

LIFE: 1882-1884

In 1882 Sharp decided his best hope was a concentrated effort to make a living by writing. In March, he accepted an invitation to visit Rossetti in Birchington. A week after he returned to London, Rossetti died. Deeply affected by the loss of his friend and mentor, Sharp also lamented the absence of his best critic and his chief entry into the literary life of London. Attempting to turn deprivation to gain, he accepted, in June, an invitation from Macmillan and Company to write a biography of Rossetti. Thus began his first attempt at a lengthy work in prose. During the summer, while staying with his mother and sisters at a cottage in Clynder on the Gare-loch, Sharp completed two-thirds of the manuscript. He finished it in the fall after returning to London, and *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Record and A Study* was published in December. The book was widely read, and its generally favorable reception provided a significant boost to Sharp's literary career.

His first book of poems, *The Human Inheritance; The New Hope; Motherhood*, also appeared in 1882, published by Elliott Stock. According to Elizabeth, he considered this book "the beginning of the true work of his life." As suggested by the title, it consists of three long poems. The first, "The Human Inheritance," contains four sections which depict, in turn, childhood, youth, manhood/womanhood, and old age. "The New Hope" forecasts a spiritual regeneration of the world; and "Motherhood" attempts to demonstrate — by depicting the experience of giving birth — commonality of experience among all living creatures. 1882 also saw the publication of separate Sharp poems in the *Athenaeum*, the *Portfolio*, the *Academy*, *Harper's*, and the *Art Journal*.

In February 1883, Sharp went to Italy where he stayed first with one of Elizabeth's aunts in her villa on the outskirts of Florence. In Venice, he met Ouida and William Dean Howells and formed a close friendship with John Addington Symonds. He spent time in Siena before going on to Rome where he stayed until July. The focus of his Italian experience, which he chronicled in a series of letters to Elizabeth, was the churches and galleries containing famous works of art. Back in London, he wrote a series of articles for the *Glasgow Herald* on Itrurian cities. In August, he went to Scotland and stayed with his mother and sisters at Inellan on the Clyde. While there, he paid a brief visit to the well known artist Noel Paton on Arran, went to Mull, crossed over to Iona, and visited several islands in Loch Fyne. In September, the *Glasgow Herald*, probably on the strength of his Italian articles, invited him to become its London-based art critic, a post he held for many years before turning it over to Elizabeth. Returning to London in the fall, he rented rooms at 13 Thorngate Road, Sutherland Gardens, and continued to place poetry and prose pieces in *Good Words*, the *Fortnightly Review*, *Cassell's Magazine*, and the *Literary World*.

During the early part of 1884, Sharp prepared his second book of poems, *Earth's Voices*, which was published by Elliott Stock in June. In the spring he spent some time in Dover and then went on to Paris to review the salons for the *Glasgow Herald*. On this, his

first visit to Paris as an art critic, he met many writers and artists, among them Paul Bourget, Madame Blavatsky, Alphonse Dudet, Emile Zola, Frederic Mistral, Adolphe Bougereau, Fernand Cormin, Puvis de Chavannes, and Jules Breton. On October 31st, after a nine-year courtship, Elizabeth and William Sharp were married at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, London. They rented lodgings at 46 Talgarth Road, West Kensington, continued to make their way as writers, and expanded their acquaintanceships in literary and artistic circles.

LETTERS: 1882-1884

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, February 13, 1882¹

Feb. 13, 1882.

Just a line to tell you I am supremely content. Beautiful sea views, steep ‘cavey’ cliffs, a delicious luxurious house, and nice company. By a curious mistake I got out at the wrong place on Sunday, and had a long walk with my bag along the cliffs till I arrived rather tired and hot at my destination. I was surprised not to find Hall Caine there, but it appeared he clearly understood I was to get out at a different station altogether. I was also delayed in arriving, as I asked a countryman my direction and he told me to 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 delicious wash of the incoming tide! Oh, dear me, I shall hate to go back tomorrow. Caine is writing a sonnet in your book, Watts is writing a review for the Athenaeum, Rossetti is about to go on with painting his Joan of Arc,² and I am writing the last lines of this note to you.

