of a day or two in a yacht from Cantyre to North Antrim coast....
>
> I am interested in what you write about *The Dominion of Dreams* and shall examine with closest attention all your suggestions. The book has already been in great part revised by my friend. In a few textual changes in "Dalua" he has in one notable instance followed your suggestion about the too literary "lamentable elder voices." The order is slightly changed too: for "The House of Sand and Foam" is to be withdrawn and "Lost" is to come after "Dalua" and precede "The Yellow Moonrock."
>
> You will like to know what I most care for myself.

From a standpoint of literary art *per se* I think the best work is that wherein the barbaric (the old Gaelic or Celto-Scandinavian) note occurs. My three favourite tales in this kind are "The Sad Queen" in *The Dominion of Dreams*, "The Laughter of Scathach" in *The Washer of the Ford*, and "The Harping of Cravetheen" in *The Sin-Eater*. In art, I think "Dalua" and "The Sad Queen" and "Enya of the Dark Eyes" the best of *The Dominion of Dreams*.

Temperamentally, those which appeal to me are those with the play of mysterious psychic forces in them.... as in "Alasdair the Proud," "Children of the Dark Star," "Enya of the Dark Eyes," and in the earlier tales "Cravetheen," "The Dan-nan-Ron," and the Iona tales.

Those others which are full of the individual note of suffering and other emotion I find it very difficult to judge. Of one thing only I am convinced, as is my friend (an opinion shared by the rare few whose judgment really means much), that there is nothing in *The Dominion of Dreams*, or elsewhere in these writings under my name, to stand beside *The Distant Country* ... as the deepest and most searching utterance on the mystery of passion.... It is indeed the core of all these writings ... and will outlast them all.

Of course I am speaking for myself only. As for my friend, his heart is in the ancient world and his mind for ever questing in the domain of the spirit. I think he cares little for anything but through the remembering imagination to recall and interpret, and through the formative and penetrative imagination to discover certain mysteries of psychological and spiritual life.

Apropos—I wish very much you would read, when it appears in the *Fortnightly Review*—probably either in October or November—the spiritual 'essay' called "The Divine Adventure"—an imaginative effort to reach the same vital problems of spiritual life along the separate yet inevitably interrelated

lines of the Body, the Will (Mind or Intellect) and the soul....

I have no time to write about the plays. Two are typed: the third, the chief, is not yet finished. When all are revised and ready, you can see them. "The Immortal Hour" (the shortest, practically a one act play in time) is in verse.

Sincerely yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

These two plays were finally entitled "The Immortal Hour" and "The House of Usna." The third, "The Enchanted Valleys," remains a fragment.

At midsummer we gave up our flat in South Hampstead and stored our furniture indefinitely. It was decreed that we were to live no more in London; so we decided to make the experiment of wintering at Chorleywood, Bucks. Meanwhile, we went to our dear West Highlands, to Loch Goil, to Corrie on Arran, and to Iona. And in August we crossed over to Belfast and stayed for a short time at Ballycastle, the north easterly point of Ireland, to Newcastle, and then to Dublin.

From Ballycastle my husband wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

6th Aug., 1899.

... We are glad to get away from Belfast, tho' very glad to be there, in a nice hotel, after our fatigues and 10 hours' exposure in the damp sea-fog. It was a lovely day in Belfast, and Elizabeth had her first experience of an Irish car.

We are on the shore of a beautiful bay—with the great ram-shaped headland of Fair Head on the right, the Atlantic in front, and also in front but leftward the remote Gaelic island of Rathlin. It is the neighbourhood whence Deirdrê and Naois fled from Concobar, and it is from a haven in this coast that

they sailed for Scotland. It is an enchanted land for those who dream the old dreams: though perhaps without magic or even appeal for those who do not....”

October found us at Chorleywood, in rooms overlooking the high common. Thence he wrote to Mr. Murray Gilchrist:

MY DEAR ROBERT,

It is a disappointment to us both that you are not coming south immediately. Yes; the war-news saddens one, and in many ways. Yet, the war was inevitable: of that I am convinced, apart from political engineering or financial interests. There are strifes as recurrent and inevitable as tidal waves. Today I am acutely saddened by the loss of a very dear friend, Grant Allen. I loved the man—and admired the brilliant writer and catholic critic and eager student. He was of a most winsome nature. The world seems shrunken a bit more. As yet, I cannot realise I am not to see him again. Our hearts ache for his wife—an ideal loveable woman—a dear friend of us both.

We are both very busy. Elizabeth has now the artwork to do for a London paper as well as for *The Glasgow Herald*. For myself, in addition to a great complication of work on hand I have undertaken (for financial reasons) to do a big book on the Fine Arts in the Nineteenth Century. I hope to begin on it Monday next. It is to be about 125,000 words, (over 400 close-printed pp.), and if possible is to be done by December-end!...

You see I am not so idle as you think me. It is likely that our friend Miss Macleod will have a new book out in January or thereabouts—but not fiction. It is a volume of ‘Spiritual Essays’ etc.—studies in the spiritual history of the Gael.

We like this most beautiful and bracing

neighbourhood greatly: and as we have pleasant artist-friends near, and are so quickly and easily reached from London, we are as little isolated as at So. Hampstead—personally, I wish we were more! It has been the loveliest October I remember for years. The equinoxial bloom is on every tree. But today, after long drought, the weather has broken, and a heavy rain has begun.

Yours,
WILL.

... *The Progress of Art in the Century* was a longer piece of work than the author anticipated. It was finished in the summer of 1900, and published in *The Nineteenth Century Series* in 1902 by The Linscott Publishing Co. in America, and by W. & R. Chambers in England. In the early winter the author wrote again to Mr. Gilchrist:

CHORLEYWOOD,
Nov., 1899.

MY DEAR ROBERT,

The reason for another note so soon is to ask if you cannot arrange to come here for a few days about November-end, and for this reason. You know that the Omar Khayyàm Club is the "Blue Ribbon" so to speak of Literary Associations, and that its occasional meetings are more sought after than any other. As I think you know, I am one of the 49 members—and I much want you to be my guest at the forthcoming meeting on Friday Dec. 1st, the first of the new year.

The new President is Sir George Robertson ("Robertson of Chitral")—and he has asked me to write (and recite) the poem which, annually or biennially, some one is honoured by the club request to write. The moment she heard of it, Elizabeth declared that it must be the occasion of your coming here—so don't disappoint her as well as myself!...

Ever affectly, yours,
WILL.

CHAPTER XXI

THE DIVINE ADVENTURE

Celtic

In the early summer of 1900 the volume entitled *The Divine Adventure: Iona: By Sundown Shores*, with a dedication to me, was published by Messrs. Chapman & Hall.

Various titles had been discarded, among others "The Reddening of the West," also "The Sun-Treader" intended for a story, projected but never written, to form a sequel to "The Herdsman." The titular essays had previously appeared in various periodicals; the two first in *The Fortnightly*. As the author explained in a letter to Mr. Macleay, Fiona's Highland champion:

> ... There is a sudden departure from fiction ancient or modern in something of mine that is coming out in the November and December issues of *The Fortnightly Review*.

"The Divine Adventure" it is called—though this spiritual essay is more 'remote,' i. e. unconventional, and in a sense more 'mystical,' than anything I have done. But it is out of my inward life. It is an essential part of a forthcoming book of spiritual and critical essays or studies in the spiritual history of the Gael, to be called *The Reddening of the West*....

A book I look forward to with singular interest is Mr. Arthur Symon's announced *Symbolist Movement in Literature*.

This is the longest letter I have written for—well, I know not when. But, then, you are a good friend.

Believe me, yours most sincerely,

FIONA MACLEOD.

To Mons. Anatole Le Braz, the Breton romance-writer and folklorist, F. M. had written previously:

DEAR M. LE BRAZ,

Your letter was a great pleasure to me. It was the more welcome as coming from one who is not only an author whose writings have a constant charm for me, but as from a Celtic comrade and spiritual brother who is also the foremost living exponent of the Breton genius. It may interest you to know that I am preparing an *étude* on Contemporary Breton (i. e. Franco-Breton) Literature; which, however, will be largely occupied with consideration of your own high achievement in prose and verse.

It gives me sincere pleasure to send to you by this post a copy of the 'popular' edition of Adamnan's *Life of St. Colum*—which please me by accepting. You will find, below these primitive and often credulous legends of Iona a beauty of thought and a certain poignant exquisiteness of sentiment that cannot but appeal to you, a Breton of the Bretons....

It seems to me that in writing the spiritual history of Iona I am writing the spiritual history of the Gael, of all our Celtic race. The lovely wonderful little

> island sometimes appears to me as a wistful mortal, in his eyes the pathos of infinite desires and inalienable ideals—sometimes as a woman, beautiful, wild, sacred, inviolate, clad in rags, but aureoled with the Rainbows of the west.
>
> "Tell the story of Iona, and you go back to God, and end in God." (The first words of my 'spiritual history').…
>
> But you will have already wearied of so long a letter. My excuse is … that you are Anatole Le Braz, and I am your far-away but true comrade,
>
> FIONA MACLEOD.

On the 30th Dec. W. S. wrote to Mr. Frank Rinder:

> Just a line, dear Frank, both as dear friend and literary comrade, to greet you on New Year's morning, and to wish you health and prosperity in 1900. I would like you very much to read some of this new Fiona work, especially the opening pages of "Iona," for they contain a very deep and potent spiritual faith and hope, that has been with me ever since, as there told, as a child of seven, old Seumas Macleod (who taught me so much—was indeed the *father* of Fiona)—took me on his knees one sundown on the island of Eigg, and made me pray to "Her." I have never written anything mentally so spiritually autobiographical. Strange as it may seem it is almost all literal reproduction of actuality with only some dates and names altered.
>
> But enough about that troublesome F. M.!…

And to Mr. Gilchrist, "It was written *de profundis*, partly because of a compelling spirit, partly to help others passionately eager to obtain some light on this most complex and intimate spiritual destiny."

Some months previously William had written to an unknown correspondent, Dr. John Goodchild,

poet, mystic and archeologist:

THE OUTLOOK TOWER,
EDINBURGH,
1898.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have to thank you very cordially for your book and the long and interesting letter which accompanied it. It must be to you also that I am indebted for an unrevised proof-copy of *The Light of the West*.

Everything connected with the study of the Celtic past has an especial and deep interest for me, and there are few if any periods more significant than that of the era of St. Columba. His personality has charmed me, in the old and right sense of the word 'charm': but I have come to it, or it to me, not through books (though of course largely through Adamnan) so much as through a knowledge gained partly by reading, partly by legendary love and hearsay, and mainly by much brooding on these, and on every known saving and record of Colum, in Iona itself. When I wrote certain of my writings (e. g. "Muime Chriosd" and "The Three Marvels of Iona") I felt, rightly or wrongly, as though I had in some measure become interpretative of the spirit of "Colum the White."

Again, I have long had a conviction—partly an emotion of the imagination, and partly a belief insensibly deduced through a hundred avenues of knowledge and surmise—that out of Iona is again to come a Divine Word, that Iona, the little northern isle, will be as it were the tongue in the mouth of the South.

Believe me, sincerely yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

"The House of Usna"—one of three Celtic plays, on which F. M. had been working for several months,

was brought out under the auspices of The Stage Society, of which William Sharp was the first Chairman. Mr. Frederick Whelen, the founder of that Society, had met my husband at Hindhead when we were staying with his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Grant Allen, at their charming house, The Croft, built among the heather and the pines on the hill-top just by the edge of the chasm called "The Devil's Punch Bowl."

The older man was keenly interested in the project, did his utmost to help towards its realisation. "The House of Usna" was performed at the Fifth Meeting of the Society at the Globe Theatre April 29th, 1900, together with two short plays by Maeterlinck, *The Interior* and *The Death of Tintagiles*. The music, composed especially for the short drama in three scenes, was by Mr. Y. M. Capel, and the play was produced under the direction of Mr. Granville Barker. According to one critic: "It had beauty and it had atmosphere, two very rare things on the stage, but I did not feel that it quite made a drama, or convince, as a drama should, by the continuous action of inner or outer forces. It was, rather, passion turning upon itself, and with no language but a cry."

The author took the greatest interest in the rehearsals, and in the performance. He thoroughly enjoyed the double play that was going on, as he moved about the theatre, and chatted to his friends during the intervals, with little heed of the risks he ran of detection of authorship. The drama itself was printed three months later in *The National Review*, and eventually published in book form in America by Mr. T. B. Mosher, in 1903.

In 1900, too, the second of these dramas, "The Immortal Hour," appeared in the November number of *The Fortnightly Review*. It was published

posthumously in England (Foulis) and in America (Mosher). The third play, "The Enchanted Valleys," was never finished. It had been the author's intention to publish these dramas in book form under the third title, and to dedicate it to Mr. W. L. Courtney, who, as Editor of the *Fortnightly*, had been a good friend to Fiona Macleod.

To his unknown correspondent the dramatist wrote again:

Nov. 15, 1900.

DEAR DR. GOODCHILD,

I am glad that you have found pleasure in *The Immortal Hour*. I wonder if you interpret the myth of Midir and Etain quite differently, or if you, too, find in Midir the symbol of the voice of the other world; and what you think of Dalua, the Fool, here and elsewhere. Your earnest letter, written in spiritual comradeship, has been read by me again and again. I do not say that the warning in it is not justified, still less that it is not called for: but, on the other hand, I do not think I follow you aright. Is it something in *The Immortal Hour* (or in *The Divine Adventure* or more likely *The Dominion of Dreams*) that impelled you to write as you did: or something seemingly implied, or inferred by you?...

We seldom know how or where we really stand, or the mien and aspect we unwittingly bear to the grave eyes of the gods. Is it the lust of knowledge, of Hidden Things, of the Delight of the World, of the magic of Mother-Earth, of the Flesh—to one or all—that you allude. The matter touches me intimately.

You have (I had almost said mysteriously, but why so, for it would be more mysterious if there were no secret help in spiritual comradeship) helped me at more than one juncture in my life....

Most sincerely,

FIONA MACLEOD.

Dr. Goodchild replied:

BORDIGHERA,
Nov. 29, 1900.

MY DEAR MISS MACLEOD,

I left one or two of your questions unanswered in my last. I am no Celtic scholar. It was your 'Prayer of the Women' which suggested to me first how far you might feel for your sisters, and how far you might journey to find succour....

A woman who gazes into Columba's Well and sees how the bubbles burst on its surface, needs all her own wisdom lest she be dizzy, and a hand held out from the opposite side the spring may help her to gaze more steadily. *Midhir*, I believe to be the same as the oriental *Mitherd*, the Recipient of Light, and its translator in the *Midhc-Myth*, A voice from the "Otherworld" as you say, but the wearer of the *Miter*, speaking not from the *Under*world, but the *Upper*world i.e. He is a High Priest speaking in the full light of the Sun.

Etain is difficult, and my own ideas by no means formulated. I merely suggest that ere your Etain was born, her name typified the strong hope of the singer, his immortality, his knowledge that the Sun not merely creates but re-creates in renewed beauty.

If you remember Cairbre, the son of Etain, you may also remember those other Ethainn who sung before the Ark in a far country. The Father is put on one side for the Mother, by the singer, the Mother for the Bride. Even Milton, puritan though he was, must invoke a woman to the aid of "adventurous song" and is careful not to change the sex when in the Muse of Sinni and Silva is seen the Spirit of the Creator.

As regards Dalua, I know nothing of him by name except what you yourself have written. Is there any connection between the name and Dala (the Celtic) which is sometimes found in company with Brat and

> Death, in your Celtic genealogies?
>
> At the same time I have dimly guessed all my life how folly might be better than the wisdom of wise men, and remembering dimly how much wiser I was myself as a child than after I had grown up, I have incessantly desired a return to that state of childish thought, and tried to learn from children, when I had the chance, the secrets of their folly which carried them so near to divinity, if they were not hurried away from their vision by those about them.
>
> J. A. G.

The Essay entitled "Celtic" had originally appeared in the *Contemporary Review* a few weeks before the publication of the new volume, and had aroused considerable comment. In Britain it was regarded as a clear statement of the aims and ideas of the so-called Celtic Revival—(a term which "F. M." greatly disliked). It was otherwise in Ireland, and naturally so, considering the different conditions on both sides of the Irish channel out of which the movement had grown. On this side political considerations had not touched the question; it was mainly concerned with the preservation of the old language, with racial characteristic feelings, and their expression in literature. On the other side of the water, the workers had many more issues at heart than in the Highlands. So the Highland Celt and the Irish Celts did not quite understand one another; an animated correspondence ensued in private and in the press. The Irish press was divided in its opinion on 'Celtic,' because the writers were not of one mind among themselves in their methods of working towards the one end all Celts have at heart. There were those, who being ardent Nationalists regarded the Celtic literary movement as one with the political, or as greatly coloured by it. This factor

gave a special element to the Irish phase of the movement which sharply differentiated it from the movement in Scotland, Wales or Brittany. Other workers were interested in the movement as a whole, in each of the "six Celtic Nations," and "The Celtic Association" was formed, with Lord Castletown at its head, with a view of keeping each of the six branches of the movement in touch with each other: the Irish, Scots, Welsh, Manx, Breton, and Cornish or British. This Society desired to make a Federation of these working sections an actuality, and to that end decided to hold a Pan Celtic Congress every three years. The first of these was held in Dublin, and to it my husband subscribed as W. S. and as F. M., though, as an obvious precaution against detection, he did not attend it.

Opinion in Ireland was divided as to the value of such a Federation; certain of the enthusiasts believed that working for it drew strength and work away from the central needs in Ireland. Another point of dispute was the question of language; as to what did or would constitute an Irish Literature—works written in the Erse only; or all work, either in the Erse or the English tongue that gave expression to and made vital the Celtic spirit and aspirations. F. M. deplored the uniting of the political element to the movement—and naturally had no inclination towards any such feeling.

William Sharp's great desire was that the Celtic spirit should be kept alive, and be a moulding influence towards the expression of the racial approach to and yearning after spiritual beauty, whether expressed in Gaelic or in the English tongue. He knew that there is a tendency, with the young of those people in Scotland at least, to put aside the beautiful old thoughts, or at all events their outward

expression, with the disuse of the older language which had clothed those thoughts; he feared that to put silence upon them would be to lose them after a generation or two. Therefore it was his great hope that the genius of the race would prove strong enough to express itself in either language; and he realised that its influence would be more potent and widespread if also it found expression in the English language. Thus a misunderstanding arose; one of approach to the subject rather than in essentials.

The Irish Press was divided in opinion concerning "Celtic," especially *The Irish Independent*, *Freeman's Journal* and *All Ireland Review*. In the latter a correspondence began. One writer welcomed the Essay as coming from one "possessed, as no other writer of our time is possessed, with a sense of the faculty and mission of the Celt, and shows not only deep intuition but the power to see life steadily and to see it as a whole."

"A. E." however, was of another opinion. He considered the essay to be out of place "in a book otherwise inspired by the artist's desire to shape in a beautiful way"; to be semi-political and inaccurate as an expression of the passionate aimes of the Irish Celt; and he took exception to the expression of belief 'there is no racial road to beauty.'

F. M. replied and endeavoured to make more clear her position; but without success, as a subsequent letter from the Irish poet proved. Another writer showed that there was obviously a confusion of two ideas between the disputants—and Mr. T. W. Rolleston closed the discussion with a letter in which he quietly pointed out the misapprehensions on both sides and concluded with the generous admission: "Fiona Macleod is most emphatically a helper, not a hinderer in this work, and one of the most potent we

have. For my own part I think her essay 'Celtic' indicates the lines on which we may most successfully work." William Sharp realised that since his essay had given rise to misapprehension of his aims and ideas, it would be well to further elucidate them; that moreover, as "F. M." wrote to Mr. Russell, "a truer understanding has come to me in one or two points where we have been at issue." He, therefore, revised and enlarged his essay, and, with an added Foreword of explanation, had it published separately in America by Mr. T. B. Mosher; and, finally, he included it in *The Winged Destiny*.

In the early autumn the following letter came to my husband from overseas:

BRONXVILLE, N. Y.,
Sept. 26, 1900.

MY DEAREST GUILIELMO,

In this last year of *my* Century, among my little and exceptional attempts to celebrate my coming birthday—I wish that you the most leal and loved of our English friends, may receive for once a word from me before its sun goes down. Probably you are in some Lodge of the lake of your Northern Night, or off for the Mountains of the Moon. Still, even your restless and untamed spirit must by this time have been satisfied of wandering; at any rate, I doubt not this will in the end find you somewhere, and then you will know that my heart began to go out to you as I neared another milestone ... it has suffered enough and lost enough to make it yearn fondly for the frank face and dear words of a kindred, though fresher heart like yours. I have a few devoted sons, and you are one of them....

My remembrances to Mrs. Sharp and to Fiona McL —— whether she be real or hypothetical. If I could have spared the means, and had had the strength, I would have completed my recovery by a voyage to

you and England last summer....

Ever devotedly yours,

E. C. STEDMAN.

The "restless spirit" was by no means tired of wandering. Partly owing to the insistence of circumstance, partly from choice, we began that autumn a series of wanderings that brought us back to London and to Scotland for a few weeks only each summer. The climate of England proved too severe; my husband had been seriously ill in the New Year. Despite his appearance of great vitality, his extraordinary power of recuperation after every illness—which in a measure was due to his buoyant nature, to his deliberate turning of his mind away from suffering or from failure and "looking sunwise," to his endeavour to get the best out of whatever conditions he had to meet—we realised that a home in England was no longer a possibility, that it would be wise to make various experiments abroad rather than attempt to settle anywhere permanently. Indeed, we were both glad to have no plans, but to wander again how and where inclination and possibilities dictated. Early in October he wrote to Mr. Murray Gilchrist from London:

MY DEAR ROBERT,

A little ago, on sitting down in my club to answer some urgent notes (and whence I now write) my heart leapt with pleasure, and an undeserving stranger received Part I of a beaming welcome—for the waiter announced that "Mr. Gilchrist would like to see you, Sir." Alas, it was no dear Peaklander, but only a confounded interviewer about the Stage Society!...

Elizabeth and I leave England on the morning of the 12th—and go first to the South of Provence, near

Marseilles: after Yule-tide we'll go on to Italy, perhaps first to Shelley's Spezzia or to Pegli of the Orange Groves near Genoa: and there we await you, or at furthest a little later, say in Florence. We shall be away till the end of March.

Meanwhile 'tis all unpleasantness and incertitude: much to do and little pleasure in the doing: a restlessness too great to be salved short of departure, and the longed for mental and nervous rest far away.

I have just returned from a flying visit to Dorset, and saw Thomas Hardy. He is well, and at work: the two happiest boons of fortune for all our kinship—and therein I hope *you* are at one with him. I wish you could run up and see our first Stage Society production this weekend (Sunday) when we bring out a short play by Hardy and R. L. Stevenson and Henley's 'Macaire.' (I resigned my Chairmanship but was re-elected: and so am extra busy before I go.)

Your loving friend,

WILL.

