

VOLUME 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 Fountain 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.

WILLIAM SHARP

(FIONA MACLEOD)

A MEMOIR

VOLUME I

WILLIAM SHARP

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(WILLIAM SHARP)

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(FIONA MACLEOD)

Compiled by MRS. WILLIAM SHARP  
(In two volumes)

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN



WILLIAM SHARP

After an etching by William Strang, A.R.A.

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# WILLIAM SHARP

(FIONA MACLEOD)

## A MEMOIR

COMPILED BY HIS WIFE

ELIZABETH A. SHARP

VOLUME I



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## 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 having assumed it, had 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 have 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



## Preface

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

## *Preface*

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 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 ab-

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sence 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. Of the two portraits of William Sharp, herein reproduced, I am indebted to our friend Mr. William Strang, A. R. A., for his kind permission to reproduce his etched portrait of my husband. The frontispiece to Volume II is from a photograph taken in Sicily in 1903, by the Hon. Alexander Nelson Hood, when we were on a visit to him in his Duchy of Bronte.

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VOLUME I

WILLIAM SHARP



# William Sharp

## 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.”



## *William Sharp*

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

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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, humorous 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

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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

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'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.

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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 in 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

## *Childhood*

winding loch, were a ceaseless delight to the boy. But above all else he felt 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 play-mates, visible to him. "I went there very often," he wrote to me 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

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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

## *Childhood*

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 elder brother. My mother was the daughter of Robert Farquharson, of Breda and Allargue. In 1863 my Uncle David had a house at Blairmore on Loch Long 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



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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 had imagined must be as obvious to others as to himself. He could

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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 frequently 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 there developed in him a love not only of mystery for its own sake, but of mystification also that became a marked characteristic and, eventually, 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

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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 "Banmorair-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

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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 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

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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 unequal 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 down hill before me a large

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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

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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

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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 fire-side 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. . . ." On Loch Long, close to Ardentinny, there was a point of waste land running into the water, frequently used as a camping ground by roving tinkers and gipsies. Many a time he sailed there in his boat to get in touch with these wandering folk. One summer he found there an encampment of true gipsies, who had



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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 those memories into a sequent romance, though in later time he thought of so doing. For one thing, the present was always the absorbing

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actuality to him, and the future a dream to realise; whether in life or in work the past was past, therefore 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." He also 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

*William Sharp*

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 was 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

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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. Macclure and Hanney, lawyers, in Glasgow, where he remained till his health broke down and he was sent on a voyage to Australia. It was soon evident that he would never be a

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shining light in the legal profession: his chief interest still lay in his private studies and his early efforts in literature. In order to find time for all he wished to do, and to gratify 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 infinite; 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 Roslyn Terrace, Glas-

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gow, 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 that all our relations would be unanimous in disapproval.

Instead of going to the lawyer's office one morning my cousin took an early train to 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 rela-

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tions 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



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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 καλον,” 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 di-

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verse 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 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:

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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

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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

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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 — in 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 au-

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tumn 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 to my mother by an old relative: "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."

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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 his first novel, *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 an 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 Holtham, 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 funereal procession of lofty blue-gums, and mournful stringy bark. Day by day we saw the sun

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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 hosts 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."



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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. He continues:

“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 the 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

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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 oppor-

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tunity to introduce him to my special friends, while my mother made him known to whomsoever 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. She and I 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 remain-

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der 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

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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, asked for a criticism and hoped 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 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 af-

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terward 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.

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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 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.

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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 my 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:



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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

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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 first met Mr. John Elder, whom I had known from childhood. John was a graduate of Cambridge, a thinker and a 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.

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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 snowflakes, calming and soothing all into peace; and again, it may be, it appears as a dark thundercloud, 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

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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

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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 the 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

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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

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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 in 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

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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.



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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 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. In him 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.

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“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

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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 the 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

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that grew to a deep affectionate devotion on the side of the younger man.

Rossetti took him into his 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

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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; 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 to Rossetti:

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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—why, 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

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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



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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,

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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 visit him again.