Memoir 59

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, April 11, 1882

London | 11:4:82

...After spending a very pleasant day at Haileybury with Farquharson³ 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, although 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

¹ Elizabeth Sharp notes that this letter was written from Birchington, Kent, where Rossetti died on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1882.

² Although he never finished it, Rossetti returned to work on his “Joan of Arc” during a short period of recovery just before his death in 1882.

³ Robert Farquharson Sharp (1864-1945) was Elizabeth Sharp’s brother and thus both a first cousin and brother-in-law of William Sharp, whose literary executor he became upon Elizabeth’s death in 1932. He served in the Department of Printed Books in the British Museum from 1888 until 1929. His published works include Dictionary of English Authors (1897), Makers of Music (1898), Reader’s Guide to Everyman’s Library, (1932), Short Biographical Dictionary of Foreign Literature (1933), and translations of Hugo, Bjornson, and Ibsen. On February 5, 1937, he read an essay entitled “I Remember William Sharp” on the BBC.

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 friendship means. I feel as if a sudden tower of strength on which I had greatly relied had given way: for not only would Rossetti's house have been my own as long as and whenever I needed, but it was his influence while alive that I so much looked to. Comparatively little known to the public, his name has always been a power and recommendation in itself amongst men of letters and artists and those who have to do with both professions. When I recall all that Rossetti has been to me — the pleasure he has given me — the encouragement, the fellowship — I feel very bitter at heart to think I shall never see again the kindly gray eyes and the massive head of the great poet and artist. He has gone to his rest. It were selfish to wish otherwise considering all things. . . .

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

Memoir 61

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, April 13, 1882

April 13, 1882

...I have just returned (between twelve and one at night) tired and worn out with some necessary things in connection with Rossetti, taking me first to Chelsea, then away in the opposite direction to Euston Road. As I go down to Birchington by an early train, besides having much correspondence to get through after breakfast, I can only write a very short letter. I have felt the loss of my dear and great friend more and more. He had weaknesses and frailties within the last six or eight months owing to his illness, but to myself he was ever patient and true and affectionate. A grand heart and soul, a true friend, a great artist, a great poet, I shall not meet with such another. He loved me, I know — and believed and hoped great things of me, and within the last few days I have learned how generously and how urgently he impressed this upon others. God knows I do not grudge him his long-looked-for rest, yet I can hardly imagine London without him. I cannot realise it, and yet I know that I shall never again see the face lighten up when I come near, never again hear the voice whose mysterious fascination was like a spell. What fools are those vain men who talk of death: blinded, and full of the dust of corruption. As God lives, the soul dies not. What though the grave be silent, and the darkness of the Shadow become not peopled — to those eyes that can see there is light, light, light — to those ears that can hear the tumult of the disenfranchised, rejoicing. I am borne me 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, and that there is no death, which is but as a child's dream in a weary night.

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

To William Michael Rossetti, April 15, 1882

13 Thorngate Road, | Sutherland Gardens, W., | 15th April, 188[2].⁴

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*⁵

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.

⁴ In the Memoir (63), Elizabeth Sharp misdates this letter as 1883.

⁵ This sonnet was not published until Mrs. Sharp printed it in the Memoir. Two other sonnets addressed to D. G. Rossetti appear in the section entitled "Sonnets, 1882-1886" in the Selected Writings of William Sharp, I.

To William Bell Scott,⁶ [April] 22, [1882]

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | W. | Saturday 22nd

Dear Mr. Scott

Pray accept my best thanks for the very welcome present of your book.

I did not get home till midnight last night, yet it was well on in the morning before I could put the volume down. The peculiar individuality that has always attracted me in your work hitherto is even more observable in some ways here than anything I have yet seen. They are emphatically not verses to read once and lay down for good — for the majority of them are of the kind that delight both the imagination and the intellect. I promise myself many a fine thought and pleasurable thrill in the many future perusals I hope to give them. Later on, if you can care to have the opinion of one as young in the art as myself, I should like to let you know what especially touches myself, and wherein in my judgment you have excelled.