P. S. Miss Macleod's drama 'The Immortal Hour' is in the November *Fortnightly*, also her article "The Gael and His Heritage" in the November *Nineteenth Century*.

And in addition to these a study on the Dramas of Gabriele d'Annunzio appeared in *The Fortnightly*, in September, signed "W. S."

To Mr. Macleay he sent an account of the work he had on hand:

AIX-EN-PROVENCE,
30th Nov., 1900.

DEAR MR. MACLEAY,

Your friendly note has reached me here, where I have been some time, this being my best centre in Provence at this season for my special studies in Provencal literature and history. My wife and I expect to remain here till about Christmas time, and

then to go on to Italy.

Pressure of urgent work—chiefly a lengthy volume on the Evolution of the Fine Arts in the Nineteenth Century, primarily for transatlantic publication—prevented my being much in Scotland this autumn. I was a brief while in Galloway visiting friends, and for a week or so at Portpatrick, and a few days in Edinburgh—c'est tout.

At one time there was a chance that I might be near Taynuilt, and I looked forward greatly to see Mr. Alexander Carmichael again. He is a splendid type of the true Highlander, and of a nature incomparably sweet and refined—and I have the greatest admiration of him in all ways....

A remarkable family, and I would to Heaven there were more such families in the Highlands now. Yes, *what* a book *Carmina Gadelica* is! It ought to become as precious to the Scottish Gael as the Greek Anthology to all who love the Hellenic ideal, but with a more poignant, a more personal appeal.... I can't tell you about Miss Macleod's historical romance for the good reason that I don't know anything about its present prospects myself. Personally I regret the long postponement, as I think (judging from what I have seen) that it would be a success as a romance of history. Miss Macleod, however, became dissatisfied with what she had done, or its atmosphere, or both, and has not touched it again for some months past—though the last time she spoke of the subject she said she hoped it would be ready by midsummer.... I am myself heavily engaged in work, including many commissions. I've finished an essay on "Impressionism" ("The Impressionist" I call it) for the forthcoming new monthly, *The North Liberal Review*, and am now in the throes of a long *Quarterly* article. Then I have a Provencal book on hand, and (interlusive) a Provencal romance.

You will, of course, keep all I have said of myself and doings, and still more importantly of Miss

> Macleod, to yourself. I don't think she wants anyone save friends and acquaintances to know that she is abroad, and for her health. And above all needing rest as she is, she dreads the slightest addition to a correspondence already beyond her capacities.
>
> Before I left London I read with deep interest the opening instalments of Neil Munro's new book *Doom Castle*. It promises, I think, to be his *chef-d'œuvre*.
>
> Write to me again soon, with news of your doings and prospects.
>
> Yours sincerely,
>
> WILLIAM SHARP.

The Provencal romance that he was mentally projecting—the never written *Gypsy Trail*—was in part to have dealt with his early gipsy experiences. One among other things which revived this strain of memory was our near vicinage to Les Sainte-Maries, in Provence, where the bones of Sarah, the gipsy servant of "les Maries," are enshrined; also he had recently read the vivid description of the gathering of the gipsy tribes at that Shrine on her Feast day, written by the Provencal novelist Jean Aicard, in his *Le Roi des Camargues*.

During my husband's first visit to Provence he had been much interested in meeting certain members of Les Félibres, the Provencal literary and linguistic Nationalists. He visited Frederick Mistral in his charming country home and noticed the similarity of physical type shared by the Provencal and himself. I, also, was struck by the likeness between the two men and thought that Mistral might easily have passed for elder brother of his Scots *confrère*. At Avignon we saw Madame Roumanille, the sister of Felix Gras, and widow of one of the founders of Les Félibres, and her poet-daughter, Térèse, who inherited her father's gift. At Aix we met

Mistral's god-daughter Madame Marie Gasquet, daughter of the poet M. Gerard, another of the original group of workers in the old *Langue d'Œuil*. Madame Gasquet was the wife of the young poet, Joachim Gasquet, between whom and my husband there grew up a warm friendship.

CHAPTER XXII

PROVENCE

Maniace

New Year's Day found us at Palermo where my husband was enchanted at being presented with a little pottle of freshly gathered wild strawberries; a week later we traversed the island to Taormina, whence he wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

MONTE VENERE, TAORMINA,
25th Jan., 1901.

... Today it was too warm to work contentedly indoors even upon our little terrace with its superb views over Etna and the Ionian Sea—so at 9 a.m. Elizabeth and I, with a young painter-friend came up here to a divine spot on the slopes of the steep and grand-shouldered Hill of Venus, bringing with us our writing and sketching materials and also fruit and wine and light luncheon. It is now about 3 p.m. and we have lain here for hours in the glorious warmth and cloudless sunglow—undisturbed by any sounds save the soft sighing of the sea far below, the fluttering of a young goatherd with his black flock on a steep across a near ravine, and the occasional passing of a muleteer or of a mountaineer with his wine-panier'd donkeys. A vast sweep of sea is before

us and beneath. To the left, under the almond boughs, are the broad straits which divide Sicily from Calabria—in front, the limitless reach of the Greek sea—to the right, below, the craggy heights and Monte Acropoli of Taormina—and, beyond, the vast slope of snow-clad Etna....

I have just been reading (for the hundredth time) in Theocritus. How doubly lovely he is, read on the spot. That young shepherd fluting away to his goats at this moment might be Daphnis himself. Three books are never far from here: Theocritus, the Greek Anthology, and the Homeric Hymns. I loved them before: now they are in my blood.

Legend has it that near this very spot Pythagoras used to come and dream. How strange to think that one can thus come in touch with two of the greatest men of antiquity—for within reach from here (a pilgrimage to be made from Syracuse) is the grave of Æschylus. Perhaps it was here that Pythagoras learned the secret of that music (for here both the sea-wind and the hill-wind can be heard in magic meeting) by which one day—as told in Iamblicus—he cured a young man of Taormina (Tauromenion) who had become mad as a wild beast, with love. Pythagoras, it is said, played an antique air upon his flute, and the madness went from the youth....

I shall never forget the journey across Sicily. I forget if I told you in my letter that it had been one of my dreams since youth to read the Homeric Hymns and Theocritus in Sicily—and it has been fulfilled: even to the unlikeliest, which was to read the great Hymn to Demeter at Enna itself. And that I did—in that wild and remote mountain-land. Enna is now called Castrogiovanni—but all else is unchanged —though the great temples to Demeter and Persephone are laid low. It was a wonderful mental experience to read that Hymn on the very spot where Demeter went seeking—torch in hand, and wind-blown blue peplos about her—her ravished daughter, the beautiful Pherephata or Persephone. However, I

have already told you all about that—and the strange coincidence of the two white doves, (which Elizabeth witnessed at the moment I exclaimed) and about our wonderful sunset-arrival in Greek Tauromenion....

To the same friend he described our visit to Syracuse:

CASA POLITI,
STRADA DIONYSIO,
7th Feb.,:01.

... I must send you at least a brief line from Syracuse—that marvellous 'Glory of Hellas' where ancient Athens fell in ruin, alas, when Nicias lost here the whole army and navy and Demosthenes surrendered by the banks of the Anapus—the Syracuse of Theocritus you love so well—the Syracuse where Pindar heard some of his noblest odes sung, where Plato discoursed with his disciples of New Hellas, where (long before) the Argonauts had passed after hearing the Sirens singing by this fatal shore, and near where Ulysses derided Polyphemus—and where Æschylus lived so long and died.

It seems almost incredible when one is in the beautiful little Greek Theatre up on the rising ground behind modern Syracuse to believe that so many of the greatest plays of the greatest Greek tragedians (many unknown to us even by name) were given here under the direction of Æschylus himself. And now I must tell you of a piece of extraordinary good fortune. Yesterday turned out the superbest of this year—a real late Spring day, with the fields full of purple irises and asphodels and innumerable flowers, and the swallows swooping beneath the multitudes of flowering almonds. We spent an unforgettable day—first going to the Castle of ancient Euryalos—perhaps the most wonderful I have ever known. Then, in the evening, I heard that today a special choral performance was to be given in the beautiful

> hillside Greek Theatre in honour of the visit of Prince Tommaso (Duke of Genoa, the late King's brother, and Admiral of the Fleet). Imagine our delight! And *what* a day it has been—the ancient Æschylean theatre crammed once more on all its tiers with thousands of Syracusans, so that not a spare seat was left—while three hundred young voices sang a version of one of the choral sections of "The Suppliants" of Æschylus—with it il Principe on a scarlet dais where once the tyrant Dionysius sat! Over head the deep blue sky, and beyond, the deep blue Ionian sea. It was all too wonderful....

While we were at Taormina the news came of the death of Queen Victoria. An impressive memorial service was arranged by Mr. Albert Stopford, an English resident there, and held in the English Chapel of Sta. Caterina.

To attend it the Hon. Alexander Nelson Hood came from the "Nelson property" of Bronte where he was wintering with his father, Viscount Bridport, Duke of Bronte, who for forty years had been personal Lord in Waiting to the Queen. To the son we were introduced by Mr. Stopford; and a day or two later we started on our first visit to that strange beautiful Duchy on Ætna, that was to mean so much to us.

Greatly we enjoyed the experience—the journey in the little Circum-Ætnean train along the great shoulder of Etna, with its picturesque little towns and its great stretches of devastating lava; the first sight of the Castle of Maniace—in its shallow tree-clad valley of the Simeto flanked by great solemn hills—as we turned down the winding hill-road from the great lava plateau where the station of Maletto stands; the time-worn quadrangular convent-castle with its Norman chapel, and its great Iona cross

carved in lava erected in the court-yard to the memory of Nelson; the many interesting relics of Nelson within the castle, such as his Will signed Nelson and Bronte on each page, medals, many fine line engravings of the battles in which he, and also Admiral Hood, took part; the beautiful Italian garden, and wild glen gardens beyond. No less charming was the kindly welcome given to us by the fine, hale old Courtier who—when his son one afternoon had taken my husband for a drive to see the hill-town of Bronte, and the magnificent views of and from Ætna, with its crowning cover of snow—told me, as we sat in the comfortable central hall before a blazing log fire, many reminiscences of the beloved Queen he had served so long.

In the spring we returned to England, through Italy; and from Florence, where we took rooms for a month, F. M. wrote to an unknown correspondent:

18th March, 1901.

MY DEAR UNKNOWN FRIEND,

You must forgive a tardy reply to your welcome letter, but I have been ill, and am not yet strong. Your writing to me has made me happy. One gets many letters: some leave one indifferent; some interest; a few are like dear and familiar voices speaking in a new way, or as from an obscure shore. Yours is of the last. I am glad to know that something in what I have written has coloured anew your own thought, or deepened the subtle music that you yourself hear—for no one finds the colour of life and the music of the spirit unless he or she already perceive the one and love the other. Somewhere in one of my books—I think in the latest, *The Divine Adventure*, but at the moment cannot remember—I say that I no longer ask of a book, is it clever, or striking, or is it well done, or even is it beautiful, but—out of how deep a life does it come. That is the

most searching test. And that is why I am grateful when one like yourself writes to tell me that intimate thought and emotion deeply felt have reached some other and kindred spirit....

I am writing to you from Florence. You know it, perhaps? The pale green Arno, the cream-white, irregular, green-blinded, time-stained houses opposite, the tall cypresses of the Palatine garden beyond, the dove-grey sky, all seem to breathe one sigh ... *La Pace! L'Oblio!*

But then—life has made those words "Peace," "Forgetfulness," very sweet for me. Perhaps for you this vague breath of another Florence than that which Baedeker described might have some more joyous interpretation. I hope so....

You are right in what you say, about the gulf between kindred natures being less wide than it seems. But do not speak of the spiritual life as "another life": there is no 'other' life: what we mean by that is with us now. The great misconception of Death is that it is the only door to another world.

Your friend,

FIONA MACLEOD.



IL CASTELLO DI MANIACE, BRONTE, SICILY
From a photograph taken by the Hon. Alex. Nelson Hood

The October number of *The Fortnightly Review* contained a series of poems by F. M. entitled "The Ivory Gate," and at the same time an American edition of *From the Hills of Dream*—altered from the original issue—was published by Mr. T. Mosher, to whom the poet wrote concerning the last section of the English Edition:

12th Nov., 1901.

DEAR MR. MOSHER,

What a lovely book *Mimes* is! It is a pleasure to look at it, to handle it. The simple beauty of the cover-design charms me. And the contents ... yes, these are beautiful, too.

I think the translation has been finely made, but there are a few slips in interpretative translation, and (as perhaps is inevitable) a lapse ever and again from the subtle harmony, the peculiar musical undulant rhythm of the original. In a *creative* translation, the faintest jar can destroy the illusion: and more than once I was rudely reminded that a foreigner mixt this far-carried honey and myrrh. Yet this is only "a counsel of perfection," by one who perhaps dwells overmuch upon the ideal of a flawless raiment for beautiful thought or dream. Nor would I seem ungracious to a translator who has so finely achieved a task almost as difficult as that set to Liban by Oisin in the Land of the Ever-Living, when he bade her take a wave from the shore and a green blade from the grass and a leaf from a tree and the breath of the wind and a man's sigh and a woman's thought, and out of them all make an air that would be like the single song of a bird. Do you wish to tempt me? Tempt me then with a proposal as to "The Silence of

Amor," to be brought out as Mimes is!

The short prose-poems would have to be materially added to, of course: and the additions would for the most part individually be longer than the short pieces you know....

Sincerely yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

In sending a copy of the American edition of *From the Hills of Dream* to Mr. Yeats, the author explained that, though it contained new material,

... there will be much in it familiar to you. But even here there are changes which are recreative—as, for example, in the instance of "The Moon-Child," where one or two touches and an added quatrain have made a poem of what was merely poetic.

The first 10 poems are those which are in the current October *Fortnightly Review*. But when these are reprinted in a forthcoming volume of new verse ... it will also contain some of the 40 'new' poems now included in this American edition, and the chief contents will be the re-modelled and re-written poetic drama *The Immortal Hour*, and with it many of the notes to which I alluded when I wrote last to you. In the present little volume it was not found possible to include the lengthy, intimate, and somewhat esoteric notes: among which I account of most interest for you those pertinent to the occult myths embodied in *The Immortal Hour*.

You will see, however, that one or two dedicatory pages—intended for the later English new book—have here found a sectional place: and will, I hope, please you.

Believe me,
Your friend truly,
F. M.

Mr. Yeats replied:

18 WOBURN BUILDINGS,
LONDON, Saturday.

MY DEAR MISS MACLEOD,

I have been a long while about thanking you for your book of poems, but I have been shifting from Dublin to London and very busy about various things —too busy for any quiet reading. I have been running hither and thither seeing people about one thing and another. But now I am back in my rooms and have got things straight enough to settle down at last to my usual routine. Yesterday I began arranging under their various heads some hitherto unsorted folk-stories on which I am about to work, and today I have been busy over your book. I never like your poetry as well as your prose, but here and always you are a wonderful writer of myths. They seem your natural method of expressions. They are to you what mere words are to others. I think this is partly why I like you better in your prose, though now and then a bit of verse comes well, rising up out of the prose, in your simplest prose the most, the myths stand out clearly, as something objective, as something well born and independent. In your more elaborate prose they seem subjective, an inner way of looking at things assumed by a single mind. They have little independent life and seem unique; your words bind them to you. If Balzac had written with a very personal, very highly coloured style, he would have always drowned his inventions with himself. You seem to feel this, for when you use elaborate words you invent with less conviction, with less precision, with less delicacy than when you forget everything but the myth. I will take as example, a prose tale.

That beautiful story in which the child finds the Twelve Apostles eating porridge in a cottage, is quite perfect in all the first part, for then you think of nothing but the myth, but it seems to me to fade to nothing in the latter part. For in the latter part the words rise up between you and the myth. You yourself begin to speak and we forget the apostles,

and the child and the plate and the porridge. Or rather the more mortal part of you begins to speak, the mere person, not the god. You, as I think, should seek the delights of style in utter simplicity, in a self-effacing rhythm and language; in an expression that is like a tumbler of water rather than like a cup of wine. I think that the power of your work in the future will depend on your choosing this destiny. Certainly I am looking forward to "The Laughter of the Queen." I thought your last prose, that pilgrimage of the soul and mind and body to the Hills of Dream promised this simple style. It had it indeed more than anything you have done.

To some extent I have an advantage over you in having a very fierce nation to write for. I have to make everything very hard and clear, as it were. It is like riding a wild horse. If one's hands fumble or one's knees loosen one is thrown. You have in the proper sense far more imagination than I have and that makes your work correspondingly more difficult. It is fairly easy for me, who do so much of my work by the critical, rather than the imaginative faculty, to be precise and simple, but it is hard for you in whose mind images form themselves without ceasing and are gone as quickly perhaps.

But I am sure that I am right. When you speak with the obviously personal voice in your verse, or in your essays you are not that Fiona who has invented a new thing, a new literary method. You are that Fiona when the great myths speak through you....

Yours,

W. B. YEATS.

I like your verses on Murias and like them the better perhaps because of the curious coincidence that I did in summer verses about lovers wandering 'in long forgotten Murias.'

During the spring William Sharp had prepared a volume of selections from the poems of Swinburne,

with an Introduction by himself, for publication in the Tauchnitz Collection of British Authors. Mr. Swinburne consented that the selection should be made in accordance with the critical taste of the Editor, with which however he was not in complete agreement. He expressed his views in a letter dated from The Pines, Putney Hill:

Oct. 6th.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

Many thanks for the early copy you have had the kindness to send on to me. I am pleased to find the Nympholept in a leading place, as I think it one of the best and most representative things I ever did. I should have preferred on all accounts that In the Bay had filled the place you have allotted to Ave atque Vale, a poem to which you are altogether too kind, in my opinion, as others have been before you. I never had really much in common with Baudelaire tho' I retain all my early admiration for his genius at its best. I wish there were fewer of such very juvenile crudities as you have selected from my first volume of poems: it is trying to find such boyish attempts as The Sundew, Aholibah, Madonna Mia, etc., offered as examples of the work of a man who has written so many volumes since in which there is nothing that is not at least better and riper than they. I wish too that Mater Triumphalis had not been separated from its fellow poem—a much fitter piece of work to stand by itself. On the other hand, I am very cordially obliged to you for giving the detached extract from Anactoria. I should greatly have preferred that extracts only should have been given from Atalanta in Calydon, which sorely needs compression in the earlier parts. Erectheus, which would have taken up so much less space, would also, I venture to think, have been a better and a fairer example of the author's work. Mr. Watts Dunton's objections to the book is the omission of Super Flumina Babylonis. I too am much surprised to find it excluded from a

> selection which includes so much that might well be spared—nay, would be better away. I would like to have seen one of what I call my topographical poems in full. The tiny scrap from Loch Torridon was hardly worth giving by itself. I do not understand what you find obscure or melancholy in The Garden of Cymodoce. It was written simply to express my constant delight in the recollection of Sark. I hope you will not think anything in this note captious or ungracious. Candour always seems to be the best expression possible of gratitude or goodwill.
>
> Ever sincerely yours,
>
> A. SWINBURNE.

In December of 1901 F. M. wrote, ostensibly from Argyll, to Dr. Goodchild: "I had hoped by this time to have had some definite knowledge of what I am to do, where to go this winter. But circumstances keep me here.... Our friend, too (meaning himself as W. S.), is kept to England by the illness of others. My plans though turning upon different issues are to a great extent dependent, later, on his....

I have much to do, and still more to think of, and it may be bring to life through the mysterious resurrection of the imagination.

What long months of preparation have to go to any writing that contains life within it.—Even the slightest, the most significant, as it seems! We, all of us who live this dual life of the imagination and the spirit, do indeed mysteriously conceive, and fare thereafter in weariness and heaviness and long travail, only for one small uncertain birth. It is the common law of the spirit—as the obverse is the common law of womanhood."

And again:

> "Life becomes more and more strange, complex, interwrought, and *intentional*. But it is *the end* that matters—not individuals."

Owing to my Mother's serious illness I could not leave England early in November, as we had intended. London was impossible for my husband for he, too, was ill. At first he went to Hastings, whence he wrote to Mrs. Philpot—author of *The Sacred Tree*:

HASTINGS,
Dec. 20, 1901.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

> You would have enjoyed "being me" yesterday. I had a most delightful day at Rye with Henry James who now lives there for many months in the year. I went over early, lunched, and then we went all over that wonderfully picturesque old Cinque Port. A lovely walk in a frost-bound still country, and then back by the sombre old Land Gate, over the misty marshes down below, and the flame red Cypres Tower against a plum coloured sunset, to Henry James' quaint and picturesque old house to tea. It was in every way a memorable and delightful day, and not least the great pleasure of intercourse with that vivid brilliant and alive mind. He is as of course, *you* realise, an artist to the finger tips. *Et ils sont rares ces diables d'esprit.* I wish it were spring! I long to hear the missel thrush in the blossoming pear tree: and the tingling of the sap, and the laughter in the blood. I suppose we are all, all of us ever dreaming of resurrections....

The English climate proved equally impossible, so W. S. went to Bordighera to be near Dr. Goodchild. But he was too restless to remain long anywhere, and moved on to Rome and finally to Sicily. He wrote to Mr. Rhys after the New Year from Il Castello di Maniace:

MY DEAR ERNEST,

As I think I wrote to you, I fell ill with a form of fever,—and had a brief if severe recurrence of it at Rome: and so was glad some time ago to get on to my beloved 'Greek' Taormina, where I rapidly 'convalesced.' A few days ago I came on here, to the wilds inlands of the Sicilian Highlands, to spend a month with my dear friend here, in this wonderful old 'Castle-Fortress-Monastery-Mansion—the Castel' Maniace itself being over 2,000 feet in the highlands beyond Etna, and Maletto, the nearest station about 3,000.

How you and Grace would rejoice in this region. Within a day's easy ride is Enna, sacred to Demeter, and about a mile or so from Castel' Maniace, in a wild desolate region of a lava wilderness, is the lonely heron-haunted moorland-lake wherein tradition has it Persephone disappeared....

W. S.

I joined him early in February at Maniace and we remained with Mr. Hood for a month of sunshine and flowers. Among other guests came Miss Maud Valerie White. She was wishful that the pleasant days spent there together should be commemorated, and proposed that W. S. should write a short poem, that she would set to Sicilian airs, and that the song should be dedicated to our host. To that end Mr. Hood summoned to the Castello one of the peasant bagpipe players, who one evening walked round and round the hall, playing the airs that are played each Christmas by the pipers before the shrines to the Madonna in the various churches. The result of that evening was a song, "Buon' Riposo," written by William Sharp, set to music by Miss Valerie White, and published by Messrs. Chappell.

BUON RIPOSO

When, like a sleeping child
Or a bird in the nest,
The day is gathered
To the earth's breast ...
Hush!... 'tis the dream-wind
Breathing peace,
Breathing rest
Out of the gardens of Sleep in the West.

O come to me ... wandering
Wind of the West!
Gray Doves of slumber
Come hither to nest....
Ah, sweet now the fragrance
Below the dim trees
Of the White Rose of Rest
That blooms in the gardens of Sleep in the West.