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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)

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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 a sonnet was written that satisfied his critic and was 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 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 the poem. If the very

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Jew in question, how he is 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 god-mother. 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

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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

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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 Poets*:

"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

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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, but his is still unfinished.

It is in great part owing to his generously



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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 associa-

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tion 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

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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?’

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“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 poly 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 im-

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purity, 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

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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 had 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

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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 *unknown* 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

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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 with 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



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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 *cinquecenti* 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

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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 Johnson, 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

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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 litera-

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ture — 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 wall-flowers, with a large yellow heart of daffodils, to cheer

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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 thralldom 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, has 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

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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 unpopular with 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; 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

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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 acquaintance 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

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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. 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 inspire either of us.

At the end of August in that year his con-



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nection 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 tomorrow.’ 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

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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

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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 re-

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joicing. 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?"

10 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 shadows 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

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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

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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

O wee drappie Talisker.

Callipee Broth. \_\_\_\_\_ Hotch Potch.

Saumon à la Pottit Heed. Pomphlet à la Newhaven.

\_\_\_\_\_

Anither Drappie.

\_\_\_\_\_

Mince Collops. \_\_\_\_\_ Doo Tairt.

\_\_\_\_\_

Haggis.

\_\_\_\_\_

An Eek.

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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 Sas-senach 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



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pushing him into the one career suited to him, even if the method seemed too drastic at times.

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 in 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

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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 :

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“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 seawrack 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.

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While we were enjoying it Rossetti, having overheard an exclamation of almost rapturous delight from Christina, rose from his great arm-chair 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.' "

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To E. A. S.:

II: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 Ros-

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setti 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

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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.”

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To Mr. W. M. Rossetti:

13 THORNGATE ROAD,  
SUTHERLAND GARDENS, W.,  
15 April, 1882.

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 ebb'd 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.



## *William Sharp*

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. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: a Record and a Study* 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

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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.

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(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

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Browning, that he wrote to that poet, then in Florence, for confirmation. 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

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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."

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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 done under difficult conditions, that the author "has approached his task with truest enthusiasm and perseverance that nothing can daunt; and by reason of his friendship he has unusual insight into the history and work of Rossetti." In after years the author realised to what extent his enthusiasm had biased his judgment. Only three letters are in my possession of the many he received from friends of his own, or of the dead poet; one is from Christina Rossetti, and two are from Walter Pater with whom he had recently become acquainted.

30 TORRINGTON SQUARE.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

Thank you with warm thanks from my

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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,

CHRISTIANA G. ROSSETTI.

The following letter from Pater 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

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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



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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 yes-

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terday. 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 esteem 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 was William Sharp's intention to rewrite

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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 written the dedicatory chapter; but the book itself was untouched save one or two opening sentences. 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 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

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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

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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.’

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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 closed 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

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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 . . .

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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 Study 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



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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

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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

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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 that year, and

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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. James 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 whis-

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pered 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 to him 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

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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  
A King of Thought, whose spotless reign  
One great and true and nobly wise—  
And now at length beside them lies\*

\* Thoreau and Hawthorne.

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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 last 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



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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.

### *First Visit to Italy*

“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. . . .

“I admired some frescoes by Fillipino Lippi

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— also those in the Choir by Ghirlandajo: 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-

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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 grey 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 one monument only, 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

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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

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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

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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,

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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 interior 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



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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

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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 bleat-

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ing of distant sheep, the cries of the cliff hawks, and the wavering echoes of waterfalls: or, if in 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

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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,

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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

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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 tent-wise, 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

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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 Mar-emma) 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

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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 repellent in its



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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 grey 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,

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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 grey 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,

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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

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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 repellent, 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

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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 compar-

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ison with many others better known or more talked about. After having seen 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, Mount 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

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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

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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



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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 myself — 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.

By 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 on 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

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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

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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 unfailling fascination for Marston.

“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

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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 con-

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temporary 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 dare say 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

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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 see 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 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 Emile 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

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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 1907 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,

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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 re-



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sumes 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 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 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.’