I expect my own “first-born” to make its appearance within 10 days at least, if Elliott Stock is true to his word.

Yours very Sincerely | William Sharp

ALS University of British Columbia

To Edward Dowden,⁷ May 22, 1882

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | London. | W. | 22/5/82

My dear Sir,

I send you by this post a copy of my first volume, published a week or two ago, — which I trust you will accept as a slight mark of the esteem and regard I hold you in as a poet and critic.

It may interest you to know that much of *The Human Inheritance* is personal. The descriptions in that poem and elsewhere of Australian & other scenery are from observation, and not reading — as, after leaving college, I knocked about the other side of the world a bit to recover health, which was somewhat shaky.

⁶ William Bell Scott (1811-1890) was a Scottish poet and painter who was associated with the Pre-Raphaelites. His publications include *Poems* (1854), *William Blake: Etchings from his Works* (1878), and *The Little Masters* (1880).

⁷ Edward Dowden (1843-1913), an Irish poet, essayist, biographer, and literary critic, was a Professor at Trinity College, Dublin from 1867 until his death in 1913. He gave the Taylor lectures at Oxford in 1889 and the Clark lectures at Cambridge between 1892 and 1896. He was best known for his Shakespeare criticism and for his two-volume *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1886). Dowden was also the author of, among other works, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (1875), *Poems* (1876), *Introduction to Shakespeare* (1893), *Essays: Modern and Elizabethan* (1910), and *Poems* (1914).

You may also care to hear that the Sonnet called Spring-Wind (which appeared also, by the bye, in Hall Caine's collection of Eng. Sonnets) was written one windy March Sunday morning of last year in the garden of 16 Cheyne Walk, while staying there with my friend Dante Rossetti.

He, by the bye, I have heard speak most warmly of both your poetical & critical gifts. His death was indeed a loss, not only to those who knew him well, but to all who loved art and literature. Personally speaking, I know that the encouragement of and belief he had in myself will always be with me an impulse to good work.

I may mention that I procured your address from a mutual friend.

Very sincerely yours | William Sharp

E. Dowden Esq.

ALS TCD.

To Hall Caine, [June 5, 1882]

Monday Mrg.

My dear Caine

Thanks for the information.

I am afraid my letter must have somewhat misled you, for you seem to be under the impression that I do not sufficiently value the Athenaeum notice.⁸ This is quite a mistake, as it is by far the most important one for me that I have received, and I am exceedingly grateful to Watts for it. What I meant to say was that the Yk. Post's⁹ notice was the best criticism as criticism that I had seen, the Athenaeum's, however important and welcome, being more a valuable notice than really a critique. I should be exceedingly sorry if I thought Watts had any reason to imagine I was not sufficiently grateful for the good service he has done me — and I trust that you have, however inadvertently, not given him this impression.

You will regret to hear that James Thomson (the poet I mean, of course) is dead.¹⁰ He died at University Hospital on Saty night at 10 o'clock. He came to make a call on Philip on Thursday, & seemed then all right, tho' very quiet and subdued. Late in the evening we thought it advisable to send for a doctor, & subsequently I carried him downstairs & took him to the Hospital in a cab. This was the only step to be taken, as he is absolutely lodgingless as well as homeless. He seemed better on Friday, tho' very weak — and perhaps still better on

⁸ Notice by Theodore Watts (later Watts-Dunton) of Sharp's first book of poetry—The Human Inheritance; The New Hope; Motherhood—which was published by Elliot Stock in Spring 1882. [Need to Check Athenaeum files.]

⁹ The Yorkshire Post.

¹⁰ James Thomson (1834-1882) was a poet and essayist. He was the author of "City of Dreadful Night" (1874) and a volume of that title which followed in 1880, in addition to Essays and Phantasies (1881), and Satires and Profanities (1884). In 1840 his father became paralyzed and his mother died in 1842. In 1853 the girl that he loved, Matilda Weller, died suddenly. Additionally his insomnia, dipsomania, melancholia, poverty, alcoholism, and eventual homelessness are some of the "miseries" to which Sharp refers. He collapsed at Philip Bourke Marston's on Thursday, June first and died on Saturday, June third.