On leaving Maniace W. S. wrote to Dr. Goodchild:

Friday, 7th March, 1902.

To-morrow we leave here for Taormina.... And, not without many regrets, I am glad to leave—as, in turn, I shall be glad (tho' for other reasons) when the time comes to leave Taormina. My wife says I am never satisfied, and that Paradise itself would be intolerable for me if I could not get out of it when I wanted. And there is some truth in what she says, though it is a partial truth, only. I think external change as essential to some natures as passivity is to others: but this may simply mean that the inward life in one person may best be hypnotised by 'a still image,' that of another may best be hypnotised by a wavering image or series of wavering images. It is not change of scene one needs so much as change in these wavering images. For myself, I should, now, in many ways be content to spend the most of my life in some quiet place in the country, with a garden, a line of poplars and tall elms, and a great sweep of sky....

Your friend affectionately,
WILLIAM SHARP.

To Mrs. Philpot.

TAORMINA,
April 3, 1902.

DEAR FRIEND,

... It would take pages to describe all the flowers and other near and far objects which delight one continually. Persephone has scattered every treasure in this her birth-island. From my room here in the Castello-a-Mare—this long terraced hotel is built on the extreme edge of a precipitous height outside the Messina Gate of Taormina—I look down first on a maze of vividly green almond trees sloping swiftly down to the deep blue sea, and over them the snowy vastness of Etna, phantom-white against the intense blue, with its hitherside 11,000 feet of gulfs of violet morning shadow. About midway this is broken to the right first by some ancient cactus-covered fragments of antiquity at the corner of a winding path, and then by the bend of Santa Caterina garden wall with fine tall plume-like cypresses filled with a living green darkness, silhouetted against the foam-white cone.

My French windows open on the terrace, it is lovely to go out early in the morning to watch sunrise (gold to rose-flame) coming over Calabria, and the purple-blue emerald straits of Messina and down by the wildly picturesque shores of these island coasts and across the Ionian sea, and lying like a bloom on the incredible vastness of Etna and its rise from distant Syracuse and Mt. Hybla to its cone far beyond the morning clouds when clouds there are —or to go out at sunrise and see a miracle of beauty being woven anew—or at night when there is no moon, but only the flashing of the starry torches, the serpentine glitter of lights, the soft cry of the aziola, and the drowsy rhythmic cadence of the sea in the

caves and crags far below. Just now the hum of bees is almost as loud as the drowsy sighing of the sea: among the almonds a boy is singing a long drowsy Greek-like chant, and on the mass of wild rock near the cypresses a goatherd is playing intermittently on a reed pipe. A few yards to the right is a long crescent-shaped terrace garden filled with roses, great shrublike clumps of white and yellow marguerite, myrtle, lilies, narcissus, sweet-scented blossom-covered geranium, oranges hanging in yellow flame, pale-gold lemons. Below the branches a "Purple Emperor" and a snow-white "May Queen" are hovering in butterfly wooing. On an oleander above a wilderness of pink and scarlet geraniums two blue tits are singing and building, building and singing.

• • • • • • •

Since I wrote the above Easter has intervened. The strange half pagan, half Christian ceremonies interested me greatly, and in one of the ceremonials of one processional part I recognized a striking survival of the more ancient Greek rites of the Demeter and the Persephonæ-Kôrê cult.

To Mrs. Janvier.

TAORMINA.

... It is difficult to do anything here. I should like to come sometime without anything to do—without even a book to read: simply to come and dream, to re-live many of the scenes of this inexhaustible region of romance: to see in vision the coming and going of that innumerable company—from Ulysses and his wanderers, from Pythagoras and St. Peter, from that Pancrazio who had seen Christ in the flesh, from Æschylus, and Dionysius and Hiero and Gelon, from Pindar and Simonides and Theocritus, to Richard Cœur-de-Lion and Garibaldi and Lord Nelson —what a strange company!...

As for my own work, it is mostly (what there is of

> it!) dealing with the literature, etc., of the south. I do not know whether my long article on Contemporary Italian Poetry is to be in the April-June issue of *The Quarterly*, or the summer issue. I am more interested in a strange Greek drama I am writing—*The Kôrê of Enna*—than in anything I have taken up for a long time. My reading just now is mostly Greek history and Italian literature.... Looking on this deep blue, often violet sea, with the foam washing below that perhaps laved the opposite shores of Greece, and hearing the bees on the warm wind, it is difficult to realise the wet and cold you have apparently had recently in New York—or the fogs and cold in London. I wish you could bask in and sun yourself on this sea-terrace, and read me the last you have written of "Captain Dionysius" while *I* give *you* tea!

During our first visit to Sicily, though my husband realised the beauty of the island, he could not feel its charm or get in touch with the spirit of the place because he was overborne by the sense of battle and bloodshed that he felt pervaded it. When I suggested how much the fascination of the beautiful island had seized hold of me he would say: "No, I cannot feel it for the ground is sodden and every leaf drips with blood." To his great relief, on his return there he found, as he said, that he had got beyond the surface of things, had pierced down to the great essentials of the ancient land, and had become one of her devoted lovers.

CHAPTER XXIII

LISMORE

Taormina

Our summer was spent on Arran, Colinsay, and on "the Green Isle" of Lismore in the sea-mouth of Loch Linnhe within sight of the blue hills of Morven. We had rooms in the Ferryman's cottage at the north point of the isle, where the tide race was so strong at the ebb in stormy weather that at times it was impossible to row across to the Appin shore, even to fetch a telegram whose advent was signalled to us by a little flag from the post office—a quicker way of getting it than by the long road from the Lismore post office. We spent much of our time on the water in a little rowing boat. A favourite haunt was a little Isle of Seals, in the loch, where we one day found a baby seagull, fat and fully fledged, but a prisoner by reason of a long piece of grass that had tightly wound round and atrophied one of its feet. Sometimes our friend the ferryman would come too. At first he refused to talk if I was there, because I could not speak Gaelic, and he thought I was English. But at last when I had reassured him that I too was a Scot, when he admitted that though I had not a Highland tongue I had Highland eyes just like his mother's—his shyness wore away. And one day when we were out on the loch at sundown, and an exquisite rosy flush lay over hill and water, he stopped rowing and leant over his oars, silent for a time, and at last murmured in his slow Highland English "'Tis—the—smile—of God—upon—the—

waters."

At Lismore F. M. wrote, to quote the author's own words, "'The Four Winds of Eiré' (long); 'The Magic Kingdoms' (longer and profounder, one of the best things F. M. has ever written); 'Sea-Magic' (a narrative and strange Sea-Lore); 'The Lynn of Dreams' (a spiritual study); and 'Seumas' (a memory)."

During the summer and autumn he had, as F. M., also written a long study on the work of W. B. Yeats for *The North American Review*; had arranged the first volume of a selection of tales for the Tauchnitz series, entitled *Wind and Wave*; and had prepared a revised and augmented edition of *The Silence of Amor* for publication in America by Mr. Mosher. W. S. meanwhile had not been idle. After editing a volume of the Poems by our friend, Eugene Lee-Hamilton, with a long Introduction for *The Canterbury Poets*, he was at work on a series of articles which were intended for a projected book to be called *Literary Geography*; and of these there appeared in *Harper's* "Walter Scott's Land," "R. L. Stevenson's Country"; and a poem, "Capt'n Goldsack."

Unfortunately, his increasing delicacy not only disabled him from the continuous heavy strain of work he was under, but our imperative absence from England necessitated also the relinquishing of my journalistic work. The stress of circumstances weighed heavily on him, as he no longer had the energy and buoyancy with which to make way against it. At this juncture, however, one or two friends, who realised the seriousness of conditions petitioned that he should be put on the Civil Pension List. The Hon. Alex. Nelson Hood and Mr. Alfred Austin were the chief movers in the matter, and were backed by Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Thomas Hardy

and Mr. Watts Dunton. Realising however, that the writings of William Sharp, considered alone, would not constitute a sufficient claim, Mr. Hood urged William to allow him to acquaint the Prime Minister with the authorship of the Fiona Macleod writings, and of the many sacrifices their production had entailed. My husband consented providing that Mr. Balfour were told "confidentially and verbally." However, it proved necessary that "a statement of entire claims to consideration should be laid upon the table of the House of Commons for the inspection of members." In writing to acquaint my husband of this regulation, Mr. Hood added:

"I do not presume to say one word to influence you in the decision you may come to. In such a matter it is for you to decide. If you will sacrifice your unwillingness to appear before the world in all the esteem and admiration which are your due, then, (I may say this) perhaps you will obtain freedom—or some freedom—from anxiety and worry that will permit you to continue your work unhampered and with a quiet mind. But advice I cannot give. I cannot recommend any one to abandon a high ideal, and your wish to remain unknown is certainly that...."

To this W. S. replied:

EDINBURGH,
21st Aug., 1902.

MY DEAR ALEC,

You will have anticipated my decision. No other was possible for me. I have not made many sacrifices just to set them aside when a temptation of need occurs. Indeed, even writing thus of 'sacrifices' seems to me unworthy: these things are nothing, and have brought me far more than I lost, if not in outward fortune. It is right, though, to say that the decision is

due to no form of mental obstinacy or arrogance. Rightly or wrongly, I am conscious of something to be done—to be done by one side of me, by one half of me, by the true inward self as I believe—(apart from the overwhelmingly felt mystery of a dual self, and a reminiscent life, and a woman's life and nature within, concurring with and oftenest dominating the other)—and rightly or wrongly I believe that this, and the style so strangely born of this inward life, depend upon my aloofness and spiritual isolation as F. M. To betray publicly the private life and constrained ideal of that inward self, for a reward's sake, would be a poor collapse. And if I feel all this, as I felt it from the first (and the *nominal* beginning was no literary adventure, but a deep spiritual impulse and compelling circumstances of a nature upon which I must be silent) how much more must I feel it now, when an added and great responsibility to others has come to me, through the winning of so already large and deepening a circle of those of like ideals or at least like sympathies in our own country, and in America—and I allude as much or more to those who while caring for the outer raiment think of and need most the spirit within that raiment, which I hope will grow fairer and simpler and finer still, if such is the will of the controlling divine wills that, above the maze, watch us in our troubled wilderness.

That is why I said that I could not adopt the suggestion, despite promise of the desired pension, even were that tenfold, or any sum. As to 'name and fame,' well, that is not my business. I am glad and content to be a 'messenger,' an interpreter it may be. Probably a wide repute would be bad for the work I have to do. Friends I want to gain, to win more and more, and, in reason, "to do well": but this is always secondary to the deep compelling motive. In a word, and quite simply, I believe that a spirit has breathed to me, or entered me, or that my soul remembers or has awaked (the phraseology matters little)—and, that being so, that my concern is not to think of

myself or my 'name' or 'reward,' but to do (with what renunciation, financial and other, may be necessary) my truest and best.

And then, believing this, I have faith you see in the inward destiny. I smiled when I put down your long, affectionate, and good letter. But it was not a smile of bitterness: it was of serene acceptance and confidence. And the words that came to my mind were those in the last chorus of Oedipus at Kolônos,

"Be no more troubled, and no longer lament, for all these things will be accomplished."

Then, too, there's the finitude of all things. Why should one bother deeply when time is so brief. Even the gods passed, you know, or changed from form to form. I used to remember Renan's 'Prayer on the Acropolis' by heart, and I recall those words "Tout n'est ici-bas que symbole et que songe. Les dieux passent comme les hommes et il ne serait pas bon qu'ils fussent eternels." ...

Elizabeth, who is on a visit to Fife, will, I know, whole-heartedly endorse my decision.

Again all my gratitude and affection, dear Alec,

Your friend,

WILL.

Early in September Mr. Hood sent the welcome information to my husband that the Prime Minister had decided "on the strength of the assurance that Mr. Sharp is F. M." to make him a grant that would meet his pressing needs and enable him to go abroad for the winter.

A few days before this message reached W. S. he had written to his friend.

23d Aug.

DEAR JULIAN,

A little line to greet you on your arrival in Venice, and to wish you there a time of happy rest

and inspiration. May the spirit of the Sea-Queen whisper to you in romance and beauty.

How I wish I could look in on you at the Casa Persico! I love Venice as you do. I hope you will not find great changes, or too many visitors: and beware of the September heats, and above all the September mosquito!

"Julian" ought to have a great lift, and not the least pleasure in looking forward to seeing you again early in October is that of hearing some more of your book of Venice and of the other Julian.

["Julian" is the name of the hero of a book, *Adria*, on which Mr. Hood was then at work.]

If all goes well—and I have been working so hard, and done so much, that things ought to go smoothly with me again—then we hope to leave London for Sicily about the 21st Oct., and to reach Taormina *about* the 26th of that month.

I need not say how glad I am that you *knew* I could not decide otherwise than I did: and I am more than ever glad and proud of a friendship so deeply sympathetic and intuitively understanding.

Ever affectionately yours, dear Friend,

Will.

P. S. By the way, you will be glad to know that Baron Tauchnitz is also going to bring out in 2 vols. a selection of representative tales by Fiona Macleod. The book called *The Magic Kingdoms* has been postponed till next year, but the first part of it will appear in *The Monthly Review* in December probably. Stories, articles, studies, will appear elsewhere.

Your friend W. S. has been and is not less busy, besides maturing work long in hand. So at least I can't be accused of needless indolence.

To his great relief October-end found us at Taormina once again; and on Allhallow-e'en he wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

Oct. 30th.

... We reached Messina all right, and Giardini, the Station for Taormina, in fair time; then the lovely winding drive up to unique and beautiful and wildly picturesque Taormina and to the lovely winter villa and grounds of Santa Caterina where a warm welcome met us from Miss Mabel Hill, with whom we are to stay till the New Year.... I have for study a pleasant room on the garden terrace, at the Moorish end of the old convent-villa with opposite the always open door windows or great arch trellised with a lovely 'Japanesy' vine, looking down through a sea of roses and lemon and orange to the deep blue Ionian Sea. The divine beauty, glow, warmth, fragrance, and classic loveliness of this place would delight you.... Overhead there is a wilderness of deep blue, instinct with radiant heat and an almost passionate clarity. Forza, Mola, Roccafiorita, and other little mountain towns gleam in it like sunlit ivory. Over Forza (or Sforza rather) the storm-cloud of the Greco, with a rainbow hanging like a scimitar over the old, pagan, tragic, savagely picturesque mountain-ridge town. The bells of the hill-chapels rise and fall on the wind, for it is the beginning of All Souls festa. It is the day when 'things' are abroad and the secret ways are more easily to be traversed.

Beneath my Moorish arch I look down through clustering yellow roses and orange and lemon to green-blue water, and thence across the wild-dove's breast of the Ionian Sea. Far to the S. E. and S., over where Corinth and Athens lie, are great still clouds, salmon-hued on the horizon with pink domes and summits. An intense stillness and the phantasmagoria of a forgotten dreamland dwell upon the long western promontories of the Syracusan coast, with the cloud-like Hyblæan hill like a violet, and a light as of melting honey where Leontinoi and Siracusa lie....

Nov. 8: This is a week later. I have accidentally destroyed or mislaid a sheet of this letter. Nothing of

importance—only an account of the nocturnal festa of All Souls, with the glittering lights and the people watching by the graves, and leaving lights and flowers on each, the one to show the wandering souls the way back to the grave, the other to disguise the odour of mortality and illude them with the old beauty of the lost world—and the offerings of handfuls of beans, to give them sustenance on this their one mortal hour in the year. We three came here yesterday (Elizabeth, Miss Hill and I) and enjoyed the marvellous mountain-climbing journey from the sea-level of Giarre (near Catania) up to beautiful Linguaglossa, and Castiglione 2000 ft. high and so on to Randazzo and Maletto (3000 ft.) where we got out, and drove thro' the wild lava-lands of this savage and brigand haunted region to Castello di Maniace where il Signor Ducino Alessandro gave us cordial and affectionate welcome.

Sunday 9th. The weather is doubtful, but if it keeps fine we are going to drive down the gorges of the Simalthos (the Simeto of today) and then up by the crags and wild town of Bronte, and back by the old Ætnean hillroad of the ancient Greeks, or by the still more ancient Sikelian tombs at a high pass curiously enough known not by its ancient fame but as the Pass of the Gipsies. As the country is in a somewhat troubled and restive state just now, especially over Bronte, all pre-arrangements have been made to ensure safety....

I hope you have received the Tauchnitz volume of "Wind and Wave." The text of Selected Tales has been revised where advisable, sometimes considerably. The gain is very marked I think, especially in simplicity. I hope you will like the preface. The long collective-article in the *Contemporary* for October "Sea-Magic and Running Water" I have already written to you about. One can never tell beforehand, but in all probability the following F. M. articles will appear in December (if not January) issues, viz.:

In *The Monthly Review*—The Magic Kingdoms.
In *The Contemporary*—The Lynn of Dreams.
In *The Fortnightly*—The Four Winds of Eirinn.

As soon as I can possibly work free out of my terribly time-eating correspondence, and am further ahead with my necessary and commissioned pot-boiling articles etc. I want to put together two F. M. volumes, one a vol. of Gaelic essays and Spiritual studies to be called *For The Beauty of an Idea* and the other a volume of Verse to be called probably "The Immortal Hour and Poems" or else "The Enchanted Valleys." But I have first a great deal to get off as W. S. and F. M.

What is dear old Tom doing now? Give him my love, and affectionate hug, bless the old reprobate! I was delighted to meet an American admirer (and two hanger-on American admiresses) of his in Florence, who spoke of his work with much admiration as well as personal delight. So I warmed to them mightily in consequence, and had the pleasure of introducing the latest production—the delightful "Consolate Giantess."

What a letter in length this is! too long for even *you*, I fear."

The following letter from Mr. Robert Hichens, another devoted lover of Sicily, reached William Sharp at Maniace:

DOVER,
Nov. 4, 1902.

MY DEAR WILL,

... The cold is setting in and today there is a fierce east wind. I scarcely dare think of what you are enjoying. I had hoped to join you at the end of this month, but the fates are unkind. When I do get away I may first have to go to the Desert as I am meditating some work there. Then I hope to make my way there to Sicily but only late in Spring. Will

you still be there? There is magic in its air—or else beauty acts on the body as powerfully as on the soul, and purifies the blood as well as the soul....

Every sentence I write wrings my heart. I ought not to write about Sicily. *Felix* was begun in that delightful room at Maniace—with Webster, thoughtfully posed by Alec—on a side table within easy reach.

Thank you again for your kind inspiring letter. I value praise from you.

Yours cordially,
ROBERT HICHENS.

Miss Hill and I returned to Sta. Caterina and left my husband at Maniace, whence a few days later he wrote to me:

CASTELLO DI MANIACE,
15th Nov., 1902.

How you would have enjoyed today!... one of the most beautiful of its kind I've ever had. It was quite dark when we rose shortly before six, but lovely dawn by 6.15, and after a gigantic breakfast we all set off all armed with rifles and revolvers. We drove up to the cutting to the left, 1/4 of a mile below Otaheite, and there diverged and went up the wild road of the Zambuco Pass, and for another five miles of ascent. Then we were met by the forest guard and Meli with great jennets (huge hill-mules as big as horses) and rode over the Serraspina (6,000 feet). To my great pleasure it was decided we could risk the further ascent of the great central Watershed of Sicily, the Serra del Rè (8,000 ft.) and I shall never forget it. All the way from about 4,000 ft. the air was extraordinarily light and intoxicating—and the views of Central Sicily magnificent beyond words. When we had ridden to about 7,500 feet thro' wild mountain gorges, up vast slopes, across great plateaux, and at last into the beginning of the vast

dense primeval beech-forests (all an indescribable glory of colour) we dismounted and did the remaining half hour on foot. Then at last we were on the summit of the great central watershed. Thence everything to the south flows to the Ionian Sea, everything to the north to the Tyrrhenian and Mediterranean.

And oh the views and the extraordinary clarity! Even with the naked eye I saw all the inland mountains and valleys and lost forgotten towns, Troina on its two hills, Castrogiovanni and Alcara, etc. etc. And with the powerful binoculars I could see all the houses, and trace the streets and ruined temples etc. in Castrogiovanni on its extraordinary raised altar-like mountain plateau. Then, below us, lay all the northern shores of Sicily from Capo Cefalù to Milazzo on its beautiful great bay, and Capo Milazzo, and the Lipari Islands (so close with the glass I could see the few houses on their wild precipitous shores), from 'Volcano,' the original home of Vulcan, and Lipari itself to Stromboli, and white ships sailing. Enna (Castrogiovanni) immensely imposing and unforgettable. And, behind us, Etna vaster, sheerer, more majestic, more terrible, than I had ever dreamed of it.

Then we lunched, amid that extraordinary and vast panorama—seeing 2,000 feet below us the "almost inaccessible" famous Lake of Balzano, with its Demeter and Persephone associations (itself about 6,000 feet among the mountains!) All enjoyed it unspeakably, except poor old Meli, very nervous about brigands—poor old chap, a ransom of 800 francs had to be paid to the capitano of the brigand-lot to free his nephew, who is now ill after his confinement for many days in a hole under the lava, where he was half suffocated, and would have soon died from cold and damp and malaria.

On the way down (in the forest, at about 6,000 feet) Alec suddenly without a word dashed aside, and sprang through the sloping undergrowth, and

the next moment I saw him holding his revolver at the head of a man crouching behind a mass of bramble, etc. But the latter had first managed to hide or throw away his gun, and swore he hadn't got one, and meant no harm, and that the ugly weapon he carried (a light, long axe of a kind) was to defend himself from the wolves! His companion had successfully escaped. The man slunk away, to be arrested later by the Carabinieri.

On his return to Taormina W. S. wrote to the Author of *Adria*, who had gone to Venice for "local colour":

TAORMINA,
19th Nov., 1902.

CARO FRA GIULIANO,

To my surprise I hear from our common friend, Mr. Aurelio Da Rù, the painter of Venice, that you are at present staying at San-Francisco-in-Deserto. This seems to me a damp and cold place to choose for November, but possibly you are not to be there long: indeed, Da Rù hints at an entanglement with a lady named "Adria." Perhaps I am indiscreet in this allusion. If so, pray forgive me. The coincidence struck me as strange, for only the other day I heard our friend Alec Hood speaking of an Adria, of whom, to say the least of it, he seemed to think very highly. By the way, I wouldn't tell him (A. H.) too much of your affairs or doings—or *he may put them in a book*. (He's a "literary feller" you know!)

I have just been staying with him—and I wish when you see him you would tell him what a happy time I had at Maniace, and how pleasantly I remember all our walks and talks and times together, and how the true affection of a deepened friendship is only the more and more enhanced and confirmed.

It is a lovely day, and very warm and delightful. Sitting by the open French-window of my study, with

a bunch of narcissus on my table, there is all the illusion of Spring. I have just gone into an adjoining Enchanted Garden I often frequent, and gathered there some sprays of the Balm of Peace, the azure blossoms of Hope, and the white roses of Serenity and Happiness and sending them, by one of the wild-doves of loving thought and sympathy and affection, to Alec at Maniace.