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“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 *Sospitira*. Also, I prefer the *Transcripts from Nature*, to the various poems included in *Earth’s Voices*, admirable as I think

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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

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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 regrets 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. . . .

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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), 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 inter-

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ested 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:

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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.

## CHAPTER VI

### SONNETS OF THE 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 Athenæum* and other weeklies.

On the appearance in *The Athenæum* 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 Athenæum* with very real pleasure; feeling criticism, at once so independent and so sympathetic, to



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be a reward for all the long labours the book has cost me. You seem to me to have struck a note of 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.

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

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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-Dunton had frequently spoken to us about a romance he had in hand, and partly in print. After much persuasion he sent several chapters of his romance *Aylwin* to us during our summer

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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.

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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 Quincy 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

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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

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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 any-

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thing told by Henry 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

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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 Williams 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



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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

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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."

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The occasion of his visit to Mr. Ernest Rhys was in connection with a scheme for the publication of a 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 to be a companion series to *The Canterbury Poets* which originally was edited by Joseph Skipsey, the miner poet of Northumberland, and afterwards by William Sharp. For the Prose Series William Sharp prepared a Selection of Alan Cunningham's *Great English Painters* (1885) and De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater* (1886). For a third series — Biographies of *Great Writers* edited by Eric S. Robertson and Frank T. Marzials, 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: his edition of *Shakespeare's Songs and Sonnets* (1885), his anthologies of *Sonnets of the Nineteenth Century* (1886); *American Sonnets* (1889) and *Great Odes* (1890); and he also wrote prefaces for P. B. Marston's *Song-Tide* (1887) and E. Lee-Hamilton's

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*Poems* (1903). In preparing the Edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets he consulted J. A. Symonds 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)

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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.

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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 — *futo* (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 J. A. 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

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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 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-

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known English sonnet writers from which I select four. The first is from the Irish poet Aubrey de Vere; in the second 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



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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. . . .

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

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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.

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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. In  
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

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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

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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 mark 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

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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

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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 snap-shots; 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.

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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



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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

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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 Iffley 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 the Nineteenth 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

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appeals from budding poets, from ambitious and wholly ignorant would-be sonneteers, who sent sheaves 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 correspondent 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

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my husband's intentions and efforts in that direction were admirable, their practical qualities ended there! Yet for 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 grey 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

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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. He did not gain the prize, but the story ran serially through *The People's Friend* in 1887 under the title of "A Deathless Hate" and in the same year it was published by Messrs. Hurst and Blackett in three volumes and entitled *The Sport of Chance*. The scene is laid in Scotland and in Australia, with a prologue dealing with Cornwall, where the author had once spent a few days in order to act as best man to one of his fellow-passengers on the sailing ship that had 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

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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

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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



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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 Sharps" — 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.

Your ever, my dear Eric,  
W. S.

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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:

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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

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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 sun-

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shine. 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*: "He

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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 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

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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. One or two of the popular novelists and essayists of to-day received their first literary 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.

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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



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the older romance as Gabriel\* 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* ran serially through *The People's Friend*, under the title of “A Deathless Hate.” The writing of it had incited the author to attempt a sensational story for boys for *Young Folk's Paper*; and in the Christmas number of that weekly (1886) there appeared the first instalment of “Jack Noel's Legacy.” This story was followed at intervals by others, such as “Under the Banner of St. James, a tale of the Conquest of Peru,” 1887, “The Secret of the Seven Fountains,” 1888. 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

\* D. G. Rossetti.

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younger man from across the seas as his "English son." In an article on "British Song" in Stedman's *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 Rossetti 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 pleas-

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ant 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

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“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

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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), 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

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laws, with his belief in the sanctity of passion when called forth by high and true emotion. He explained:

“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 idio-syncratic 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

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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 re-

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ceived 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, PRES 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.



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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.

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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.

## CHAPER 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 Plantasy* was published in the spring of 1888 (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*

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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

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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, slays 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

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“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

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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 it 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 Poets* — a volume of selected Odes, and one of American Sonnets, to which he contributed prefaces — and writing critical

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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.