Saty afternoon — but before midnight the poor fellow had escaped his insomnia and other miseries. He's to have another volume coming out in the Autumn I understand.

I let you know this matter as you may wish it for "news"; & as I don't suppose it's in today's papers.

Hoping ere long that we may see more of each other.

Yours ever sincerely | William Sharp

ALS British Library.

*To Hall Caine, [June 15, 1882]*¹¹

My dear Caine

I will obtain 2 more bottles of Hydoleine for you with pleasure — but I have not a disengaged hour this week!

If you are feeling seedy it wd. perhaps be better for me to come to you than vice versa. So I will endeavor to turn up at No. 16 at the earliest opportunity, sending if practicable a card first.

I will give P.B.M.¹² your message. He will also be pleased to hear you have quoted his sonnet on Thomson. I don't think I shall ever write anything on Thomson,¹³ as the personal reminiscences are slight, indeed I have only met with about two people who knew him really well. Philip knew him better than I did, personally, tho' I am more acquainted with certain passages in his life. But neither of us are really qualified to write personal reminiscences.

Hoping you will soon be all right again. | In extremity of haste | Yours ever | William Sharp
ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

To Hall Caine, [July ?, 1882]

Friday Morning

Dear Caine,

I write this note in case you shd. be out when I call.

If you had made yourself acquainted with the matter as it really stood, you would not have written me the letter I have just received, containing as it does expressions which I cannot but feel insulting.

In the first place, my projected book is not to be a biography at all.¹⁴ After the Harper's affair fell through I did think of writing a memoir of Rossetti, but the moment I learned that you intended such a work I threw up my plans, both because I thought you had a prior claim and were in a better position to do it well than myself.¹⁵ When E. Stock told me of

¹¹ Date from postcard on envelope.

¹² Philip Bourke Marston

¹³ James Thomson.

¹⁴ Sharp began his book on Rossetti (*Daniel Gabriel Rossetti: A Record and a Study*) in June 1882 within two months of Rossetti's death in April. It was published in December by Macmillian. The book was well-received and established Sharp's reputation as a critic. He later considered it a too-hasty project by a young man whose "judgement" was "immature" (*Memoir*, 63-72).

¹⁵ Caine's *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* was published by Elliot Stock in fall, 1882.

the volume, I knew at once he meant you, and I informed him at once that I wd. be quite willing to miss out the biographical portion altogether. As it is, the book Macmillians are to bring out, is a Study of the Poet-Artist — for in deference to your own work I determined to make the biographical portion consist of only about 10 pp or so. At most, this chapter (the first — “Life”) will not be more than a rechauffé of already disseminated information. The main portion of the book will be a critical study of his poetic work. Now, as I understand your book is to be purely a biographical memoir, with correspondence, & — I fail to see where the two clash. Stock himself saw this in the same light, & wd. have been willing to have brought out both books if I had agreed to his terms.

Do you know, I had somewhat hastily & foolishly concluded I had won your friendship? But I am now disillusioned — otherwise you could not have so insulted me as to infer that I sent the announcement of my book in order to annul the effect of an announcement of your own. And how, moreover, could I know that there was any announcement of yours previously sent at all? I never dreamt you wd. misunderstand the matter. I thought it a fact that your book wd. be out 2 mos. or more before my own, so that, if anything, it wd. be you damaging me instead of the contrary. Whatever I may be in a literary sense, I hope at least I am a gentleman.

I regret you have withdrawn your announcement. I had been looking forward with the greatest interest to reading your book.

I give you the benefit of the doubt in supposing you did not intentionally insult me by your reason there for. As a known friend of Rossetti’s I have no need to “claim intimacy” with him. You will excuse me if I say that your sneer seems to me to cut both ways.