Ever, dear Fra Giuliano, with love to Da Rù, the Graziani, the Manins, and above all to Alec,

Yours,

WILL.

And again two days later:

SHAR SHAN, BOR!

Which, being interpreted, is Romany (Gypsy) for "How d'ye do, Mate!"—I fear you are having a bad day for your return to Maniace. Here, at any rate, 'tis evil weather. Last night the wind rose (after ominous signals of furtive lightnings in every quarter) to the extent of tempest: and between two and three a.m. became a hurricane. This lasted at intervals till dawn, and indeed since: and at times I thought a cyclone had seized Taormina and was intent on removing 'Santa Caterina' on to the top of Isola Bella. Naturally, sleep was broken. And in one long spell, when wind and a coarse rain (with a noise like sheep that has become sleet) kept wakefulness in suspense, my thoughts turned to Venice, to Giuliano in the lonely rain-beat wave-washed sanctuary of San-Francisco-in-Deserto; to Daniele Manin, with his dreams of the Venice that was and his hopes of the Venice to be; and to Adria, stilled at last in her grave in the lagunes after all her passionate life and heroic endeavour. And then I thought of the Venice they, and you, and I, love:—and recalled lines of Jacopo Sannazaro which I often repeat to myself when I think of the Sea-City as an abstraction—

"O d'Italia dolente
Eterno lumine
Venezia!"

And that's all I have to say to-day!... except to add that this very moment there has come into my mind the remembrance of some words of Montesquieu I read last year (in the *Lettres Persanes*), to the effect (in English) that "altho' one had seen all the cities of the world, there might still be a surprise in store for him in Venice,"—which would be a good motto for your book.

Your friend,

WILL.

The few entries in William Sharp's Diary for 1903 begin with New Year's Day:

TAORMINA.

Thursday, 1st Jan., 1903. Yesterday afternoon I ended literary work for the year, at p. 62 on my MS. of "The King's Ring" with the sentence: "Flora Macdonald saw clearly that the hearts of these exiles and New Englanders would follow a shepherd more potent than any kind, the shepherd called Freedom, who forever keeps his flocks of hopes and ideals on the hills of the human heart." To-day, this afternoon, wrote till end of p. 70. In the evening we dined with Robert Hichens at the Hotel Timeo.

Sat. 3rd. Finished "The King's Ring." Revised: and sent off to Mary to type. We lunched at the Timeo. After lunch we spent an hour or more in the Greek Theatre with Hichens. Then we walked to Miss Valerie White's villa and had tea with her. In evening 'turned in' about 9 and read Bourget's Calabria *Ricordi*, and Lenormant on Crotone and Pythagorus."

Saturday, 9th Jan.

To the Editor of The Pall Mall Magazine:

DEAR SIR,

I have written a story somewhat distinct in kind from the work associated with my name, and think it is one that should appeal to a far larger public than most of my writings do: for it deals in a new way with a subject of unpassing interest, the personality of Flora Macdonald. "The King's Ring," however, is not concerned with the hackneyed Prince Charlie episode. It is, in a word, so far as I know, the only narrative presentment of the remarkable but almost unknown late-life experiences of Flora Macdonald: for few know that, long after her marriage, she went with her husband and some of her family and settled in South Carolina, just before the outbreak of the War of Independence: how her husband was captured and imprisoned: how two of her sons in the Navy were lost tragically at sea: and how she herself with one daughter with difficulty evaded interference, and set sail from a southern port for Scotland again, and on that voyage was wounded in an encounter with a French frigate. True, all these things are only indicated in "The King's Ring," for fundamentally the story is a love-story, that of Flora M.'s beautiful eldest daughter Anne and Major Macleod, with the tragical rivalry of Alasdair Stuart, bearer of the King's Ring.

Practically the facts of the story are authentic: save the central episode of Alasdair Stuart, which is of my own invention. I think the story would appeal to many not only in Scotland and England but in America.

Yours very truly,
FIONA MACLEOD.

The story was accepted and the first instalment was printed in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in May, 1904; but after its appearance the author did not care sufficiently for it to republish it in book form.

The Diary continues:

Sunday 4th. Began article on "Thro' Nelson's Duchy" commissioned for *The Pall Mall Magazine*. Received *The Monthly Review* for Jany. with the Fiona Macleod article, "The Magic Kingdoms": the *Mercure de France* for January: and proofs from the *Pall Mall Magazine* of my articles on Scott and George Eliot. Among several letters one from Mrs. Gilchrist, who says (apropos of F. M.'s "By Sundown Shores") "she always can send one back to the distance which is all the future."

Later, after a walk alone I looked in at Villa Bella Rocca and had a pleasant chat with M. et Mme. Grandmont about Anatole France, Loti, and treatment of sea in "Pecheur d'Islande," Bourget's and Lenormant's "Calabria," etc. Wrote after dinner from 9 till 11; and read some Bacchylides, etc. At 11.15 suddenly some five or six cocks began to crow vehemently: and about five minutes later abruptly stopped.

Monday 5th. A day of perfect beauty. Divinely warm. In morning sat out on Loggia two hours or so working at revision. After lunch Hichens came for me and we walked down to Capo San Andrea and thence took a boat with two men (Francesco and his brother) across to Capo Schiso (Naxos) and thence walked some five or six miles back. Tea at H's. A divinely lovely sunset.

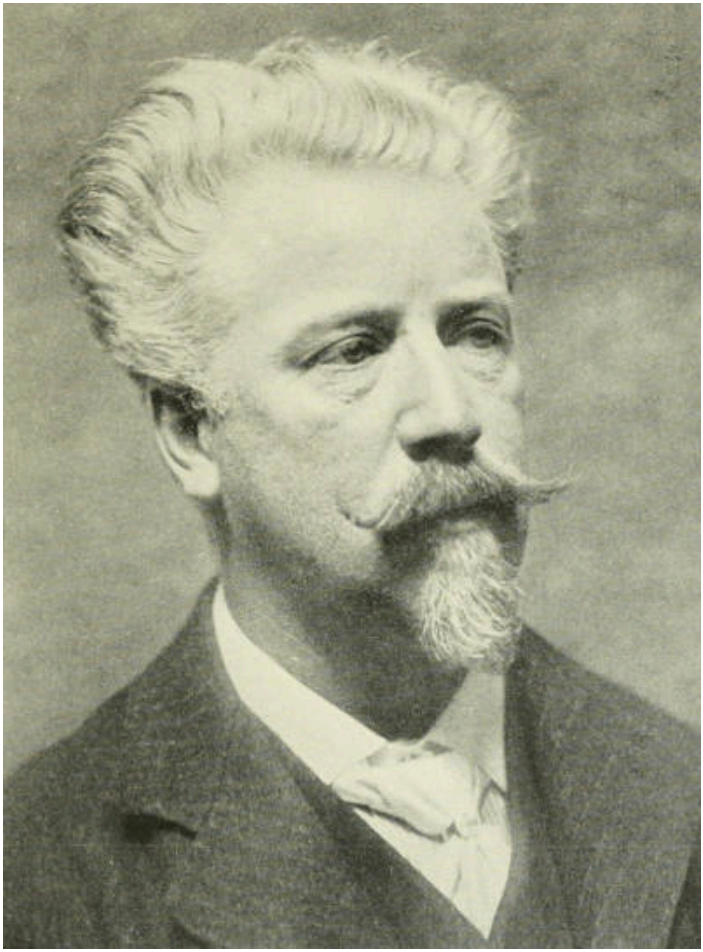
Tuesday 6th. As beautiful a day as yesterday. More could be said of no day. Worked at "Thro' Nelson's Duchy" material, and wrote a letter. A walk after lunch. Then again a little work. Had a charming letter from Joachim Gasquet, and to F. M. one from Stephen Gwynn (with his "Today and Tomorrow in Ireland")—and an *Academy* with pleasant para. about F. M. saying just what I would want said (with an allusion to a special study of F. M. in the *Harvard Monthly*, by the Editor).

This afternoon, the Festa of the Epiphany, more

great doings with the delayed Xmas tree treat of the School-children of Taormina. Much enjoyed it.

Thursday 8th. Finished the P. M. Mag. commissioned article "Thro' Nelson's Duchy"—about 5,000 words—then revised: marked with directions the 8 fine Photos selected by A. N. H. (Alex. Nelson Hood) and sent off to be registered....

After dinner wrote one or two letters including longish one of literary advice to Karl Walter. Read some Æschylus' "Eumenides."



WILLIAM SHARP
From a photograph taken by the Hon. Alex. Nelson Hood, 1903

This is the letter in question:

TAORMINA,
Jan., 1903.

MY DEAR WALTER,

... In some respects your rendering of your sonnet is towards improvement. But it has one immediate and therefore fatal flaw. Since the days of Sophocles it has been recognized as a cardinal and imperative law, that a great emotion (or incident, or idea, or collective act) must not be linked to an effective image, an incongruous metaphor. Perhaps the first and last word about passion (in a certain sense only, of course, for to immortal things there is no mortal narrowing or limiting in expression) has been said more than two thousand years ago by Sappho and to-day by George Meredith. "The apple on the topmost bough" ... all that lovely fragment of delicate imperishable beauty remains unique. And I know nothing nobler than Meredith's "Passion is noble strength on fire." ... But turn to a poet you probably know well, and study the imagery in some of the Passion-sonnets in "The House of Life" of Rossetti—of Passion

... "creature of poignant thirst
And exquisite hunger" ...

—the splendid sexual diapason in the sestet of the sonnet celled "The Kiss"—or, again, to "the flame-winged harp-player."

... "thou art Passion of Love,
The mastering music walks the sunlit sea."

Perhaps I have said enough to illustrate my indication as to the opening metaphor in your sonnet. Apart from the incongruity of the image, it has no logical congruity with the collateral idea of Fear. The sonnet itself turns on a fine emotion in your mind: let that emotion shape a worthy raiment of metaphor and haunting cadence of music, *not* as the metricist desires but as the poet au fond compels. Yes, both in sonnet-writing and in your terza-rima narrative (cultivate elision here, also fluent terminals, or you will find the English prosody jib at

the foreign reins) you will find G. useful. But the secret law of rhythm in a moving or falling wave, in the cadence of wind, in the suspiration of a distant song, in running water, in the murmur of leaves, in chord confluent upon chord, will teach you more—if you will listen long enough and know what you listen to.

I hope I have not discouraged you. I mean the reverse of that.

Your friend,
WILLIAM SHARP.

I add here a letter of criticism and encouragement sent by F. M. to another young writer, in the previous summer, to the nephew of William Black the novelist:

LONDON, June, 1902.

MY DEAR MR. BLACK,

As soon as possible after my return from Brittany I read your MS. It is full of the true sentiment, and has often charm in the expression: but I think you would do well to aim at a style simpler still, freer from mannerisms, and above all from mannerisms identified with the work of other writers. As I am speaking critically, let me say frankly that I have found your beautiful tale too reminiscent ever and again of an accent, a note, a vernacular (too reminiscent even in names), common to much that I have written. You are sympathetic enough to care for much of my work, and loyal enough to say so with generous appreciation: but just because of this you should be on guard against anything in my style savouring of affectation or mannerism. You may be sure that whatever hold my writings may have taken on the imagination of what is at most a small clan has been in despite of and not because of mannerisms, which sometimes make for atmosphere and versimilitude and sometimes are merely obvious,

and therefore make for weakness and even disillusion. Be on guard, therefore, against a sympathy which would lead you to express yourself in any other way than you yourself feel and in other terms than the terms of our own mind. Mannerism is often the colour and contour of a writer's mind: but the raiment never fits even the original wearer, and is disastrous for the borrower, when the mental habit of mannerism is translated into the mental incertitude of mannerisms. You have so natural a faculty and so eager a desire, that I have no hesitation in urging you to devote your best thought and time and effort to a worthy achievement.

But no work of the imagination has any value if it be not shaped and coloured from within. Every imaginative writer must take his offspring to the Fountain of Youth, and the only way is through the shadowy and silent avenues of one's own heart. My advice to you, then, is, not to refrain from steeping your thought and imagination in what is near to your heart and dream, but to see that your vision is always your *own* vision, that your utterance is always your own utterance, and to be content with no beauty and no charm that are dependent on another's vision of beauty and another's secret of charm.

Meanwhile, I can advise you no more surely than to say, write as simply, almost as baldly, above all as *naturally* as possible. Sincerity, which is the last triumph of art, is also its foster-mother. You will do well, I feel sure: and among your readers you will have none more interested than

Yours Sincerely,

FIONA MACLEOD.

To another friend he wrote in answer to a question on 'style':

"Rhythmic balance, fluidity, natural motion, spontaneity, controlled impetus, proportion, height

and depth, shape and contour, colour and atmosphere, all these go to every *living* sentence—but there, why should I weary you with uncertain words when you can have a certainty of instance almost any time where you are: you have hut to look at a wave to find your exemplar for the ideal sentence. All I have spoken of is there—and it is alive—and part of one flawless whole."

From W. S. to Mrs. Janvier.

TAORMINA,
18th Feb., 1903.

... In fact, letters are now my worst evil to contend against—for, with this foreign life in a place like this, with so many people I know, it is almost impossible to get anything like adequate time for essential work—and still less for the imaginative leisure I need, and dreaming out my work—to say nothing of reading, etc. As you know, too, I have continually to put into each day the life of two persons—each with his or her own interests, preoccupations, work, thoughts, and correspondence. I have really, in a word, quite apart from my own temperament, to live at exactly double the rate in each day of the most active and preoccupied persons. No wonder, then, that I find the continuous correspondence of 'two persons' not only a growing weariness, but a terrible strain and indeed perilous handicap on time and energy for work....

A little later William Sharp started for a fortnight's trip to Greece by way of Calabria—Reggio, Crotona, Taranto, Brindisi to Corfù and Athens, with a view of gathering impressions for the working out of his projected book (by W. S.) to be called *Greek Backgrounds*.

En route he wrote to me:

23d Jan., 1903.

"Where of all unlikely places do you think this is written from? Neither Corfù nor Samothrace nor Ithaka nor Zante, nor any Greek isle betwixt this and the Peloponnesus, but in Turkey!... i.e., in Turkish Albania, surrounded by turbaned Turks, fezzed Albanians, and picturesque kilted Epeirotes, amid some of the loveliest scenery in the world.

You will have had my several cards en route and last from Târantô. The first of a series of four extraordinary pieces of almost uncanny good fortune befell me *en route*,—but it would take too long now to write in detail. Meanwhile I may say I met the first of three people to whom I already owe much—and who helped me thro' every bother at Brindisi. (He is a foreign Consul in Greece.)

(By the way, the engine from Târantô to Brindisi was called the *Agamemnon* and the steamer to Greece the *Poseidon*—significant names, eh?)

I had a delightful night's rest in my comfortable cabin, and woke at dawn to find the *Poseidon* close to the Albanian shore, and under the superb snow-crowned Acrokerannian Mountains. The scenery superb—with Samothrace, and the Isle of Ulysses, etc., etc., seaward, and the beautiful mountainous shores of Corfù (here called *Kepkuga*, Kêrkyra) on the S.W. and S. There was a special Consul-Deputation on board, to land two, and also to take off a number of Turks, Albanians, and Epeirotes for Constantinople. We put in after breakfast at Eavri Kagavri—a Greco-Albanian township of Turkey. The scattered oriental 'town' of the Forty Saints crowns a long ridge at a considerable height—the harbour-town is a cluster of Turkish houses beside an extraordinary absolutely deserted set of gaunt ruins. Hundreds of Albanians and Epeirotes, Moslem priests and two Greek *papas* (or popes) were on the shore-roads, with several caravans each of from 20 to 50 mules and horses. Costumes extraordinarily picturesque, especially the white-kilted or skirted Albanian mountaineers, and the Larissa Turks. We

were 3 hours—and I the only 'privileged' person to get thro' with the consul. We took many aboard—a wonderful crew, from a wonderful place, the fairyland of my Greek resident from Paris—who is on his way to spend a month with his mother in Athens, and has asked me to visit him at his house there....

Well, the *Poseidon* swung slowly out of the bay,—a lovely, exciting, strange, unforgettable morning—and down the lovely Albanian coast—now less wild, and wooded and craggy, something like the West Highlands at Loch Fyne, etc., but higher and wilder. When off a place on the Turkish Albanian coast called Pothlakov (Rothroukon) the shaft of the screw suddenly broke! The engineer told the captain it would be five hours at least before it could be mended—adding, a little later, that the harm could probably not be rectified here, and that we should have to ride at sea till a relief boat came from Corfù or Greece to take off the passengers, etc.

As no one has a Turkish passport, no one can get ashore except lucky me, with my influential friend, in a Turkish steam-pinnacle! (It is so beautiful, so warm, and so comfortable on the *Poseidon*, that, in a sense, I'm indifferent—and would rather *not* be relieved in a hurry.)

(Later.) Late afternoon on board—still no sign of getting off. No Corfù to-day, now, though about only an hour's sail from here! *Perhaps* tonight—or a relief steamer may come. I'll leave this now, as I want to see all I can in the sundown light. It is all marvellously strange and lovely. *What* a heavenly break-down! *What* luck!

Just had a talk with another passenger stamping with impatience. I didn't soothe him by remarking I hoped we should adrift ashore and be taken prisoners by the Turks. He says he wants to get on. Absurd. "There's more beauty here than one can take-in for days to come," I said—"Damn it, sir, what have *I* got to do with beauty,"—he asked indignantly. "Not much, certainly," I answered drily,

looking him over. An Italian *maestro* is on board on his way to Athens—now playing delightfully in the salon. A Greek guitarist is going to play and sing at moonrise. No hills in the world more beautiful in shape and hue and endless contours—with gorgeous colours. Albania is lost Eden, I think. Just heard that a steamer is to come for us in a few hours, or less, from Corfù, and tow us into Kêrkyra (the town)—and that another Austro-Lloyd from Trieste or Brindisi will take us on to-morrow sometime from Corfù to Athens.... The only perfectly happy person on board.

Yours,

WILL.

ATHENS, 29th Jan.

... This lovely place is wonderful. How I wish you were here to enjoy it too. I take you with me mentally wherever I go. It is a marvellous *home-coming* feeling I have here. And I know a strange stirring, a kind of spiritual rebirth.

ATHENS, Feb. 1st.

... Yesterday, a wonderful day at Eleusis. Towards sundown drove through the lovely hill-valley of Daphne, with its beautifully situated isolated ruin of the Temple of Aphrodîtê, a little to the north of the Sacred Way of the Dionysiac and other Processions from Aonai (Athenai) to the Great Fane of Eleusis. I have never anywhere seen such a marvellous splendour of living light as the sundown light, especially at the Temple of Aphrodîtê and later as we approached Athens and saw it lying between Lycabettos and the Acropolis, with Hymettos to the left and the sea to the far right and snowy Pentelicos behind. The most radiant wonder of light I have ever seen.

On his return to Taormina he received the following letter from Mr. Hichens:

ST. STEPHENS,
CANTERBURY.

MY DEAR SHARP,

... Lately I recommended a very clever man, half Spanish and half German, to read the work of Fiona Macleod. I wondered how it would strike one who had never been in our Northern regions, and he has just written to me, and says: "I am reading with intense delight Fiona Macleod's books and thank you very much for telling me to get them. I ordered them all from London and cannot tell you how I admire the thoughts, the style, "toute la couleur locale." They are books I shall keep by me and take about with me wherever I go." I suppose he feels they are fine, as I feel Tourgeney's studies of Russian character are fine, although I have never lived among Russians. I shall take *Anna Karénina* to Italy with me and read it once more. At Marseilles I saw the "Resurrection" acted. It was very interesting and touching, though not really a very good play. It was too episodical. In London it is an immense success.

Well, I hope you will really come to winter in Africa. You can stay at either the Oasis or the Royal and I think we should be very happy. We must often go out on donkey-back into the dunes and spend our day there far out in the desert. I know no physical pleasure,—apart from all the accompanying mental pleasure,—to be compared with that which comes from the sun and air of the Sahara and the enormous spaces. This year I was more enchanted than ever before. Even exquisite Taormina is hum-drum in comparison. I expect to go to Italy very early in May, and back to Africa quite at the beginning of November. Do try to come then as November is a magnificent month. Don't reply. You are too busy. I often miss the walks, and your company, which wakes up my mind and puts the bellows to my spark of imagination.

Ever yours,

ROBERT HICHENS.

I can't help being rather sorry that you won't go to Sicily again for a long while. I always feel as if we all had a sort of home there.

For, as Mr. Hichens wrote to me, "I still think Taormina the most exquisite place in Europe. On a fine morning it is ineffably lovely."

CHAPTER XXIV

WINTER IN ATHENS

Greek Backgrounds

During the following summer William Sharp saw George Meredith for the last time. Concerning that visit to Box Hill he wrote to a friend:

Monday, June 22, 1903.

... I am so glad I went down to see George Meredith to-day. It was goodbye, I fear, though the end may not be for some time yet: not immediate, for he has recovered from his recent severe illness and painful accident, though still very weak, but able to be up, and to move about a little.

At first I was told he could see no one, but when he heard who the caller was I was bidden enter, he

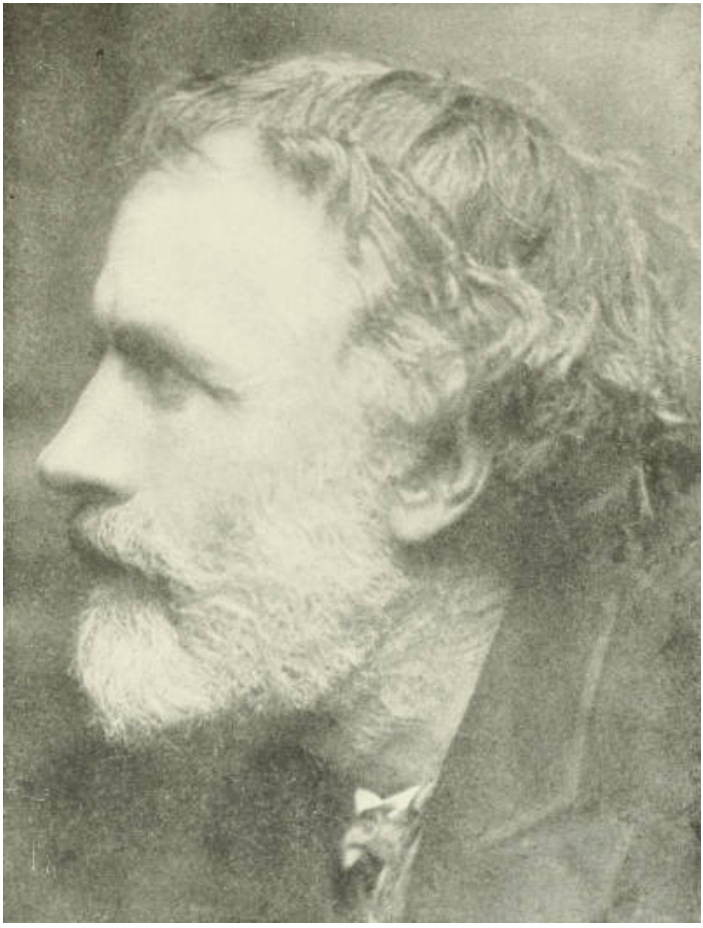
gave me a sweet cordial welcome, but was frail and weak and fallen into the blind alleys that so often await the most strenuous and vivid lives. But, in himself, in his mind, there is no change. I felt it was goodbye, and when I went, I think he felt it so also. When he goes it will be the passing of the last of the great Victorians. I could have (selfishly) wished that he had known a certain secret: but it is better not, and now is in every way as undesirable as indeed impossible. If there is in truth, as I believe, and as he believes, a life for us after this, he will know that his long-loving and admiring younger comrade has also striven towards the hard way that few can reach. What I *did* tell him before has absolutely passed from his mind: had, indeed, never taken root, and perhaps I had nurtured rather than denied what *had* taken root. If in some ways a little sad, I am glad otherwise. And I had one great reward, for at the end he spoke in a way he might not otherwise have done, and in words I shall never forget. I had risen, and was about to lean forward and take his hands in farewell, to prevent his half-rising, when suddenly he exclaimed "Tell me something of *her*—of Fiona. I call her so always, and think of her so, to myself. Is she well? Is she at work? Is she true to her work and her ideal? No, *that* I know!"