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

After the appearance of the review of *Underwoods*, Stevenson wrote again:

R. L. S. SARANAC, NEW YORK.

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 black-bird (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.

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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.

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 præterea 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

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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

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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; Rich-

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ard 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, the novelist, 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 Roussel was an ever welcome guest. Sir George Douglas came now and again from Kelso; Charles Mavor, editor of *The Art Review*, ran down occasion-

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ally 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

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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 were 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 one of the many potent factors in altering the attitude of the public mind in its approach to and examination of such questions, and 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

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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 that 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



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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 George Meredith:

3 ST. EDMUND'S TERRACE,  
NOV. II, 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

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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, 1888.

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 — draw 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 on Earth" on the 18th I may expect it. Otherwise you

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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

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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,

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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

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one of adventure, of life seen from a purely objective point of view. *The Children of Tomorrow* 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

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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, perplexed 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 way-

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wardness 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:

I 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



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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

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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

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Caine, Sir George Douglas, Aubrey De Vere, Mrs. Augusta Webster. When, however, the date of election drew near, on the advice of his doctor he withdrew his candidature. The question, to him, had throughout 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 had contemplated a visit to the United States, where he was well known as poet and critic, and had many friendly correspondents. He considered the moment to be opportune; and although he was forbidden to lecture, he decided to go. Opportunely, our friend Mrs. Caird had 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,

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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 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

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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) humorous 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

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lakes: and he has arranged for a three days' moose-hunt later on 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 in-

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finite 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 tomorrow. 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 de-



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cayed 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 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

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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 multi-

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tudes 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 cariño.'"

On leaving New York William wrote to his kind host:

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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.

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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

### *First Visit to America*

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,

*William Sharp*

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 gatherings, and among other frequenters came Mr. and Mrs. Henry Harland, with an introduction from 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 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 moc-casins 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

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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 1889 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 Vene-

### *Browning*

tian 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 waterways 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."

William Sharp

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

## Browning

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 over-sea. 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 it being carefully continued throughout the months, an intention, however, that inevitably was abandoned

William Sharp

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 sévère 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. “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*).

## Browning

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

*William Sharp*

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

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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. 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.



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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 Elegiac 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.”

. . . . .

William 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

## *Browning*

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.

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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 din-

## *Browning*

ner 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." (The selection of Great Odes in the *Canterbury Poets*.)

In evening wrote six pp. 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 quotations, 21.

Here the Diary abruptly ends. I do not remember on what date the monograph on *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—from the time we gave up the house in Goldhurst Terrace he never gave it a thought. It was characteristic of

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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 of 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 zest 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

## *Browning*

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. 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. Therefore 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."

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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

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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*

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

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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 William 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 Walter Severn, the painter, walked over to luncheon. He spoke about my husband's Study on Rossetti, then of the quantity of unpublished MSS. he and his family possessed 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,

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his father's devoted friendship with and care of the dying poet. After considerable deliberation, my husband 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, whom he visited at Coniston later, 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 Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* 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

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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, Rus-

*William Sharp*

sia 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, Württemberg, 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 ani-

## *Browning*

mated 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 Württemberg and rejoices in the title 'Frau Hof-Arzt von Teuffel.' Dr. von Teuffel himself is one of the few Germans who seems 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  $3\frac{1}{2}$  rooms, within a yard or so of the summit of the Quirinal Hill. The  $\frac{1}{2}$  is a small furnished corridor or ante-room: the comfortable *salotto*, is at once our study, drawing-room, and parlour.

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“ We have our coffee and our fruit in the morning: and when we are in for lunch our old landlady gives us delightful collazioni 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

## Browning

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 described 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 warning 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



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were never realised. William constantly projected and roughly drafted out possible work that absorbed him during its conception, but that later 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 when

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the poems of *Sospiri di Roma* were written. From it I have selected the following entries:

*Jan. 2nd.* . . . Read through and revised "Bacchus in India." Added the (I think good) adjective "sunsparkled 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. Marino 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

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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

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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

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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-

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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.

*Jan. 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

## Rome

separate fashion. The sheep and disconsolate shepherds on one high heathy 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 whirl-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!