I have much more reason to object to Mr. Niebuhs’¹⁶ writing on the same lines as myself. But I don’t, & will welcome his contribution to our knowledge of R’s art and influence. With either Theodore Watts, Wm. R. or yourself, I would not contend — each being far fitter than myself for a biographical memoir. But I have a right to my own opinions as to his art and poetry, & if I choose to publish a book engaged by a firm of publishers, embodying those opinions, I do not see that you or any one else need object. Doubtless your critical faculty is more developed than mine — but despite, in your own words, “your enormous superiority” over myself for the work in question, I may perhaps be vain enough to consider my own judgment not wholly worthless.

Frankly, I must tell you I exceedingly regret this matter having come between us: for I had come to like you, & to hope that our friendship would grow and fructify. But if you consider my conduct only in the light of what you designate as “journalistic sharp practice,” then there must be an end to this friendship.

With every good wish for the success of your book, which I hope you will still proceed with,

I am | Yours very truly | William Sharp

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

¹⁶ [Identify]

To Edward Dowden, July 16, 1882

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | London | W. | 16/7/82

My dear Sir,

I have heard one or two friends mentioning the probability of your being in London during July, and I now write to say that if this is to be the case I hope I may have the pleasure of seeing you. I have known you a good long time now through both your critical and poetic work, and I have always since wished to meet you in the flesh as well. If you could come and share my quiet dinner with me at my rooms — or, if you are only going to pay a flying visit, if I could come and see you at your hotel or lodging I should be most glad. At the end of this month, or beginning of August, I leave for Scotland for two months — partly for pleasure, partly to finish more rapidly the volume on Pre-Raphaelitism & on Rossetti and his work in art and literature which Macmillans commissioned me to write.¹⁷

I have to thank you very sincerely for kind words as to my book in letters to Miss Hickey & to Mr. Stock.¹⁸ I am looking forward to the letter which you mentioned in your note of a month or so ago as intending to write to me thereon. I have been very fortunate in favourable reviews as yet, & Rossetti's prognostication as to its reception have not been falsified after all.

Hoping the report of your coming over to London for a brief visit is well-founded.

Very sincerely yours | William Sharp

Edward Dowden, Esq.

ALS TCD.

To William Michael Rossetti, July 21, 1882

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens W. | 21/7/82

Queries in Nos. 8, 9, 10, & 18

Dear Mr. Rossetti,

I am much indebted to you for your kindness in annotating and correcting my hastily put together trial list.

There is much useful information and corroboration in your notes, though most cases where you have marked 'don't remember this' I have seen the drawings or pictures myself, either in Oxford, Scotland, or in the rooms of owners, besides frequently finding confirmation in the 30 photos or thereabouts Gabriel at different times gave me.

1. As to the Sea-Spell, this I am almost certain is the same as La Ghirlandata, despite the minor difference between the painting having a small harp and the sonnet mentioning a lute. It is a beautiful painting; — I know it well.
2. I did not now about the pencil head of himself belonging to your mother, but I have seen the pen & ink one I mention.
3. Fra Pace, which I put down at 1850, & which you barely remember — but suppose may be later than /50 — this I now think must be one of his earliest. It is exceedingly

¹⁷ This work became *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Record and a Study* (London: Macmillan, 1882).

¹⁸ *The Human Inheritance; The New Hope; Motherhood* (London: Elliott Stock, 1882).

interesting, and in your brother's early style. I took down a full description of it at the time I saw it. It was, I was told, the first thing of Gabriel's Burne Jones saw him working at.

4. The 'Annunciation' I know well, & entered by mistake as a W. Col.¹⁹

5. 'Morning Music,' which you don't know of, I have seen. It is a square water-colour, painted in 1850 — and early found its way to some dealers, & thence to present owner.

6. 'How They Met Themselves' — The Photo has on it the dates 1851/1860. I take it the design was in 1851, the water-colour in /60, and an improved replica in 1864, now belonging to Mr. Graham.

7. 'Roman de la Rose,' which you don't recollect, is a rather inferior early production. Date 1854.