It was then he said the following words, which two minutes later, in the garden, I jotted down in pencil at once lest I should forget even a single word, or a single change in the sequence of words. "She is a woman of genius. That is rare ... so rare anywhere, anytime, in women or, in men. Some few women 'have genius,' but she is more than that. Yes, she is a woman of genius: the genius too, that is rarest, that drives deep thoughts before it. Tell her I think often of her, and of the deep thought in all she has written of late. Tell her I hope great things of her yet. And now ... we'll go, since it must be so. Goodbye, my dear fellow, and God bless you."

Outside, the great green slope of Box Hill rose

> against a cloudless sky, filled with a flowing south wind. The swifts and swallows were flying high. In the beech courts thrush and blackbird called continually, along the hedgerows the wild-roses hung. But an infinite sadness was in it all. A prince among men had fallen into the lonely and dark way.

Goodbye it was in truth; but it was the older poet who recovered hold on life and outlived the younger by four years.



GEORGE MEREDITH
From a photograph by F. Hollyer, about 1898

A wet spring, and a still damper autumn affected my husband seriously; and while we were visiting Mrs. Glassford Bell in Perthshire he became so ill that we went to Llandrindod Wells for him to be under special treatment. As he explained to Mr. Ernest Rhys:

LLANDRINDOD WELLS,
Sept., 1903.

MY DEAR ERNEST,

... I know that you will be sorry to learn that things have not gone well with me. All this summer I have been feeling vaguely unwell and, latterly, losing strength steadily.... However, the rigorous treatment, the potent Saline and Sulphur waters and baths, the not less potent and marvellously pure and regenerative Llandrindod air—and my own exceptional vitality and recuperative powers—have combined to work a wonderful change for the better; which may prove to be more than "a splendid rally," tho' I know I must not be too sanguine. Fortunately, the eventuality does not much trouble me, either way: I have lived, and am content, and it is only for what I don't want to leave undone that the sound of 'Farewell' has anything deeply perturbing.

W. S.

And later to Mrs. Janvier:

LONDON, Sept. 30, 1903.

Thanks for your loving note. But you are not to worry yourself about me. I'm all right, and as cheerful as a lark—let us say as a lark with a rheumatic wheeze in its little song-box, or gout in its little off-claw.... Anyway, I'll laugh and be glad and take life as I find it, till the end. The best prayer for me is that I may live vividly till "Finis," and work up to the last hour....

My love to you both, and know me ever your irrepressible,

BILLY.

In a letter to Mr. Alden (Aug. 25th, 1903) he describes the work he had on hand at the moment, and the book he had projected and hoped to write:

" ... in the *Pall Mall Magazine* you may have noticed a series of topographical papers (with as much or more of anecdotal and reminiscent and critical) contributed, under the title of "Literary Geography," by myself. The first three were commissioned by the editor to see how they 'took.' They were so widely liked, and those that followed, that this summer he commissioned me to write a fresh series, one each month till next March. Of these none has been more appreciated than the double article on the Literary Geography of the Lake of Geneva. Forthcoming issues are The English Lake Country, Meredith, Thackery, The Thames, etc. In the current issue I deal with Stevenson.

... About my projected Greek book, to comprise Magna Grecia as well, i. e. Hellenic Calabria and Sicily, etc.... I want to make a book out of the material gathered, old and new, and to go freshly all over the ground.... I intend to call it *Greek Backgrounds* and to deal with the ancient (recreated) and modern backgrounds of some of the greatest of the Greeks—as they were and are—as, for example, of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Empedocles, Theocritus, etc.—and of famous ancient cities, Sybaris, Corinth, etc.; and deal with the home or chief habitat or famous association. For instance:

(1) Calabria (Crotan and Metapontum) with Pythagoras.

(2) Eleusis in Greece, Syracuse and Gela in Sicily	}	with life and death of Æschylus.
(3) Colonos		Sophocles.
(4) Athens etc.		with Euripides.
(5) Syracuse and Acragas (Girgente)	}	with Pindar etc. etc.

The two following letters were acknowledgments

of birthday greetings. In the first to Mr. Stedman our plans for that winter are described:

THE GROSVENOR CLUB,
Oct. 2, 1903.

MY DEAR E. C. S.,

Two days ago, on Wednesday's mail, I posted a letter to reach you, I hope, on the morning of your birthday—and today, to my very real joy, I safely received your long and delightful letter. It has been a true medicine—for, as I told you, I've been gravely ill. And it came just at the right moment, and warmed my heart with its true affection.

... I know you'll be truly glad to hear that the tidings about myself can be more and more modified by good news from my physician,—a man in whom I have the utmost confidence and who knows every weakness as well as every resource and reserve of strength in me, and understands my temperament and nature as few doctors do understand complex personalities.

He said to me today "You look as if you were well contented with the world." I answered "Yes, of course I am. In the first place I'm every day feeling stronger, and in the next, and for this particular day, I've just had a letter of eight written pages from a friend whom I have ever dearly loved and whom I admire not less than I love." He knew you as a poet as well as the subtlest and finest interpreter of modern poetry—and indeed (tho' I had forgotten) I had given him a favourite volume and also lent your Baltimore addresses.

When I'm once more in the land of Theocritus (and oh how entrancing it is) I'll be quite strong and well again, he says. Indeed I'm already 'a live miracle'! We sail by the Orient liner "Orizaba" on the 23rd; reach Naples (via Gibraltar and Marseilles) 9 to 10 days later; and leave by the local mail-boat same evening for Messina—arrive there about 8 on

Monday morning—catch the Syracuse mail about 10, change at 12 at Giarre, and ascend Mt. Etna by the little circular line to Maletto about 3,000 ft. high, and thence drive to the wonderful old Castle of Maniace to stay with our dear friend there, the Duke of Bronte—our third or fourth visit now. We'll be there about a fortnight: then a week with friends at lovely and unique Taormina: and then sail once more, either from Messina or Naples direct to the Piræus, for Athens, where we hope to spend the winter and spring.

How I wish you were to companion us. In Sicily, I often thought of you, far off Brother of Theocritus. You would so delight in it all, the Present that mirrors the magical Past; the Past that penetrates like stars the purple veils of the Present.

Yes, I know well how sincere is all you say as to the loving friend awaiting me—awaiting *us*—if ever we cross the Atlantic: but it is gladsome to hear it all the same. All affectionate greetings to dear Mrs. Stedman, a true and dear friend.

Ever, dear Stedman,

Your loving friend,

WILLIAM SHARP.

13th Sept., 1903.

DEAR MRS. GILCHRIST,

It is at all times a great pleasure to hear from you, and that pleasure is enhanced by hearing from you on my birthday and by your kind remembrance of the occasion....

We look forward to Athens greatly, though it is not (as in Elizabeth's case) my first visit to that land of entrancing associations and still ever-present beauty. But as one grows older, one the more recognises that 'climate' and 'country' belong to the geography of the soul rather than to that secondary physical geography of which we hear so much. The winds of heaven, the dreary blast of the wilderness,

the airs of hope and peace, the tragic storms and cold inclemencies—these are not the property of our North or South or East, but are of the climes self-made or inherited or in some strange way become our 'atmosphere.' And the country we dream of, that we long for, is not yet reached by Cook nor even chartered by Baedeker. You and yours are often in our thought. In true friendship, distance means no more than that the sweet low music is far off: but it is there.

Your friend,
WILLIAM SHARP.

We journeyed by sea to Naples. Our hopes of a chat with our friends the Janviers at Marseilles were frustrated by a violent gale we encountered. As my husband wrote to Mrs. Janvier while at sea:

R.M.S. ORIZABA,
Oct. 31, 1903.

It seems strange to write to you on the Festival of Samhain—the Celtic Summer-end, our Scottish Hallowe'en—here on these stormy waters between Sardinia and Italy. It is so strong a gale, and the air is so inclement and damp that it is a little difficult to realise we are approaching the shores of Italy. But wild as the night is I want to send you a line on it, on this end of the old year, this night of powers and thoughts and spiritual dominion.

It was a disappointment not to get ashore at Marseilles—but the fierce gale (a wild mistral) made it impossible. Indeed the steamer couldn't approach: we lay-to for 3 or 4 hours behind a great headland some 4 or 5 miles to S. W. of the city, and passengers and mails had to be driven along the shore and embarked from a small quarry pier.... We had a very stormy and disagreeable passage all the way from Plymouth and through the Bay. ... The first part of the voyage I was very unwell, partly from an

> annoying heart attack. You may be sure I am better again, or I could not have withstood the wild gale which met us far south in the Gulf of Lyons and became almost a hurricane near Marseilles. But I gloried in the superb magnificence of the lashed and tossed sport of the mistral, as we went before it like an arrow before a gigantic bow.
>
> It is now near sunset and I am writing under the shelter of a windsail on the upper deck, blowing 'great guns' though I don't think we are in for more than a passing gale. But for every reason I shall be glad to get ashore, not that I want to be in Naples, which I like least of any place in Italy, but to get on to Maniace ... where I so much love to be, and where I can work and dream so well....

But the gale increased and became one of the wildest we had ever known, as William reminded me later when he showed me an unrhymed poem he had composed—exactly as it stands—in the middle of the night, and the next day, in Naples, recalled it and wrote it down. It was his way of mental escape from a physical condition which induced great nervous strain or fatigue, to create imaginatively a contrary condition and environment, and so to identify himself with it, that he could become oblivious to surrounding actualities. This is the poem:

INVOCATION

Play me a lulling tune, O Flute-Player of Sleep,
Across the twilight bloom of thy purple havens,
Far off a phantom stag on the moonyellow
highlands
Ceases; and as a shadow, wavers; and passes:
So let Silence seal me and Darkness gather,
Piper of Sleep.

Play me a lulling chant, O Anthem-maker,
Out of the fall of lonely seas, and the wind's sorrow:
Behind are the burning glens of the sunset-sky
Where like blown ghosts the sea-mews wail their desolate sea-dirges:
Make me of these a lulling chant, O Anthem-maker.

No—no—from nets of silence weave me, O Sigher of Sleep,
A dusky veil ash-gray as the moonpale moth's grey wing;
Of thicket-stillness woven, and sleep of grass, and thin evanishing air
Where the tall reed spires breathless—for I am tired, O Sigher of Sleep,
And long for thy muffled song as of bells on the wind, and the wind's cry
Falling, and the dim wastes that lie
Beyond the last, low, dim, oblivious sigh.

During a short visit to Maniace W. S. wrote to Mrs. Philpot:

11th Nov., 1903.

... At this season of the year, beautiful and unique in its appeal and singular wild fascination as it is, this place does not suit me climatically, being for one thing too high between 2,000 and 3,000 ft. and also too much under the domination of Etna, who swings vast electric current, and tosses thunder charged cloud-masses to and fro like a Titan acolyte swinging mighty censers at the feet of the Sun. We drive to Taormina on Tuesday and the divine beauty and not less divinely balmy and regenerative climate—sitting as she does like the beautiful goddess Falcone worshipped there of old, perched on her orange and olive-clad plateau, hundreds of feet above the peacock-hued Ionian Sea, with one hand as it were

> reaching back to Italy (Calabria ever like opal or amethyst to the North-east), with the other embracing all the lands of Etna to Syracuse and the Hyblæan Mount, the lands of Empedocles and Theocritus, of Æschylus and Pindar, of Stesichorus and Simonides, and so many other great names—and with her face ever turned across the Ionian Sea to that ancient Motherland of Hellas, where once your soul and mine surely sojourned.
>
> We shall have a delightful "going" and one you would enjoy to the full.... Tomorrow if fine and radiant we start for that absolutely unsurpassable expedition to the great orange gardens a thousand feet lower at the S. W. end of the Duchy. We first drive some eight miles or so through wild mountain land till we come to the gorges of the Simeto and there we mount our horses and mules and with ample escort before and behind ride in single file for about an hour and a half. Suddenly we come upon one of the greatest orange groves in Europe—26,000 trees in full fruit, an estimated crop of 3,000,000! stretching between the rushing Simeto and great cliffs. Then once more to the saddle and back a different way to barbaric Bronte and thence a ten mile drive back along the ancient Greek highway from Naxos to sacred Enna. And so, for the moment, à revedèrla!"

After a delightful week at Corfù we settled in Athens (at Maison Merlin) for four months, and found pleasant companionship with members of the English and American Schools of Archeology—of which Mr. Carl Bosenquet and Prof. Henry Fowler were respectively the heads—with Dr. Wilhelm head of the Austrian School,—with Mr. Bikelas the Greek poet, at whose house we met several of the rising Greek men of letters, and other residents and wanderers.

The winter was very cold and at first my husband

was very ill—the double strain of his life seemed to consume him like a flame. At the New Year he wrote again to Mrs. Philpot:

MAISON MERLIN,
ATHENS.

DEAR FRIEND,

This is mainly to tell you that I've come out of my severe feverish attack with erect (if draggled) colours and hope to march "cock-a-hoopishly" into 1904 and even further if the smiling enigmatical gods permit!... To-day I heard a sound as of Pan piping, among the glens on Hymettos, whereon my eyes rest so often and often so long dream. Tomorrow I'll take Gilbert Murray's fine new version of Hippolytus or Bacchæ as my pocket companion to the Theatre of Dionysus on the hither side of the Acropolis; possibly my favourite Œdipus at Kolonos and read sitting on Kolonos itself and imagine I hear on the wind the rise and fall of the lonely ancient lives, serene thought-tranced in deathless music. And in the going of the old and the coming of the new year, a friend's thoughts shall fare to you from far away Athens.... As far as practicable I am keeping myself to the closer study of the literature and philosophy and ethical concepts and ideals of ancient Hellas and of mythology in relation thereto, but you know how fascinating and perturbing much else is, from sculpture to vase paintings, from Doric and Ionic architecture to the beauty and complex interest of the almost inexhaustible field of ancient Greek coins, and those of Græcia Magna,—And then (both Eheu and Evoe!) I have so much else to do—besides "Life" the supreme and most exciting of the arts!

A letter of New Year wishes to Dr. Garnett from W. S.; and a copy of *The House of Usna* to Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Rhys brought the following acknowledgments:

27 TANZA ROAD, HAMPSTEAD,
Jan. 8, 1904.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Your letter has given me infinite pleasure....

Athens must be a delightful residence at this time of year, especially if there are no "cold snaps," against which I fear that the modern Athenians are no better provided than their ancestors were. There is a very amusing letter in Alisplorn's epistles, describing the sufferings of a poor parasite in a hard winter. You seem to have very charming society. The name of Bikelas is well known to me, but I am not much versed in Roman literature. The history of Paparrhegopoulos has been a good deal noticed here of late. It seems to be a really classical work. By producing such the Greeks will indicate their claim to a high position in the European family, until the time has come for action, which apparently has not come yet.

I quite agree in the conclusion at which they seem to have arrived that it is better to have the Turks in Constantinople than the Bulgarians, much more the Russians. If either of their victims once occupy it, the rightful possessors will be forever excluded.

I have not wanted for literary occupations—one a little work of fancy which I am about finishing, and of which you will hear more. Then I have a story to translate from the Portuguese, published in the *Venture*; an edition of Browning's preface to Shelley's forged letters, with an introduction by me, and the second volume of English literature in conjunction with Gosse, which has been these six weeks ready for issue but delayed from time to time to suit the Americans. It is now positively announced for the 31st.

With kindest regards to Mrs. Sharp, who I hope finds Attica entirely to her taste,

I am, dear Sharp,

Very sincerely yours,
R. GARNETT.

DERWEN,
HERMITAGE LANE, N. W.,
Jan. 28, 1904.

DEAR MISS FIONA MACLEOD,

Most delightful of all New Year's gifts is a really beautiful book; and we thank you,—both of us,—for sending us your most characteristic heroic-lyric tragedy, *The House of Usna*. We were fortunate in being allowed to see it performed—how long ago can it have been!—at the Stage Society's instance.... The "Psychic Drama," as you conceive it, opens the door to a lost world of Nature and the emotions of Nature in the imagination. No doubt it is a frightfully difficult thing to attire these emotions in fair and credible human dress, one that seemed impossible even, but the "House of Usna" may serve as a test of how far those who have the key to these emotions can hope to fit it to old or new-old dramatic forms. Your 'Foreword' is suggestive enough to be treated separately; but we write from a sick house, and in such states, it is harder to think of critical things than of pure imaginative ones. For these last, as they rise out of your magic 'House,' and haunt the ear, we owe you very whole and ample thanks.

With many wishes for health and spirit in this year of 1904,

We are, yours most truly,
G. AND E. RHYS.

With Spring sunshine and warmth my husband regained a degree of strength, and it was his chief pleasure to take long rambles on the neighbouring hills alone, or with the young American archeologist, Mrs. Roselle L. Shields, a tireless walker. We made some interesting expeditions to Tyrens, Mycenæ,

Corinth, Delphi, etc. and from 'Olympia in Elis' he wrote to a friend:

> "How you would love this radiant heat, this vast solitude of ruins, the millions of flowers and dense daisied grass. This fragment of vast Olympia is the most ancient Greek temple extant. It lies at the base of the Hill of Kronos, of which the lowest pines are seen to the right and overlooks the whole valley of the Alpheios....
>
> And the millions of flowers. They are almost incredible in number and density. The ground is often white with thick snow of daisies. Wild plums, pears, cherries, etc. The radiant and glowing heat is a joy. I am sad to think that this day week beautiful Greece will be out of sight."

Later he wrote to Mr. Rhys:

MAISON MERLIN, ATHENS,
Friday, 26th Feb., 1904.

MY DEAR ERNEST,

> ... Yesterday I had a lovely break from work, high up on the beautiful bracing dwarf-pine clad slopes of Pentelicos, above Kephisia, the ancient deme of Menander—and then across the country behind Hymettos, the country of Demosthenes, and so back by the High Convent of St. John the Hunter, on the north spur of the Hymettian range, and the site of ancient Gargettos, the place of Epicurus' birth and boyhood. At sundown I was at Heracleion, some three or four miles from Athens—and the city was like pale gold out of which peaked Lycabettos rose like a purple sapphire. The sky beyond, above Salamis, was all grass-green and mauve. A thunder-cloud lay on extreme Hymettos, rising from Marathon: and three rainbows lay along the violet dusk of the great hill-range....
>
> We intend to spend April in France, mostly in

Southern Provence, which we love so well, and where we have dear French friends.

I am apparently well and strong again, hard at work, hard at pleasure, hard at life, as before, and generally once more full of hope and energy.

Love to you both, dear friends and a sunbeam to little Stella.

Ever yours,

WILL.

On leaving Greece we loitered at Hyères in the month of cherry-blossoms, and moved slowly northwards through Nîmes to the fantastic neighbourhood of Le Puy, with its curious hill-set town and churches perched on pinnacles of conical rock.

From Le Puy W. S. wrote to Mrs. Janvier:

18th April, 1904.... What has most impressed my imagination in this region is what I saw today outside of fantastic Le Puy—namely at the magnificent old feudal rock-Chateau fortress of Polignac, erected on the site of the famous Temple of Apollo (raised here by the Romans on the still earlier site of a Druidic Temple to the Celtic Sun God). I looked down the mysterious hollow of the ancient oracle of Apollo, and realised how deep a hold even in the France of today is maintained by the ancient Pagan faith....

CHAPTER XXV

THE WINGED DESTINY

Literary Geography

Two important events of 1904 to William Sharp were the publication of *The Winged Destiny*, at midsummer, by Messrs. Chapman & Hall; and of his *Literary Geography* in October.

In the Dedication to Dr. John Goodchild of *The Winged Destiny* (the title of *The Magic Kingdoms* was discarded), the author set forth 'her' intention:

> "In this book I have dealt—as I hope in all I write —only with things among which my thought has moved, searching, remembering, examining, sometimes dreaming....
>
> It is not the night-winds in sad hearts only that I hear, or the sighing of vain fatalities: but, often rather, of an Emotion akin to that mysterious Sorrow of Eternity in love with tears, of which Blake speaks in *Vala*. It is at times, at least I feel it so, because Beauty is more beautiful there. It is the twilight hour in the heart, as Joy is the heart's morning.
>
> Perhaps I love best the music that leads one into the moonlit coverts of dreams, and old silence, and unawakening peace. But Music, like the rose of the Greeks, is 'the thirty petalled one' and every leaf is the gate of an equal excellence. The fragrance of all is Joy, the beauty of all is Sorrow: but the Rose is one—*Rosa Sempiterna*, the Rose of Life. As to the past, it is because of what is there, that I look back: not because I do not see what is here today, or may be here tomorrow. It is because of what is to be gained that I look back: of what is supremely worth knowing there, of knowing intimately: of what is

supremely worth remembering, of remembering constantly: not only as an exile dreaming of the land left behind, but as one travelling in narrow defiles who looks back for familiar fires on the hills, or upward to the familiar stars where is surety. In truth is not all creative art remembrance: is not the spirit of ideal art the recapture of what has gone away from the world, that by an imperious spiritual law is forever withdrawing to come again newly."

To a friend W. S. wrote:

It is a happiness to me to know that you feel so deeply the beauty that has been so humbly and eagerly and often despairingly sought, and that in some dim measure, at least, is held here as a shaken image in troubled waters. It it a long long road, the road of art ... and those who serve with passion and longing and unceasing labour of inward thought and outward craft are the only votaries who truly know what long and devious roads must be taken, how many pitfalls have to be avoided or escaped from, how many desires have to be foregone, how many hopes have to be crucified in slow death or more mercifully be lost by the way, before one can stand at last on "the yellow banks where the west wind blows," and see, beyond, the imperishable flowers, and hear the immortal voices.