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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 light."

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.

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*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's En Amérique*. The bookseller said he neither had the book nor had he heard of it: but 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. . . . Delighted 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.

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*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

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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 them-

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selves 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 "Sirocco" (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

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worth while 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 Argo Romans" (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 Ib-

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sen's "Rosmersholm" for Y. F. P. Wrote "Spuma dal Mare" (41 lines).

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 slant-  
wise,  
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,  
Scirocco 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 Società Laziale, who will take them out to

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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 Lune" (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 to-day. 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 there could superintend 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



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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 for a 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

## Rome

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

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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 Società 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,

Rome

in acknowledgment of the privately printed 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

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identify myself with this joy in the beauty of the world which bubbles up fountain-like 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.

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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

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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!"

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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



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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 gorgeously, 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 hillslopes 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:

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some peasants singing in the valley as they trimmed the vines: and the just audible susurrus 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

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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

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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 acquaintance-ship. . . . 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—

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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 de-

## Rome

cided 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

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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. Siwäärmill. 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.

*Rome*

Siwäärmill) 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 waning 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, paralyzing,

*Walt Whitman*

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

William Sharp

visit. In a letter to Mrs. Janvier, announcing his projected visits, 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

*Walt Whitman*

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

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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 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.

Walt Whitman

Palmer "the leading theatrical Boss in the States to sell to him the rights of his play on 'A Fellowe and his Wife,'" a proposal which he declined.

After his return to England he wrote to Thomas A. Janvier from Paris:

"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

*William Sharp*

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 in 7th 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

Walt Whitman

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



William Sharp

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.

P. S.—Tell K. that when I have "reformed" I'll write to her. Don't let her be

*Walt Whitman*

impertinent, and say that this promise will be fulfilled *ad Græcas Kalendas!*

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 aboard 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).

*William Sharp*

(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 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

*Walt Whitman*

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,

*William Sharp*

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

### *Walt Whitman*

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 went to Bayreuth. In August we settled near Rudgwick, in the little eight-roomed cottage, with its little porch, orchard and garden, and small lawn with a chestnut tree in its midst. We re-

*William Sharp*

mained 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*.]

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*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 in 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 be-



*William Sharp*

lieve that, with the blessēd 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

## Walt Whitman

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

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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 re-incarnation 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

## Walt Whitman

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,

William Sharp

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

*Walt Whitman*

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:

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!

*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 persual 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 definitely reformed

*Walt Whitman*

— 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.

P. S. 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 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.



*William Sharp*

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

*Walt Whitman*

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

*William Sharp*

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, with ourselves, my sister-in-law Mary and Mr. Stanley Little as mourners. The Review was buried in a corner of the garden; 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, and thus procure sufficient money to enable us to cross to North Africa. "The Red Rider" appeared in *The Weekly*

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*Budget* (1892), "The Last of the Vikings" in *Old and Young* (1893), and both stories were crowded with startling adventures. The weaving of sensational plots offered no difficulties to him, but were 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 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,

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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 hardest 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 Scot-

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land 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

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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 splen-



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dour of the sun-swept 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 sun-flood! 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-

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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 Sahara. It has cool corridors, with arched alcoves, on both sides, so that at any time of

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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 popula-

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tion 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 ere long 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, tom-toms, and nameless instruments, and the strange wild haunting chanting of the ecstasies and fanatics. I went

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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, at the shriek of an Arab fanatic, and with outstretched hands and arms cursed the *Giaour-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, til 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 —”

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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!”

*William Sharp*

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.

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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. Streatfeild, 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 Dairy 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:



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first for three weeks to St. Andrew's: then to Mrs. Glassford Bell 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

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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 Sonnenschein & 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 I 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*, though out nearly fully, which I would like

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to make my *chef d'œuvre*. In all, I have actually on hand eight books, and innumerable stories, articles, etc.

“The things first to be done now are

“Books 1 Finish new Life of Rossetti

2 Finish Pharaïs

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: Tlemçen: 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

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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 had read 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

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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 VOLUME ONE