8. As to 'Mary Magdalene' was it simply a drawing? It was so mentioned in a contemporary notice, and also in the note to the Sonnet — but Ruskin's remarks I thought applied to a water colour or oil, can you tell me for certain?

9. 'Venus Verticordia' — I have seen the first chalk study, which differs greatly. I am almost certain I am right as to the first oil being 1858, & not as you think about 65 or 66. There was a fine & slightly altered 'replica' about the latter date, which I think Rae has.

10. 'The Farmer's daughter' — this water colour was either the study for or taken from the idea, of Found. The treatment is almost the same as in the oil. It was executed probably in 1861, exhibited in Edinburgh in 1862. Do you think you are right in supposing "Found" to have been begun so long ago as 1853? I remember Gabriel's (I think) telling me that it had been on hand nearly 20 years; this would bring it to about 1861.

11. In addition to the Hamlet and Ophelia, pen and ink (date unknown to me) — there was a water colour which I have seen. It was finished in April /64. called, as in my list, First Madness of Ophelia, & quite different from the Pen & Ink Scene.

12. Il Ramoscello, which you don't remember, is a beautiful little oil, about which I have some interesting particulars. Painted in 1865.

13. The drawing of Christina R. I have put this down at Sept. 1866, which date you doubt, thinking about Dec /60. My only reason for differing is the distinctly states 'September 1866' in the photo of it Gabriel gave me.

14. Mariana. Surprised you don't remember this as an oil. It is one of the finest of his achievements in depth of colour (blue). Very large picture. Rae's an early water colour. I know of nothing in contemporary art to equal the wonderful management of the hues of deep blue throughout her dress. It has, of course, nothing to do with the Tennyson Illustration. Really a portrait of Mrs. Morris.

15. There are two oils called 'Beata Beatrix,' the same as you mean by the Dying Beatrix or B. in trance.

Much the finer belongs to Lord Mt. Temple, date of beginning the work, as you say, about the latter part of 1862.

¹⁹ i.e. watercolor.

The second belongs to Graham. Not as fine, but has a Predella which the other lacks (not a double Predella, as I mistakenly said.) Finished in 1872 — as a favour in return for a kindness of great service. Had been asked before to do it but always refused till 1871.

16. As to the oil named 'La Fleur du Mari' or 'La Fleur de Marie', I must find out the exact name. I was told at the time it was the former. Save 'Found' it is the only modern work of his I know. Subject contemporary. Lady Standing before an oaken chest. Sage green apron over green-blue dress. Upstretched arms towards a blue vase with yellow kingcups in it. She meant to be an other flower herself, Fleur du Mari? Date 1874.

17. Sancta Liliis. My date was 1879, but you think about /73. My authority the date on the drawing in Studio. Also in Photo.

18. I fancy the drawing (W. Colour)(Sprinkling the lintels with blood) I spoke of as in the Taylor Museum at Oxford is really the same as the drawing "The Passover in the Holy Family," described in Sonnet of same name. If so, it must be synonymous with the 'Mary gathering the bitter Herbs for the Passover, mentioned by Ruskin in conjunction with Mary Magdalene, as two such noble works.

As you kindly tell me to write on any point of difficulty, I shd be glad (if writing is not hurtful to you at present) to know who owns Helen of Troy, La Donna della Finestra (the painting, not the drawing, which I know) and the Dante & Giotto. Also Mr. Turner's address, who owns the Frainmetta, which I have not seen. And if you would give me an introduction to Mr. Rae, (his Liverpool address) I should be greatly obliged, as I shall go to Scotland via Liverpool on purpose. Also Leyland's address.

I am causing you I fear a great deal of trouble, but I must again plead that it is not for my sake alone that I wish to be accurate and as complete as practicable. I wish the book to be really an authority, & to give a full & true account of Gabriel's life work.

I have read Tirebok's essay — but think very little either of its style or matter. In the first place he is evidently forming an opinion on but little basis, & in the next I doubt much his qualifications for art criticism at all, from what I have heard of him.