A thousand perils guard the long road. And when the secret gardens are reached, there is that other deadly peril of which Fiona has written in "The Lynn of Dreams." And, yet again, there is that mysterious destiny, that may never come, or may come to men but once, or may come and not go, of which I wrote to you some days ago, quoting from Fiona's latest writing: that destiny which puts dust upon dreams, and silence upon sweet airs, and stills songs, and makes the hand idle, and the spirit as foam upon the sea.

For the gods are jealous, O jealous and

> remorseless beyond all words to tell. And there is so little time at the best ... and the little gain, the little frail crown, is so apt to be gained too late for the tired votary to care, or to do more than lie down saying 'I have striven, and I am glad, and now it is over, and I am glad!'

A letter of appreciation to the author from an unknown Gaelic correspondent contained this beautiful wish:

> "May you walk by the waters of Life, and may you rest by Still Waters, and may you know the mystery of God."

To Mrs. Helen Bartlett Bridgman, "Fiona" wrote in acknowledgment of a letter, and of a sympathetic, printed appreciation of *The Winged Destiny*:

> MY DEAR FRIEND,
>
> (For if deep sympathy and understanding do not constitute friendship, what does?) It would be strange indeed if I did not wish to write to you after what Mr. Mosher has told me, and after perusal of what you have written concerning what I have tried to do with my pen. There are few things so helpful, perhaps none so pleasant to a writer in love with his or her work and the ideals which are its source, than the swift understanding and sympathy of strangers. So much of my work is aside from the general temper and taste, and not only in its ideals but in its 'atmosphere,' indeed even in its writer's methods and manner, that I have to be content (as I gladly am content) to let the wind that blows through minds and hearts carry the seed whithersoever it may perchance take root, and this with the knowledge that the resting places must almost of necessity, as things are, be few and far between. But it is not number that counts, and, as I say, I am well content —would be content were my readers far fewer than

they are. It seems enough to me that one should do one's best in a careful beauty and in the things of the spirit. It is enough to be a torch-bearer, whether the flame be a small and brief light or a beacon—it is to take over and to tend and to hand on the fire that matters. As I say in my very shortly forthcoming new book, *The Winged Destiny*, I desire to be of the horizon-makers; if I can be that, however humbly, I am glad indeed. This would be so with anyone, I think, feeling thus. To me outside sympathy means perhaps more; for I stand more isolated than most writers do, partly by my will, partly by circumstances as potent and sometimes more potent. It is not only that I am devoid of the desire of publicity, of personal repute, and that nothing of advantage therefrom has the slightest appeal to me (though, alas, both health and private circumstances make my well-being to a large extent dependent on what my work brings me), but that I am mentally so constituted that I should be silenced by what so many are naturally and often rightly eager for and that so many seek foolishly or unworthily. In this respect I am like the mavis of the woods, that sings full-heartedly in the morning shadow or evening twilight in secret places, but will be dumb and lost in the general air of noon and where many are gathered in the frequented open to see and hear.

It is for these, and other not less imperative private reasons, why I am known personally to so very few of my fellow-writers: and why in private circles the subject is not one that occurs. I cannot explain, though not from reluctance or perversity or any foolish and needless mystery. The few who do not know me, as you know me, but with added intimacy, are loyal in safe-guarding my wishes and my privacy. That explains why I refuse all editorial and other requests of "interviews," "photographs," "personal articles" and the like. In a word, I am blind to all the obvious advantages that would accrue from my 'entering the arena' as others do. I have all that

frequently borne in upon me. But still less so do I ignore what would happen to my work, to its quality and spirit, to myself, if I yielded. I may be wrong, but I do not think I am. I am content to do my best, as the spirit moves me, and as my sense of beauty compels me; and if, with that, I can also make some often much-needed money, enough for the need as it arises; and, further, can win the sympathy and deep appreciation of the few intimate and the now many unknown friends whom, to my great gladness and pride, I have gained, then, indeed, I can surely contentedly let wider "fame" (of all idle things the idlest, when it is, as it commonly is, the mere lip-repute of the curious and the shallow) go by, and be indifferent to the lapse of possible but superfluous greater material gain...."

Dr. Goodchild, after a first acknowledgment of the dedication, again wrote to F. M.:

AUTHOR'S CLUB,
July 1904.

DEAR FRIEND,

... Yesterday I read your Preface to a friend of mine, and afterwards a lady (a clever woman I believe) came into the room. I had never met her before, and she had never read anything of yours, but she picked up the book and asked what it was. "Just read the introduction" said my friend. The reader had an expressive face, and I wish you had seen it. "But this is something quite new. I never read anything like it before" she said as she finished: and I fancy that many will do likewise.

A woman said in my hearing not long ago, of one of your poems, "*I* could not put out my heart for daws to peck at" and I said "only the Eagle could do that, and not only daws, but blackbirds of all kinds will come to do that, and when the Eagles hear the call of their mates, there will be such slaughter of carrion crows as the World has not seen yet."

J. A. G.

A few days later William described to a friend the events of

> ... one of the loveliest days of the year, with the most luminous atmosphere I have seen in England—the afternoon and evening divinely serene and beautiful.
>
> I had a pleasant visit to Bath, and particularly enjoyed the long day spent yesterday at Glastonbury and neighbourhood, and the glowing warmth and wonderful radiance.
>
> As usual one or two strange things happened in connection with Dr. G. We went across the ancient "Salmon" of St. Bride, which stretches below the hill known as "Weary-All" (a corruption of Uriel, the Angel of the Sun), and about a mile or less westward came upon the narrow water of the ancient 'Burgh.' Near here is a very old Thorn held in great respect....
>
> He put me (unknowing) to a singular test. He had hoped with especial and deep hope that in some significant way I would write or utter the word "Joy" on this 1st day of August (the first three weeks of vital import to many, and apparently for myself too)—and also to see if a certain spiritual influence would reach me. Well, later in the day (for he could not prompt or suggest, and had to await occurrence) we went into the lovely grounds of the ancient ruined Abbey, one of the loveliest things in England I think. I became restless and left him, and went and lay down behind an angle of the East end, under the tree. I smoked, and then rested idly, and then began thinking of some correspondence I had forgotten. Suddenly I turned on my right side, stared at the broken stone of the angle, and felt vaguely moved in some way. Abruptly and unpremeditatedly I wrote down three enigmatic and disconnected lines. I was looking curiously at the third when I saw Dr. G. approach.

"Can you make anything out of that," I said —"I've just written it, I don't know why." This is the triad:

> "*From the Silence of Time, Time's Silence borrow.*
> *In the heart of To-day is the word of To-morrow.*
> *The Builders of Joy are the Children of Sorrow.*"

To Mr. Stedman W. S. announced our plans for the coming winter:

Aug. 29, 1904.

DEAR POET,

This is not an advance birthday letter, as you may think! It is to convey tidings of much import to my wife and myself, and I hope of pleasure to you and other friends over-sea—namely that this late autumn we are going to pay a brief visit to New York.

It is our intention to spend January, February, and March in Rome—which for me is the City of Cities. But we are going to it via New York. In a word, we intend to leave England somewhere between 23rd and 26th of October, according as steamers and our needs fit it. Then after six weeks or so in New York, we intend to sail direct to the Mediterranean by one of the Hamburg-American or North-German Lloyd Special Mediterranean line, sailing to Genoa and Naples....

I have been very busy of late, and for one thing have been occupied with collecting and revising the literary studies of some years past—and much else of which I'll tell you when we meet. My *Literary Geography*, which has been running serially in the *Pall Mall Magazine* for the last 14 or 15 months will be out in book-form in October. My wife's recently published little book on Rembrandt has had a good reception, I am very glad to say.

With all affectionate greetings to you both, ever, Dear Stedman,

Affectionately your friend,
WILLIAM SHARP.

Before we started for New York *Literary Geography* (by W. S.) was published. According to the critic in *The World*:

> "It was a characteristically original idea of the author to combine descriptions of certain localities with criticisms and appreciations of those famous writers who had identified themselves therewith. It gives one a fresher and keener insight, for instance, into Mr. George Meredith's poems to know how much they reveal of the lovely country in which he lives, and how many of his exquisite similes are drawn from observation of the birds and beasts and plants which he sees daily around his home under the shadow of Box Hill. "The Country of Stevenson," "Dickens-Land," "Scott-Land," "The Country of George Eliot," "Thackeray-Land," "The Brontë Country," "The Carlyle Country," and "Aylwin-Land" are all both delightful and instructive, full of poetic description, sound criticism, and brilliant flashes of wit; and not less so are the chapters on the "literary geography" of the Thames from Oxford to the Nore, the English Lakes, with all their associations with Wordsworth and his brother poets, and the Lake of Geneva, which might have been called Voltaire-Land were it not that so many other famous personalities and authors are identified with Geneva and its surroundings that the solitary distinction might seem invidious."

The book was dedicated to the author's friend of early days, Mr. George Halkett (then Editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*) with the reminder that

> "More years ago now than either of us cares to recall, we were both, in the same dismal autumn for us, sent wandering from our native lands in Scotland

> to the end of the earth. I remember that each commiserated the other because of that doctor's doom in which we both, being young and foolish, believed. Since then we have sailed many seas and traversed many lands, and I, at least, have the wayfaring fever too strong upon me ever to be cured now."

The critic in the *Daily Chronicl*e explained that the "book is all an affair of temperament, and the only thing which really matters is that Mr. Sharp has made excellent stuff out of his impressions.... For instance, the first time he saw Robert Louis Stevenson was not as it should have been, in the land of Alan Breck; it was at Waterloo Station. Is the literary geographer abashed by this conjunction of two sympathetic Scots in a dismal London shed? Not a bit of it:

> 'He was tall, thin, spare—indeed, he struck me as almost fantastically spare. I remember thinking that the station draught caught him like a torn leaf blowing at the end of a branch.'

"Mind you, at that moment Mr. Sharp did not know who the stranger was, but knew by instinct that the station draught ought to make poetical use of him. More than that, Mr. Sharp saw that Stevenson had the air of a man just picked out of a watery grave. Anybody could see this.

> 'That it was not merely an impression of my own was proved by the exclamation of a cabman, who was standing beside me expectant of a "fare" who had gone to look after his luggage: "Looks like a sooercide, don't he, sir? One o' them chaps as takes their down-on-their-luck 'eaders into the Thames!"'

> "When Stevenson could inflame a cabman with

this picturesque fantasy, no wonder he turned Waterloo Station into the home of romance. But this was not all. The 'sooercide' had still more magic about him. Stevenson was waiting for a friend to arrive by train, and when the friend appeared, the drowned *revenant* became another being.

'The dark locks apparently receded, like weedy tangle in the ebb; the long sallow oval grew rounder and less wan; the sombre melancholy vanished like cloud-scud on a day of wind and sun, and the dark eyes lightened to a violet-blue and were filled with sunshine and laughter.'

"This extraordinary man was carrying a book and dropped it. Then happened something which expanded Waterloo Station into the infinite:

'I lifted and restored it, noticing as I did that it was the *Tragic Comedians*, ...

In 1902 W. S. had been greatly gratified by a request from the composer, Mr. McDowell, couched in generous terms of appreciation:

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
NEW YORK, May 25th.

MISS FIONA MACLEOD,
MY DEAR MADAM,

Your work has so grown into my life that I venture to ask you to permit my placing your name on some music of mine. Your poems have been an inspiration to me and I trust you will accept a dedication of music that is yours already by right of suggestion. By this I do not mean that my music in any way echoes your words but that your words have been a most powerful incentive to me in my music and I crave your sympathy for it.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD MACDOWELL.

At the end of 1904 F. M. wrote to Mr. Lawrence Gilman, the American Musical Critic:

22 ORMIDALE TERRACE,
MURRAYFIELD, 31st Dec.

DEAR MR. GILMAN,

Some time ago a friend played to me one or two lovely airs by Mr. Loeffler, and I was so much impressed by their unique quality and their atmosphere of subtle beauty that I wrote to find out what I could about this composer, and also about another, Mr. MacDowell, whose beautiful Keltic Sonata I have heard. And now I have been sent a copy of your winsome and deeply interesting and informing little book, *Phases of Modern Music*. There I not only find much of deep interest to me about Mr. Loeffler and Mr. MacDowell, but find your whole book at once informing and fascinating. In addition I had the great pleasure of coming unexpectedly upon allusions to myself and my writings: and I would like you to know how truly I appreciate these, and how glad I am that a critic touched to such fine issues in the great art of Music, and with so keen a sense for the new ideals of beauty, the new conceptions of style and distinction, should care for what I am trying to do in my own art.

I hope you are writing another book. Whether on musical subjects only, or on literary and musical subjects in conjunction (which of course would appeal to a wider section of the reading public), any such book would I am sure, be welcomed by all who know *Phases of Modern Music*.

I wish I knew more of the music of these two composers. There is a spirit abroad just now, full of a new poignancy of emotion, uplifted on a secret wave of passion and ecstasy, and these men seem to me of that small but radiant company who have slept and

dreamed in the other world and drank moon-dew.

Let me thank you again for all the pleasure you have given me, and

Believe me
Most truly yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

Mr. Lawrence Gilman replied:

NEW YORK,
Jan 14, 1905.

MY DEAR MISS MACLEOD,

It would not be easy for me to tell you, without seeming extravagance, of the keen pleasure I have had in your cordial letter concerning my book, *Phases of Modern Music*. The deep impression which your own work has made upon me must already have become evident to you through even the most cursory reading of my book—an impression the extent and definiteness of which I myself had scarcely realised. You will know, then, how great a satisfaction it is for me to hear that you have been interested in my thoughts on musical subjects, and that they have seemed to you worthy of the friendly praise which you have spoken in your letter.

So you know and like the music of Loeffler and MacDowell! That is good to hear; for few, even in this country, where they have been active in their art for so long, are sensible of the beauty and power of their work. Do you know Loeffler's latest production —"Quatre Poëmes," settings of verses by Verlaine and Baudelaire? They are written for voice, piano, and viola: a singular and admirable combination. Mr. MacDowell will be glad to hear of your pleasure in his "Keltic Sonata," for he is one of your most sensitive admirers: it was he, indeed, who first made me acquainted with your work. Have you heard his earliest sonatas—the "Norse," "Eroica," and "Tragica"? They are not very far behind the "Keltic"

in distinction and force, though lacking the import and exaltation of the latter.

You would be surprised, I think, to know how the Celtic impulse is seizing the imaginations of some of the younger and more warmly-tempered of American composers. I am enclosing a programme of a concert given recently in Boston, consisting entirely of music written on Celtic themes.

Thank you again.

Very faithfully yours,

LAWRENCE GILMAN.

When in New York William Sharp had written to Mr. Alden "on behalf of Miss Macleod" concerning her later nature-essay work, and explained that "Some months ago, by special request from the Editor of *Country Life* Miss M. began contributing one or two of these papers. From the first they attracted notice, and then the Editor asked her if she would contribute a series to appear as frequently as practicable—averaging two a month—till next May when they would be issued in book-form. As Miss M. enjoys writing them, she agreed."

In the same letter he spoke of a subject on which he had long meditated. He proposed it for *Harper's Magazine*:—"I have long been thinking over the material of an article on the Fundamental Science of Criticism, to be headed, say 'A New Degree: D. Crit.'" This project among many others was never worked out. But the 'nature-papers' were a great pleasure to him, and in 1904 and 1905 he wrote on many subjects for *Country Life*, over the signature of F. M., also several poems that were afterwards included in the second edition of *From the Hills of Dream*.

As month by month the number of nature essays grew, he planned to issue them in two, and later in three volumes. To the second volume he thought to

give the title “Blue Days and Green Days” (from a line of R. L. Stevenson’s), and to call the third, which was to deal with the stars and the skies at night, “Beyond the Blue Septentrion.” Not all the projected essays for each book, however, were written; but those which appeared serially were published posthumously in 1906, by *Country Life* under the title of *Where the Forest Murmurs*. Concerning the titular essay, Mr. Alfred Noyes wrote: “It is one of those pieces of nature-study which, in Matthew Arnold’s phrase, have that rarest of all modern qualities —‘Healing Power.’”

And according to *The Contemporary Review*:

“Fiona Macleod’s prose baffles description. It is perhaps hardly prose at all. It is melody in words suggesting scenes as much by sound as by the passage of ideas. The ideas conveyed by the actual words are supplemented by the rhythm or melody conveyed by the sequence of words. But it is, when all analysis is ended, something quite alone: pure music of a strange and curious quality that is neither prose nor poetry, but thrilling with the pain and passion of a Gaelic chant. It conveys to the mind and heart the scenes and sounds of nature with almost magical accuracy.”

The immediate object of our short visit to New York and Boston was that I should know in person some of the many friends my husband valued there, and I was specially interested to make the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Stedman, who gave me a warm welcome, of Mr. and Mrs. Alden, Mr. and Mrs. R. Watson Gilder, Mr. John Lafarge, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, and Miss Caroline Hazard whom we visited at Wellesley College. But winter set in with

December. The cold proved so severe that we sailed for and reached Naples in time to spend Xmas Day with friends at Bordighera whence W. S. wrote to Mr. Murray Gilchrist: “We are back from America (thank God) and are in Italy (thank Him more).... For myself I am crawling out of the suck of a wave whose sweep will I hope be a big one of some months and carry me far.”

In Rome we took rooms at the top of Fischer’s Park Hotel, whence from the balconies we had a superb view over Rome. There we saw a few friends —in particular Mr. Hichens who was also wintering there; but my husband did not feel strong enough for any social effort. As he wrote to Mr. Mosher:

11th Feb., 1905.

Dubious and ever varying health, with much going to and fro in quest of what is perhaps not to be found (for mere change of climate will not give health unless other conditions combine to bring about the miracle) have, among other causes, prevented my writing to you as I had intended, or, indeed, from doing much writing of any kind. I have written a few articles for *Country Life*—and little else, published or unpublished. The days go by and I say “at night”—and every night I am too tired or listless, and say “tomorrow”: and so both the nights and the morrows go to become thistles in the Valley of Oblivion. But with the advancing Spring I am regathering somewhat of lost energy, and if only I were back in Scotland I believe I should be hard at work! Well, I shall be there soon, though I may be away again, in the remote isles or in Scandinavia for the late spring and summer....

F. M.

CHAPTER XXVI

1905

"*There is a great serenity in the thought of death, when it is known to be the Gate of Life.*"
FIONA MACLEOD.

April my husband spent in the West of Scotland, for which he pined; and on his way North broke his journey in Edinburgh whence he wrote to Mr. W. J. Robertson, the translator into English verse of *A Century of the French poets of the XIX Century*:

April, 1905.

DEAR MR. ROBERTSON,

After our most pleasant evening à deux I had a comfortable journey north: and last night luxuriated in getting to bed early (a rare thing for me) with the sure and certain knowledge there would be no glorious resurrection therefrom at any untimely hour. So after sleeping the sleep of the true Gael—who is said to put 85 to the poor Sassenach 40 winks—I woke in peace. I was thereafter having a cigarette over the *Scotsman* when my youngest (and secretary) sister brought me my letters, papers, etc. and with them a long narrow box which I soon discovered to be your generous gift of 100 of these delectable Indian cigars. It is very good of you indeed, and I am grateful, and may the ancient Gaelic God Dia-Cheo,

God of Smoke, grant you remission of all your philological sins and derivative 'howlers'—and the more so as there is no authority for any such god, and the name would signify hill-mist instead of pipe-smoke! And may I have a himdred 'rèves de Notre Dame de Nicotine!' I couldn't resist trying one. Wholly excellent. And in the meditative fumes I arrived through intuition at the following derivation which I hope will find a place in your book:

Roab ancient Celtic for a Good Fellow
H'Errt " " " Smoke-Maker or Smoke-Bestower
's contraction for *Agus* 'and',
Onn ancient Celtic for 'May Heaven Bless'
W. J. ancient Celtic Tribal tattoo——

which, assisted in dreams by the spirits of Windisch, D'Arbois de Jubainville, Loth, Whitley Stokes and Kuno Meyer, I take to be *W. J. Roab-H'Errt-S-onn*—i. e. *Bill-Jack*, or in mod. English 'William John' of the Clan of Heaven-Blessed Friendly Smokers—i. e. William John of the Roaberrtsson, or Robertson Clan. This of course disposes of Donnachie once and for all.

Ever sincerely yours
WILLIAM SHARP.

From Edinburgh he and his secretary-sister Mary went to Lismore, so that he might "feel the dear West once more." From Oban he reported to Mr. W. J. Robertson on a post card addressed to "Ri Willeam Iain MacRiobeart mhic Donnach aidh"——

"Awful accident in a lonely Isle of the West.

A distinguished stranger was observing the vasty deep, and had laid a flask-filled cup on a rock beside him when a tamned gull upset it and at same time carried off a valuable Indian cheroot. Deep sympathy is everywhere expressed, for the distinguished

stranger, the lost cheroot, and above all for the spilt cup and abruptly emptied flask. A gloom has been cast over the whole island.

Verb: *Sap*:"

From Lismore he wrote to me:

"*April 19*. It was sweet to fall asleep last night to the sound of the hill-wind and the swift troubled waters. We had a lovely walk in the late afternoon, and again in the sombre moonlit night. It came on too stormy for me to go round to the Cavern later, however. I'll try again. I was there about first dusk, with Mary. To my chagrin there was neither sound nor sight of the sea-woman, but she must be there for MacC. has *twice* heard her sobbing and crying out at him when he passed close in the black darkness. There was only a lapwing wailing near by, but both Mary and I heard a singular furtive sound like something in a trailing silk dress whispering to itself as it slid past in the dusk—but this, I *think*, was a curious echo of what's called 'a sobbing wave' in some narrow columnar hidden hollow opening from the sea. Mary got the creeps, and loathed a story I told her about a *midianmara* that sang lovely songs but only so as to drown the listener and suck the white warm marrow out of his spine.

Later I joined MacC. for a bit over the flickering fireflaucht. I got him to tell me all over again and more fully about the Maighdeann Mhara. The first time he heard 'something' was before his fright last November. 'There was *cèol* then' he said....

I asked in Gaelic 'were songs sung?' He said 'Yes, at times.' Mrs. MacC. was angry at him he said, and said he hadn't the common-sense of a jenny-cluckett (a clucking hen)—*but* (and there's a world of difference in that) *she hadn't heard what he had heard*. So to cheer him up I told him a story about a crab that fed on the brains of a drowned man, and grew with such awful and horrible wisdom that it climbed

up the stairway of the seaweed and on to a big rock and waved its claws at the moon and cursed God and the world, and then died raving mad. Seeing how it worked upon him, I said I would tell him another, and worse, about a lobster—but he was just as bad as Mary, and said he would wait for the lobster till the morning, and seemed so absurdly eager to get safely to bed that the pleasant chat had to be abruptly broken off....

P. S. The cold is very great, and it is a damp cold, you couldn't stand it. When I got up my breath *swarmed* about the room like a clutch of phantom peewits. No wonder I had a dream I was a seal with my feet clemmed on to an iceberg. A duck went past a little ago seemingly with one feather and that blown athwart its beak, so strong was the north-wind blowing from that snowy mass that Ben Nevis wears like a delicate veil. Cruachan has covered herself with a pall of snow mist.

April 20.... Fiona Macleod has just been made an honorary member of a French League of writers devoted to the rarer and subtler use of Prose and Verse, a charming letter from Paul Fort acting for his colleagues Maeterlinck, Henri de Roquier, Jean Moréas, Emile Verhacren, Comte Antoine de la Rochefoucault, Duchesse de la Roche-Guyon, Richeguin, Sully Prudhomme, Henri Le Sidaner, Jules Claretie, etc. etc.

We're glad, aren't we, you and I? She's our daughter, isn't she?

23d April.... You will have got my note of yesterday telling you that I have reluctantly had to relinquish Iona. The primary reason is its isolation at present....

But from something I heard from old Mr. C. I fancy it's as well for me not to visit there just now, where I'd be the only stranger, and every one would know of it—and where a look out for F. M. or W. S.

is kept! And, too, anything heard there and afterwards utilised would be as easily traced to me.... After Tiree and Iona and Coll, and Arran in the South, I don't care just now for anywhere else—nearer: as for Eigg, which I loved so much of old, Rum or Canna and the Outer Isles, they are too inaccessible just now and Skye is too remote and too wet and cold. However, it is isolation plus 'atmosphere' I want most of all—and I doubt if there is any place just now I could get so much good from as Lismore. I love that quiet isolated house on the rocks facing the Firth of Lorne, all Appin to Ben Naomhir, and the great mountains of Morven.

It was on the sandy bindweed-held slope of the little bay near the house, facing Eilean-nan-Coarach, that F. wrote the prelude to *The Winged Destiny*—and also the first piece, the "Treud-nan-Ron," which describes that region, with Mr. MacC.'s seal legend, and the dear little island in the Sound of Morvern (do you remember our row to it one day?) There one could be quiet and given over to dreams and to the endless fascination of outer nature.... And I have got much of what I want—the *in-touch* above all, the atmosphere: enough to strike the keynote throughout the coming year and more, for I absorb through the very pores of both mind and body like a veritable sponge. Wild-life and plant-life too extremely interesting here. There does seem some mystery about that cave tho' I cannot fathom it.

I've all but finished the preparation of the new Tauchnitz vol. (The Sunset of Old Tales) and expect to complete it (for May) tonight.

24th April.... Yes, I was sorry to leave Lismore. It may be my last time in the Gaelic west. (I don't say this "down-ly"—but because I think it likely). There is much I want to do, and now as much by W. S. as by F. M. and that I realise must be done abroad where alone can I keep well and mentally even more than physically. (*How* I hope Fontainebleau may

some day suit us.) Dear MacC. was sorry to part too. He shook hands (with both his) and when I said in Gaelic "Goodbye, and Farewell upon that, my friend" he said "No—no"—and then suddenly said "My blessing on you—and goodbye now!" and turned away and went down the pier-side and hoisted the brown sail and went away across the water, waving a last farewell.

The cold proved so disastrous that my husband was ordered to Neuenahr for special treatment. Thence he wrote to the Hon. A. Nelson Hood:

June, 1905.

MY DEAR JULIAN,

Just a brief line, for I am still very restricted in permission as to writing, as so much depends on the rest-cure which is no small factor in my redemption here....

It has been 'a narrow squeak.' Briefly, after a hard tussle at the brink of 'Cape Fatal' and a stumble across 'Swamp Perilous' I got into the merely "dangerous condition" stage—and now at last that's left behind, and I'll soon be as well in body as I'm happy and serene in mind.

It is at best, however, a *reprieve*, not a lifetime-discharge. *N'importe*. Much can be done with a reprieve, and who is to know how long the furlough may be extended to. At any rate, I am well content."

To me he wrote—for I was unable to accompany him:

NEUENAHR,

16th June, 1905.

... Here, at the Villa Usner, it is deliciously quiet and reposeful. I had not realised to the full how much nervous harm I've had for long. To live near trees is alone a joy and a restorative. The heat is very great but to me most welcome and strengthening....

In my room or in the garden I hear no noise, no sounds save the susurrus of leaves and the sweet monotony of the rushing Ahr, and the cries and broken songs of birds....

I could see that Dr. G. can't understand why I am not more depressed or, rather, more anxious. I explained to him that these physical troubles meant little to me, and that they were largely the bodily effect of other things, and might be healed far more by spiritual well-being than by anything else: also that nature and fresh air and serenity and light and warmth and nervous rest were worth far more to me than all else. "But don't you know how serious your condition may become at any moment, if you got a bad chill or setback, or don't soon get better?" "Certainly," I said; "but what then? Why would I bother about either living or dying? I shall not die before the hour of my unloosening comes."

I want to be helped all I may be—but all the waters in the world can only affect the external life, and even that only secondarily very often....

Monday evening.

... "*How* I enjoyed my breakfast this morning! (in the lovely garden, in a vine-shadowed arbour or pergola, with great tall poplars and other trees billowing against the deep blue). Then a cigarette, a stroll in the lovely sunlit-dappled green shadowiness of an adjoining up-sloping avenue—and a seat for a little on a deserted south-wall bench (because of the blazing heat) for a sun-bath, while I watched a nightingale helping its young to fly among the creaming elders and masses of wild-rose, while her mate swung on a beech-branch and called long sweet exquisite cries of a thrilling poignancy (which, however, might only be "Now then, Jenny, look out, or Tommy will fall into that mass of syringa:—hillo! there's Bobby and Polly gone and got scratched pecking at these confounded white wild-roses!)."

Then I got up to come in and write to you (gladly

in one way, reluctantly in another for I seem to drink in life in the strong sunlight and heat), but first stopped to speak to a gorgeous solitary dandelion. I stroked it gently, and said "Hullo, wee brother, isn't the world beautiful? Hold up your wee head and rejoice!" And it turned up its wee golden nose and said "Keep your hair on, you old skidamalink, I'm rejoicing as hard as ever I can. I'm *always* rejoicing. What else would I do? You *are* a rum old un-shiny animal on two silly legs!" So we laughed, and parted —but he called me back, and said gently in a wee soft goldy-yellow voice, "Don't think me rude, Brother of Joy. It's only my way. I love you because you love *me* and don't despise me. Shake pinkies!"—so I gave him a pinkie and he gave me a wee golden-yellow pinkie-petal....

Tell Marjorie[5] the wee Dandelion was asking about her and sends her his love—also a milky daisy that says *Hooray!* every morning when it wakes, and then is so pleased and astonished that it remains silently smiling till next morning.

This flower and bird talk doesn't bother you, does it? Don't think I don't realise how ill I have been and in a small way still am: but I don't think about it, and am quite glad and happy in this lovely June-glory...."

He broke his return journey at Doorn with our friends M. and Mme. Grandmont and wrote to me:

July, 1905.

" ... How you'd love to be here!

Nothing visible but green depths fading into green depths, and fringing the sky-lines the endless surf of boughs and branches. From the forest-glades the cooing of doves and the travelling-voice of a flowing cool sweet wind of this delicious morning. I always gain immensely in mind and body from nearness to woodlands and green growth—hence in

no small part my feeling for Fontainebleau. I'd such a lot to tell you about it—and of what we should strive to obtain for ourselves in restful, fine, dignified life, and much else, apropos and apart—as you lay happy and contented on the long luxurious lounge beside my chair on the deep balcony, half listening to me and half to the soft continuous susurrus of the pine-fragrant breeze—that more than an hour elapsed while I drank my tea and read your letter....

"It is no exaggeration to say, that, so greatly do I value and treasure afterwards certain aspects of beauty, I would quite willingly go through all the suffering again for the sake of the lovely impressions here last night and this morning. The beauty and charm of this house and its forest-environment, the young moon and the night-jar at dusk (and then to soothe and sleepify me still more, the soft, sweet, old-fashioned melodies of Haydn from 9 to 9.30)—one or two lovely peacocks trailing about in front—the swallows at corner of my great verandah—a thousandfold peace and beauty, and the goodness of these dear friends, have not only been, and are, a living continuous joy, but have been like the Heralds of Spring to the return of gladness and energy into my mind. Today I realise that too, for one thing, 'Fiona' has come back from afar off. It is peace and greenness she loves—not the physical and psychical perturbation and demoralisation of towns.

Yes, we'll make 'green homes' for ourselves now. No more long needless months in London....

Despite his serenity of mind, London as usual wrought him harm, and as he explained to Dr. Goodchild:

30th July.

... August is always a 'dark' month for me—and not as a rule, I fancy, a good one: at any rate an obscure and perhaps perilous one. But this time I fancy it is on other lines. I believe strong motives

and influences are to be at work in it perhaps furtively only: but none the less potently and far reachingly. Between now and September-end (perhaps longer) many of the Dark Powers are going to make a great effort. We must all be on guard—for there will be individual as well as racial and general attack. But a Great Unloosening is at hand.

Yours ever,

W. S.

We therefore went to Scotland to say goodbye to his mother and sisters, and to see one or two friends, among others, Miss Mary Wilson, the pastellist, at Bantaskine, her home on the site of the battle of Falkirk; Mr. D. Y. Cameron, with whom my husband planned an unfulfilled wander among the Western Isles; and Mr. David Erskine of Linlathen.

While in the North he wrote to Mr. John Maesfield:

KESSOCK COTTAGE,
NAIRN.

DEAR MR. MAESFIELD,

A brief word to tell you what pleasure I have had in your little book *A Mainsail Haul*. It is not only that it is written with delicate art: but it is rich in atmosphere—a much rarer thing. The simplicity, the charm, the subtle implication of floating, evasive yet fluctuating romance, your own keen sense of the use of words and their veiled life and latent as well as obvious colour, combine to a winning and often compelling effect. I do not think any who has read Don Alfonso's drinking bout with the little red man and the strange homegoing of the weed and flower-grown brigantine with the Bible name, will forget it: and what dream charm also there is in "Port of Many Ships," "Sea Superstition," "The Spanish Sailor's Yarn." In such a splendid and delightful colour fabric

as “From the Spanish” “high words and rare” are of course apt—but is it not a mistake to introduce in “Sea Superstition” words such as “august” and “wrought” in a sailor’s mouth? (In the text the effect seems to be enhanced not lessened, by the omission of these words—“were like things in bronze,” “the roof of which was of dim branches.”)

In “From the Spanish” I would, as a matter of personal taste, prefer that the end came at the close of the penultimate para, the shore-drift of the Italian lute. I think the strange dream-like effect would be much enhanced without (what seems to me) the superfluous ‘realistic’ tag. Otherwise the piece is a gem of its kind.

But you will forgive the critic (and it shows he has read closely) in the admirer, I hope?

Let us have more work of the kind. There is much need of it, and you are of the few who can give it.

Yours sincerely

WILLIAM SHARP.

Mr. Maesfield—who had written concerning Fiona Macleod to a friend: “I think the genius of a dead people has found re-incarnation in her. Wherever the Celt is, thence come visions and tears”—replied:

GREENWICH,
Aug. 19, 1905.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

I was deeply touched by your kind letter about my little book [*A Mainsail Haul*]. If it should go to a second edition I will make use of your suggestion. I prepared the book rather hurriedly, and there is much in it that I very much dislike, now that it cannot be altered.

The mood in which I wrote the tales you like, has gone from me, and I am afraid I shall be unable to

write others of the same kind. In youth the mind is an empty chamber; and the spirits fill it, and move and dance there, and colour it with their wings and raiment. In manhood one has familiars. But between those times (forgive me for echoing Keats) one has little save a tag or two of cynicism, a little crude experience, much weariness, much regret, and a vision blurred by all four faults. One is weakened, too, by one's hatreds.

I thank you again for your very kind and cordial letter.

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN MAESfiELD.

To an unknown correspondent F. M. wrote:

Sept. 15, 1905.

... I have been away, in the isles, and for a time beyond the reach of letters. I wish there were Isles where one could also go at times, where no winged memories could follow. In a Gaelic folk-tale, told me by an old woman once, the woman of the story had only to burn a rose to ashes and to hold them in the palms of her hands and then to say seven times *A Eileanain na Sith*, "O Isles of Peace"! and at once she found herself in quiet isles beyond the foam where no memories could follow her and where old thoughts, if they came, were like phantoms on the wind, in a moment come, in a moment gone. I have failed to find these Isles, and so have you: but there are three which lie nearer, and may be reached, Dream, Forgetfulness, and Hope.

And there, it may be, we can meet, you and I....

Yes, your insight is true. There is a personal sincerity, the direct autobiographical utterance, in even, as you say, the most remote and phantastic of my legends as in the plainest of my words. But because they cover so much illusion as well as passion, so much love gone on the wind as well as

love that not even the winds of life and death can break or uproot, so much more of deep sorrow (apart from the racial sorrow which breathes through all) than of joy save in the deeper spiritual sense, they were thus raimented in allegory and legend and all the illusion of the past, the remote, the obscure, or the still simpler if more audacious directness of the actual, the present, and the explicit. There is, perhaps, a greater safety, a greater illusion, in absolute simplicity than in the most subtly wrought of art....

But you will understand me when I say that you must not count on our meeting—at any rate not this year. I too stand under obscure wings.

Your friend,

F. M.

To the Duchess of Sutherland:

... I have the memory that recalls everything in proportion and sequence. I have often written that art is memory, is in great part memory, though not necessarily a recalling of mere personal experience: and the more deeply I live the more I see that this is so....

When you write, I mean imaginatively, you must write more and more with concentrated vision. Some time ago I re-read your *Four Winds of the World*; much of it is finely done, and in some of it your self lives, your own accent speaks. But you have it in you to do work far more ambitious. The last is not a word I like, or affect; but here it is convenient and will translate to your mind what is in my mind. These stories are *yours* but they are not *you*: and though in a sense art is a wind above the small eddies of personality, there is a deeper sense in which it is nothing else than the signature of personality. Style (that is, the outer emotion that compels and the hidden life of the imagination that impels and the brooding thought that shapes and colours) should,

spiritually, reflect a soul's lineaments as faithfully as the lens of the photographer reflects the physiognomy of a man or woman. It is because I feel in you a deep instinct for beauty, a deep longing for beautiful expression and because I believe you have it in you to achieve highly in worth and beauty, that I write to you thus.... There is that Lady of Silence, the Madonna of Enigma, who lives in the heart of many women. Could you not shape something under *Her* eyes—shape it and colour it with your own inward life, and give it all the nobler help of austere discipline and control which is called art? I have not much to tell you of myself just now. At the moment I do not write to you from the beloved west where I spend much of each year and where my thoughts and dreams continually are. Tonight I am tired, and sad, I hardly know why.

O wind, why break in idle foam
  This wave that swept the seas—...
Foam is the meed of barren dreams,
  And hearts that cry for peace.

Lift then, O wind, this heart of mine
  And swirl aside in foam—
No, wander on, unchanging heart,
  The undrowning deeps thy home.

Less than a billow of the sea
  That at the last doth no more roam
Less than a wave, less than a wave
  This thing that hath no home
This thing that hath no grave!

But I shall weary you. Well, forgive me....

The next letter is to Mrs. Helen Hopekirk, the Scottish-American composer, who has set several of the F. M. poems to music:

18th Oct., 1905.

MY DEAR MRS. HOPEKIRK,

I was very pleased to hear from you again. I am busy with preparations for Italy, for the doctors say I should be away from our damp Scottish climate from October-end till Spring comes again. How far off it seems.... Spring! Do you long for it, do you love its advent, as I do? Wherever I am, St. Bride's Day is always for me the joy-festival of the year—the day when the real new year is born, and the three dark months are gone, and Spring leans across the often gray and wet, but often rainbow-lit, green-tremulous horizons of February. This year it seems a longer way off than hitherto, and yet it should not be so—for I go to Italy, and to friends, and to beautiful places in the sun, there and in Sicily, and perhaps in Algeria. But, somehow, I care less for these than I did a few years ago, than two or three years ago, than a year ago. I think outward change matters less and less as the imagination deepens and as the spirit more and more "turns westward." I love the South: and in much, and for much, am happy there: but as the fatally swift months slip into the dark I realise more and more that it is better to live a briefer while at a high reach of the spirit and the uplifted if overwrought physical part of one than to save the body and soothe the mind by the illusions of physical indolence and mental leisure afforded by long sojourns in the sunlands of the South....

How I wish I knew Loeffler and Debussy and others as you do: but then, though I love music, tho' it is one of the vital things in life for me, I am not a musician, alas. So even if I had all their music beside me it would be like a foreign language that must be read in translation. Do you realise—I suppose you do—how fortunate you are in being your own interpreter. Some day, however, I hope to know intimately all those wonderful settings of Verlaine and Baudelaire and Mallarmé and others. The verbal music of these is a ceaseless pleasure to me. I have a great love of and joy in all later French poetry, and

> can never understand common attitude to it here—either one of ignorance, or patronage, or complete misapprehension. Because of the obvious fact that French is not so poetic a language as English or German, in scale, sonority, or richness of vocabulary—it is, indeed, in the last respect the poorest I believe of all European languages as English is by far the richest—people, and even those who should be better informed, jump to the conclusion that therefore all French poetry is artificial or monotonously alike, or, at best, far inferior to English. So far as I can judge, finer poetry has been produced in France of late years than in England, and very much finer than any I know in Germany. However, the habitual error of judgment is mainly due to ignorance: that, and the all but universal unfamiliarity with French save in its conventional usage, spoken or written....

"Fiona" received that summer, from Mr. Yoni Noguchi, a volume entitled *From the Eastern Sea* by that Japanese author, and sent acknowledgment:

ON THE MEDITERRANEAN.

DEAR MR. NOGUCHI,

> Your note and delightful little book reached me, after considerable delay, in southern Europe. I write this at sea, and will send it with other letters, etc., to be stamped and posted in Edinburgh—and the two reasons of delay will show you that it is not from indolence!
>
> I have read your book with singular pleasure. What it lacks in form (an inevitable lack, in the circumstances) it offers in essential poetry. I find atmosphere and charm and colour and naïveté, and the true touch of the poet; and congratulate you on your 'success of suggestion' in a language so different in all ways from that wherein (I am sure) you have already achieved the 'success of finality.'

Believe me, yours very truly,
FIONA MACLEOD.

Later, Mr. Noguchi sent his subsequent book *The Summer Cloud*, a collection of short prose-poems, which, as he explained in his note of presentation: "In fact, I had been reading your prose-poems, *The Silence of Amor*, and wished I could write such pieces myself. And here is the result!"

It was our habit, when talking to one another of the "F. M." writings, to speak of "Fiona" as a separate entity—so that we should not be taken unawares if suddenly spoken to about 'her' books. It was William's habit also to write and post to himself two letters on his birthday—letters of admonition and of new resolutions. On the 12th Sep. 1905 he brought me the two birthday letters when they reached him, and gave them to me to read, saying, with a smile, "Fiona is rather hard on me, but she is quite right." Both letters are in his handwriting and are as follows:

GU FIONAGHAL NIC LEOID
SLIABHEAN N'AN AISLING
Y-Breasil (NA TIR-FO-TUINN)
AN DOMHAIN UAINE,
12th Sept., 1905.

DEAREST FIONA,

A word of loving greeting to you on the morrow of our new year. All that is best in this past year is due to *you*, mo caraid dileas: and I hope and believe that seeds have been sown which will be reborn in flower and fruit and may be green grass in waste places and may even grow to forests. I have not always your serene faith and austere eyes, dear, but I come to

much in and thro' my weakness as you through your strength. But in this past year I realise I have not helped you nearly as much as I could: in this coming year I pray, and hope, it may be otherwise. And this none the less tho' I have much else I want to do apart from *our* work. But we'll be one and the same *au fond* even then, shall we not, Fiona dear?

I am intensely interested in the fuller development of the Celtic Trilogy—and shall help in all ways. You say I can give you what you have not: well, I am glad indeed. Together we shall be good *Sowers*, Fionaghal mo rùn: and let us work contentedly at *that*. I wish you Joy and Sorrow, Peace, and Unrest, and Leisure, Sun, and Wind, and Rain, all of Earth and Sea and Sky in this coming year. And inwardly dwell with me, so that less and less I may fall short of your need as well as your ideal. And may our "Mystic's Prayer" be true for us both, who are one.

Ever yours, dear,

WILL.

12th Sept., 1905.

HILLS OF DREAM,
Y-BREASIL.

MY DEAR WILL,

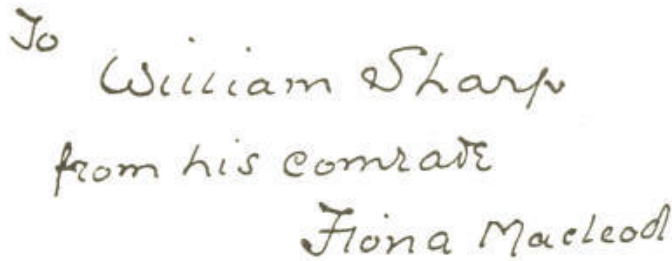
Another birthday has come, and I must frankly say that apart from the loss of another year, and from what the year has brought you in love and friendship and all that makes up life, it has not been to your credit. True, you have been in America and Italy and France and Scotland and England and Germany—and so have not been long settled anywhere—and true also that for a month or two you were seriously and for a few months partially ill or 'down'—but still, after all allowances, I note not only an extraordinary indolence in effort as well as unmistakable laziness in achievement. Now, either you are growing old (in which case admit dotage, and be done with it) or else you are permitting yourself to remain weakly in

futile havens of ignoble repose or fretful pseudo rest. You have much to do, or that you ought to do, yourself: and as to *our* collaboration I see no way for its continuance unless you will abrogate much of what is superfluous, curtail much that can quite well be curtailed, and generally serve me loyally as I in my turn allow for and serve *you*.

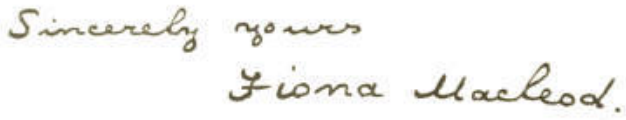
Let our New Year be a very different one from the last, dear friend: and let us not only beautifully dream but *achieve* in beauty. Let the ignoble pass, and the noble remain.

Lovingly yours, dear Will,

FIONA.



Some of his own copies of his F. M. books have an inscription to "W. S." from his twin self. For instance, his specially bound copy of *The Winged Destiny* bears this inscription in his handwriting: and is dated 12th Sept., 1904. But William did not write or sign his F. M. letters himself. When not typed by him, they were copied and signed for him by his sister Mary, in whose handwriting is the following signature—familiar to F. M.'s correspondents:



In the beginning of October we left London accompanied by Miss Mary Wilson and went to Venice by way of Zurich and Innsbruck. Then to Florence to stay with our friends Mr. and Mrs. Lee Hamilton, and finally, to Sicily.

Taormina was beautifully sunny and restful as of yore; and the delicate man rejoiced greatly in the beautiful gardens that the Duke of Bronte was designing and planting with flowers and trees, on the slopes of the hillside below the town.

A letter reached him there from Mr. Hichens:

ST. STEPHEN'S,
CANTERBURY.

OH, MY DEAR WILL,

I cannot help envying you. It is bitterly cold here, like winter, and neuralgia is flitting about my twitching face and shrinking head. But I will not inflict my little woes upon you, and only write this word to say I am sending you my book *The Black Spaniel*. It is a very slight and mixed affair this time —my last book of stories I think. The new novel I have some hopes of your liking, as I hope I have imprisoned something of our beloved Sicily in it. Now I am doing the last act—the last to be done, I mean, of my play for Wyndham. Yes, we will meet in Africa, if the gods are kind. I expect to leave England for Rome on Dec. 3. I am looking forward to Biskra immensely but must try to settle in there as *must* be working then.... How are you both? Happy in the sun? All blessings upon you and your work.

Ever yours affectionately,

ROBERTO.

It had been planned that after the New Year Mr. Hood, Mr. Hichens, my husband and I should go together to Biskra. But as the autumn waned, we realised the unwisdom of making any such plans. On hearing of our reluctant decision Mr. Hichens wrote:

Nov., 1905.

MY DEAR WILL,

Your letter was really a blow, but of course I thoroughly understand that you must not risk such a journey. I am grieved about your delicate health. You must take great care and stay in places where you can have your comforts. I wish Rome suited you both. I am suffering from London dyspepsia. Today there is a thick fog and I envy you all tremendously. I am counting the days till I can start for Rome. How is Taormina? Alec describes it as warm and splendid, and pretends that he needs a sun umbrella and a straw hat! Perhaps you are all bathing in the sea! Oh, these travellers' tales! I am going out to bathe in the fog, so au revoir. Love to you both, kindest regards to Etna from

Yours ever affectionately,

ROBERTO.

During one of our visits to Maniace Mr. Hichens was also a guest; on a subsequent visit to that lava-strewn country, on the great western slope of the shoulder of Etna, he wrote to me, in 1906, about my husband: "I have had many walks here with Will. I think my last long walk with him here was towards Maletto. We sat on a rock for a long while, looking at the snow on Ætna and the wild country all around. We talked about death, and he said he loved life but he did not fear death at all. I remember well how alive his eyes looked. He always had a very peculiar

look of life in the eyes, an unquenchable vitality."

On reaching Maniace W. S. wrote to a friend:

Dec. 4, 1905.

... As my card of yesterday will have told you we arrived here all right on Monday afternoon, after a wonderful journey. We left Taormina in a glory of midsummerlike warmth and beauty—and we drove down the three miles of winding road from Taormina to the sea at Giardini; thence past the bay and promontory of Naxos, and at the site of the ancient famous fane of Apollo Archagêtês turned inland. Then through the myriad lemon-groves of Al Cantara, till we crossed the gorges of the Fiumefreddo, and then began the long ascent, in blazing heat, by the beautiful hill road to the picturesque mountain-town of Piedemonte. There we caught the little circum-Ætnean mountain loop-line, and ascended the wild and beautiful slopes of Etna. Last time we went we travelled mostly above the clouds, but this time there was not a vestige of vapour in the radiant air, save for the outriders' trail of white, occasionally flame-coloured, smoke from the vast 4-mile wide mouth of snow-white and gigantically-looming cone of Etna. At the lofty mediæval and semi-barbaric town of Randazzo we were delayed by an excited crowd at the station, on account of the arrest and bringing in by the carabinieri of three chained and heavily manacled brigands, one of them a murderer, who evidently had the sympathy of the populace. A woman, the wife of one of the captured men, outdid any lamenting Irish woman I ever saw: her frenzy was terrible—and of course the poor soul was life-desolate and probably punished and would likely never see her man again. Finally she became distracted with despair and fury, and between her appeals and furious curses and almost maniacal lamentations, the small station was anything but an agreeable stopping place. The

captive brigands were absolutely impassive: not a glance: only, as the small train puffed onward, one of them lifted a manacled arm behind one of the carabinieri and made a singular sign to some one.



MRS. WILLIAM SHARP
From a photograph by T. Craig-Annan, 1909

> Thereafter we passed into the wild and terrible lava-lands of the last frightful eruption, between Randazzo and the frontier of the Duchy of Bronte: a region as wild and fantastic as anything imagined by Doré, and almost terrifying in its sombre deathfulness. The great and broad and sweeping mountains, and a mighty strath—and we came under the peaked rocks of Maletto, a little town standing 3000 feet high. Then the carriage, and the armed escort, and we had that wonderful drive thro' wild and beautiful lands of which I have heretofore written you. Then about four we drove up to the gates of the Castle, and passed into the great court just within the gates, and had the cordial and affectionate welcome of our dear host.
>
> A few minutes later we were no longer at an ancient castle in the wilds of Sicily, but in a luxurious English country house at afternoon tea....

My husband had taken with him, as material for the winter's work, his notes for the *Greek Backgrounds*, and the finished drafts of two dramas. One, by W. S., was to be called *Persephonœia, or the Drama of the House of Ætna*, and of it one act and one scene had been written at Maniace two years before. It was to have been dedicated to The Duke of Bronte. The other drama was Fiona's projected play *The Enchanted Valleys*, of which one scene only was written. But he felt unable for steady work, as the following letter to the same friend, shows:

> ... A single long letter means no work for me that day, and the need of work terribly presses, and in every way, alas. My hope that I might be able for some writing in the late afternoon, and especially from 5 to 7.30 is at present futile. I simply can't. Yesterday I felt better and more mentally alert than I've done since I came, and immediately after afternoon tea, I came to my study and tried to work,

but could not, though I had one of my nature articles begun and beside me: nor had I spirit to take up my reviews: then I thought I could at least get some of that wearisome accumulated correspondence worked off, but a mental nausea seized me, so that even a written chat to a friend seemed to me too exhausting. C'est cette maladie poignante, ce "degoût de la plume," que Tourgenieff (ou Flaubert?) parlait de son cœur frappé. So I collapsed, and dreamed over a strange and fascinating ancient-world book by Lichtenberger, and then dreamed idly, watching the flaming oak-logs."

In William's Diary for December there are the following entries:

1st. Friday. Wrote the short poem "When greenness comes again." Read Zola's wearisome "His Excellency Eugène Rougon," and in the evening the "Jupiter" and "Saturn" chapters in Proctor's "Otherworlds Than Ours."

2d. Saty. Read and took notes and thought out my Country Life article on "At the Turn of the Year." Also incidentally "The Clans of the Rush, the Reed, and the Fern," and one to be called "White Weather" (snow, the wild goose and the wild swan). Alec and I walked to the Boschetto. Began (about 1300 words) "At the Turn of the Year."

3rd. Sunday. A stormy and disagreeable day. Wrote long letters. In afternoon felt too tired and too sleepy to work or even to write letters: so sat before the fire in my study and partly over that fascinating book I love often to recur to for a few pages, Lichtenberger's *Centaures*, and partly in old dreams of my own, it was 7.30 and time to dress before I knew it. Heard today from Ernest Rhys about the production of his and Vincent Thomas' Opera *Guinevere*. Thought over an old world book to be called *Beyond the Foam*.

Dec. 4th. In the forenoon began again and wrote

first thousand words of “At the Turn of the Year.” At 3 went to drive with Elizabeth along the Balzo to near the Lake of Garrida.

Dec. 5. Tuesday. In forenoon wrote the remaining and large half of “At the Turn of the Year”: revised the whole of it and posted it to Mary, with long letter.

In afternoon a drive, despite the wet and inclement weather, up to Maletto. I walked back. A lovely, if unsettled sunset of blue and gold, purple brown, amethyst, and delicate cinnamon. A marvellous light on the hills. Luminous mist instead of cloud as of late. For the first time have seen the Sicilian Highlands with the beauty of Scotland.

From 10 till 11.30 P.M. worked at notes for “White Weather” article.

Dec. 6. Wed. In the forenoon worked at Gaelic material partly for articles, partly for other things. But not up to writing. There is a sudden change to an April-like heat: damply-hot; though fine: very trying, all feel it. After lunch walked up the north heights with Alec, then joined E. and D. L. in carriage and drove up past Otaheite to the Saw-Mills. Lovely air, gorgeous windy sky in the west, and superb but thunderous clouds in S. and E. Another bad change I fear. Etna rose gigantic as we ascended Otaheite-way, and from Serraspina looked like an immense Phantom with a vast plume of white smoke.

In afternoon (from 5.30 till 7.30) wrote 1200 words of “White Weather.”

Thursday. 7th. This morning fresh and bright and clear, a welcome change from these recent days—with the Beechwoods all frosted with snow. The Simeto swollen to a big rushing river.

Worked at and finished the latter part of “White Weather,” and then revised and sent off to Mary to forward with note to *Country Life*. Also other letters. Turned out the wettest and worst afternoon we’ve had yet, and return of severe thunderstorm.

> *Dec. 8. Friday.* A fine morning but very doubtful if yet settled. Went out and was taken by Beek to see the observatory instruments and wind-registers and seismographs. Then took the dogs for a walk, as "off" work today.
>
> Wrote a long letter to Robert Hichens, also to R. L. S. Also, with poem "When Greenness comes again" by W. S. to C. Morley *Pall Mall Magazine*. In afternoon we had a lovely drive up above the Alcantara Valley along the mountain road toward Cesaro."

And here the Diary ends, and here too ends the written work of a tired hand and brain, but of an eager outlooking spirit. Ever since we left London it was evident that his life forces were on the ebb-tide slowly but surely; and he knew it, but concerned himself little, and believed he had at any rate a few months before him and possibly a whole year. Yet he seemed to have an inner knowledge of what was to be. In Scotland, in the summer, he told me it would be his last visit there; that he knew it, and had said farewell to his mother. On the afternoon when we drove up to the Saw-Mills in the oak-woods he got out of the carriage and wandered among the trees. When I urged him to come away, as the light was waning rapidly, he touched the trees again and again and said, "Ah dear trees of the North, dear trees of the North, goodbye." The drive on the 8th, so beautiful, to him so full of fascination, was fatal to him. We drove far along a mountain pass and at the furthest point stopped to let him look at the superb sunset over against the hillset town of Cesaro.

He seemed wrapt in thought and looked long and steadfastly at the wonderful glowing light; it was with difficulty that I persuaded him to let us return. On the way back, a sudden turn of the road brought

us in face to the snow covered cone of Ætna. The wind had changed and blew with cutting cold straight off the snow. It struck him, chilling him through and through. Half way back he got out of the carriage to walk and get warm. But the harm was done. That evening, before dinner, he said to me: "I am going to talk as much as I can tonight. That dear fellow Alec is rather depressed. I've teased him a good deal today; now I am going to amuse him." He was as good as his word, anecdote, reminiscence, followed one another told in the gayest of spirits, and in saying goodnight to me our host declared, "I have never heard Will more brilliant than he has been tonight."

The next morning my husband complained of pain which grew rapidly more severe. The doctor was sent for, and remained in the house.

On the morning of the 12th—a day of wild storm, wind, thunder and rain—he recognised that nothing could avail. With characteristic swiftness he turned his eager mind from the life that was closing to the life of greater possibilities that he knew awaited him. About 3 o'clock, with his devoted friend Alec Hood by his side, he suddenly leant forward with shining eyes and exclaimed in a tone of joyous recognition, "Oh, the beautiful 'Green Life' again!" and the next moment sank back in my arms with the contented sigh, "Ah, all is well."

On the 14th, in an hour of lovely sunshine, the body was laid to rest in a little woodland burial-ground on the hillside within sound of the Simeto; as part of the short service, his own "Invocation to Peace," from *The Dominion of Dreams*, was read over the grave by the Duke of Bronte. Later, an Iona cross, carved in lava, was placed there, and on it this inscription, chosen by himself:

Farewell to the known and exhausted,
Welcome the unknown and illimitable

and

Love is more great than we conceive, and Death is the keeper of unknown redemptions.

F. M.

Now, truly, is Dreamland no longer a phantasy of sleep, but a loveliness so great that, like deep music, there could be no words wherewith to measure it, but only the breathless unspoken speech of the soul upon whom has fallen the secret dews.

F. M.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONCLUSION

"How the man subdivided his soul is the mystery," wrote Mr. James Douglas. And in trying to suggest an answer I would say with "F. M."—"I write, not because I know a mystery and would reveal it, but because I have known a mystery, and am to-day as a child before it, and can neither reveal nor interpret it." For that mystery concerns the evolution of a human soul; and the part of it for which 'the man' is consciously and personally responsible, is the method he used, the fiction he created and deliberately fostered,—rightly or wrongly—for the protection of his inner, compelling self.

This deliberate 'blind'—which according to some critics "is William Sharp's most notable achievement in fiction rather than the creation of any of 'her' works"—is largely the cause of the sense of confusion that exists in the minds of certain of his friends, to whom he told the half but not the whole of the facts. He purposely did not dispel the idea of a collaborator, an idea which grew out of the half veiled allusions he had made concerning the friend of whom I have written, whose vivid personality appealed so potently to a phase of his complex

nature, and stirred his imagination as no one else had done.

In a letter to Mr. W. B. Yeats signed “Fiona Macleod,” and written in 1899, about herself and her friend (namely himself) William tried “as far as is practicable in a strange and complex manner to be explicit.” ‘She’ stated that, “all the formative and expressional as well as nearly all the visionary power is my friends. In a sense only his is the passive part, but it is the allegory of the match, the wind, and the torch. Everything is in the torch in readiness, and as you know, there is nothing in the match itself. But there is a mysterious latency of fire between them ... the little touch of silent igneous potency at the end of the match—and in what these symbolise, one adds spiritual affinity as a factor—and all at once the flame is born. The torch says all is due to the match. The match knows the flame is not hers. But beyond both is the wind, the spiritual air. Out of the unseen world it fans the flame. In that mysterious air both the match and the flame hear strange voices. The air that came at the union of both is sometimes Art, sometimes Genius, sometimes Imagination, sometimes Life, sometimes the Spirit. It is all.

“But before that flame people wonder and admire. Most wonder only at the torch. A few look for the match beyond the torch, and finding her are apt to attribute to her that which is not hers, save as a spiritual dynamic agent. Now and then the match may have *in petto* the qualities of the torch—particularly memory and vision: and so can stimulate and amplify the imaginative life of the torch. But the torch is at once the passive, the formative, the mnemonic, and the artistically and imaginatively creative force. He knows that in one sense he would be flameless or at least without that ideal blend of

the white and the red—without the match: and he knows that the flame is the offspring of both, that the wind has many airs in it, and that one of the most potent is that which blows from the life and mind and soul of 'the match'—but in his heart he knows that, to all others, he and he alone is the flame, his alone both the visionary, the formative, the expressional."

At the last, realising with deep regret that one or two of the friends he cared greatly for would probably feel hurt when they should know of the deception, he left the following note to be sent to each immediately on the disclosure of the secret:

> "This will reach you after my death. You will think I have wholly deceived you about Fiona Macleod. But, in an intimate sense this is not so: though (and inevitably) in certain details I have misled you. Only, it is a mystery. I cannot explain. Perhaps you will intuitively understand or may come to understand. "The rest is silence." Farewell.
>
> WILLIAM SHARP.
>
> It is only right, however, to add that I, and I only, was the author—in the literal and literary sense—of all written under the name of "Fiona Macleod."

In watching the development of the "Fiona Macleod" phase of expression it has seemed to me that the writer, in that work, lived a new sequent life, and passed through its successive phases of growth and development independently of the tenor of his ordinary life as "W. S." He passed from the youth in *Pharais* and *The Mountain Lovers*, through the mature manhood of *The Barbaric Tales and Tragic Romances* to the greater serenity of later contemplative life in *The Divine Adventure*, *The Winged Destiny* and *Where the Forest Murmurs*.

In surveying the dual life as a whole I have seen how, from the early partially realised twin-ship, "W. S." was the first to go adventuring and find himself, while his twin, "F. M.," remained passive, or a separate self. When "she" awoke to active consciousness "she" became the deeper, the more impelling, the more essential factor. By reason of this severance, and of the acute conflict that at times resulted therefrom, the flaming of the dual life became so fierce that "Wilfion"—as I named the inner and third Self that lay behind that dual expression—realised the imperativeness of gaining control over his two separated selves and of bringing them into some kind of conscious harmony. This was what he meant when he wrote to Mrs. Janvier in 1899, "I am going through a new birth."

For, though the difference between the two literary expressions was so marked, there was, nevertheless, a special characteristic of "Wilfion" that linked the dual nature together—the psychic quality of seership if I may so call it. Not only did he, as F. M. "dream dreams" and "get in touch with the ancient memory of the race" as some of 'her' critics have said; but as W. S. he also saw visions by means of that seership with which he had been dowered from childhood. And though, latterly, he gave expression to it only under shelter of the Fiona Macleod writings—as for instance in *The Divine Adventure*, because he was as sensitive about it as he was to the subtler, more imaginative side of his dual self—a few of his friends knew William Sharp as psychic and mystic, who knew nothing of him as Fiona Macleod.

I have said little concerning my husband as a psychic; a characteristic that is amply witnessed to in his writings. From time to time he interested himself

in definite psychic experimentation, occasionally in collaboration with Mr. W. B. Yeats; experimentation that sometimes resulted in such serious physical disturbance that he desisted from it in later years.

In a lecture given by Mr. Yeats to the Aberdeen Centre of the Franco-Scottish Society in 1907 the Irish poet referred to his friend. He considered that "Sharp had in many ways an extraordinarily primitive mind. He was fond of speaking of himself as the representative of the old bards," and the Irish poet thought there was really something in the claim. (In a letter Mr. Yeats had expressed his opinion that my husband was imaginative in "the old and literal sense of image-making; not like a man of this age at all.") He continued that W. S. was the most extraordinary psychic he had ever encountered. He really believed that "Fiona Macleod was a secondary personality—as distinct a secondary personality as those one reads about in books of psychical research. At times he (W. S.) was really to all intents and purposes a different being." He would "come and sit down by my fireside and talk, and I believe that when 'Fiona Macleod' left the house he would have no recollection of what he had been saying to me."

It is true, as I have said, that William Sharp seemed a different person when the Fiona mood was on him; but that he had no recollection of what he said in that mood was not the case. That he did not understand it, is true. For that mood could not be commanded at will. Different influences awakened it, and its duration depended largely on environment. "W. S." could set himself deliberately to work normally, and was, so far, master of his mind. But for the expression of the "F. M." self he had to wait upon mood, or seek conditions to induce it. But, as I have

said, the psychic, visionary power belonged exclusively to neither; it influenced both, and was dictated by laws he did not fully understand. For instance, “Lilith,” “The Whisperer,” “Finis,” by W. S. and “The Woman with the Net,” “The Last Supper,” “The Lynn of Dreams” by F. M., were equally the result of direct vision.

I remember from early days how he would speak of the momentary curious “dazzle in the brain” which preceded the falling away of all material things and preluded some inner vision of Great Beauty, or Great Presences, or of some symbolic import—that would pass as rapidly as it came. I have been beside him when he has been in trance and I have felt the room throb with heightened vibration. I regret now that I never wrote down such experiences at the time. They were not infrequent, and formed a definite feature in our life. There are, however, two or three dream-visions belonging to his last summer that I recollect. Two he had noted down in brief sentences for future use. One was:

“The Lily of the World, and its dark concave, dark with excess of light and the stars falling like slow rain.”

The other is headed “Elemental Symbolism,” “I saw Self, or Life, symbolised all about me as a limitless, fathomless and lonely sea. I took a handful and threw it into the grey silence of ocean air, and it returned at once as a swift and potent flame, a red fire crested with blown sunrise, rushing from between the lips of sky and sea to the sound as of innumerable trumpets.”

One morning he told me that during sleep he had visited a city of psychic mechanism. In a huge building he had seen this silent mechanism at work; he had watched a force plunge into molten metal and

produce a shaped vessel therefrom. He could see nothing that indicated by what power the machinery was driven. He asked his guide for explanation, and he was led along passages to a small room with many apertures in the walls, like speaking tubes. In the centre was a table, on a chair sat a man with his arm on the table, his head in his hand. Pointing to him the guide said "His thought is the motive force."

In another dream he visited a land where there was no more war, where all men and women were equal; where humans, birds and beasts were no longer at enmity, or preyed on one another. And he was told that the young men of the land had to serve two years as missionaries to those who lived at the uttermost boundaries. "To what end?" he asked. "To cast out fear, our last enemy." The dream is too long to quote in its entirety, for it spread over two nights, but one thing impressed him greatly. In the house of his host he was struck by the beauty of a framed painting that seemed to vibrate with rich colour. "Who painted that?" he asked. "His host smiled, "We have long ceased to use brushes and paints. That is a thought projected from the artist's brain, and its duration will be proportionate with its truth."

Once again he saw in waking vision those Divine Forges he had sought in childhood. On the verge of the Great Immensity that is beyond the confines of space, he saw Great Spirits of Fire standing at flaming anvils. And they lifted up the flames and moulded them on the anvils into shapes and semblances of men, and the Great Spirits took these flaming shapes and cast them forth into space, so that they should become the souls of men.

He was, as Mrs. Mona Caird has truly said of him, "almost encumbered by the infinity of his perceptions; by the thronging interests, intuitions,

glimpses of wonders, beauties and mysteries which made life for him a pageant and a splendour such as is only disclosed to the soul that has to bear the torment and the revelations of genius. He had much to suffer, but in spite of that—perhaps partly because of that—he was able to bring to all a great sense of sunshine and boyish freshness, of joy in life and nature and art, and in the adventure and romance of it all, for those who knew how to dare enough to go to meet it with open hands. He gave ever the sense of new power, new thresholds, new realms. His friendship was a spiritual possession." And though indeed, as Mr. Frank Rinder has written "there may be those inclined to censure William Sharp for his silence about Fiona Macleod, yet, probably, had the world known, 'she'—for in thought it is always that —would have written no more. May we not remember Ossian and others who shrank from revealing to all their secret?... I can but bear testimony to the ever-ready and eager sympathy, to the sunny winsomeness, to the nobility of the soul that has passed. William Sharp was one of the most lovable, one of the most remarkable men of our time."

And, I would add,—to quote my husband's own words—ever, below all the stress and failure, below all the triumph of his toil, lay the beauty of his dream.

To live in beauty—which is to put into four words all the dream and spiritual effort of the soul of man.

F. M.

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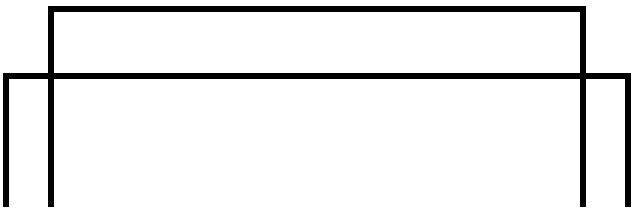
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IN COLLABORATION WITH MRS. WILLIAM SHARP

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] Thoreau and Hawthorne.

[2] D. G. Rossetti.

[3] The essay prefaces a selection of M. A.'s poems published in the Canterbury Series (Walter Scott).

[4] The Divine Adventure.

[5] The little daughter of our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Tomson.

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