There is a very unjust and (apart from my differing from the views taken) very incompetent review of Gabriel's poetry, in the British Quarterly for July. His whole life work is condemned in the most sweeping manner, and with a severity that would be almost out of place in a depreciator of Villon or Baudelaire.

It makes me all the more glad that a friend like myself (who admire, moreover, by no means indiscriminately) should be engaged in what may give a fair and just account of one who beyond all detraction was a great artist and great poet.

Hoping your gout will soon be a thing of the past, and with renewed best thanks for all the trouble you have kindly undertaken on my behalf.

Sincerely Yours, | William Sharp

To F. S. Ellis, [July 21, 1882]

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens W.

My dear Sir,

Thanks for your note and permission to see your “Bella Mano” and “Donna della Finestra (which I am glad to learn you possess as I could not find out who the owner was — tho’ I know the chalk study of it belonging to Mr. Graham).

Tuesday forenoon will be much the most convenient time for me, so I will go to Epsom then. I think I know the house, it is not far from my friends the Robinsons’ cottage.

With thanks | Yours sincerely | William Sharp

F. S. Ellis Esq.

P.S. If there are no dates on “La Bella Mano” or “La Donna d. F.” I should be much obliged if you would kindly leave a slip of paper with the date of painting of each, or failing this of your purchase. The former if I am not mistaken was either 1874 or 1875.

ALS UCLA.

To F. S. Ellis, [July 25, 1882]²⁰

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens W.

Dear Sir,

I write to say I shd. be greatly obliged if you cd. send me a card with (if you know) the date of the chalk study of “Lilith” I saw next the door in the drawing room. Also the subject of the companion drawing.

I greatly enjoyed the full inspection I had of “La Bella Mano” — it is a most lovely picture. “La D. della F” I was glad to see again also.

With my best thanks for the courtesy I met with at your house,

Yours sincerely | William Sharp.

ACS UCLA.

To Theodore Watts [-Dunton], July 27, 1882

Tuesday | 13 Thorngate Rd

I think I must postpone my small dinner party till the autumn, as Philip²¹ leaves London on Wednesday week, & Miss Blind²² not long after.

May the Gods be more favourable next time.

Yours ever sincerely | W.S.

²⁰ Date from postmark, and addressed to Ellis at Hill House, Epsom. Sharp wrote this card on the 25th, a Thursday, after returning from seeing Ellis’ Rossetti paintings in Epsom.

²¹ Philip Bourke Marston.

²² Mathilde Blind (1841-1896) was a German-born poet, translator, and friend of the Rossetti family. Her works include *The Ascent of Man*; *The Heather on Fire*; *Dramas in Miniature*; *Poems of the Open Air*; *Tarantella: A Romance* (1885); and *Madame Roland* (1886); *George Eliot* (1888).

*To Hall Caine, [?September, 1882]*²³

My dear Caine

Tho' overwhelmed with work I must send you a line of congratulatory welcome for your book. It is a most fascinating volume, from its general get-up (which does Stock the highest credit) to the material itself . . .

...besides staying for a day or two at a time frequently . . . On the other hand I have to thank you for your very kind reference to myself on p 291 — just saying what is most pleasing to myself: not only that he appreciated my work but also that I cheered him up a bit. He often told me this, but I am glad to have it confirmed . . .

P.S. I caught it from Mrs W M R for my “unqualified abuse” of Madox Brown in re his etching.

Manx Museum, Isle of Man

To William Michael Rossetti, October 23, 1882

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens. W.

Dear Mr. Rossetti,

As you said it would do equally for you, and as I now find it would be greatly more convenient for me, I will come unless I hear from you to the contrary on Sunday next about 10 a.m. On Monday I go to Hampshire for a fortnight or more, and it might be too late on my return. I am glad you are agreeable to include the unsold drawings in my Catalogue,²⁴ not only because I am anxious to prove by demonstration that Rossetti really did get through a great amount of sterling work — and again because several desirous and likely purchasers both in Scotland and England have asked me to let them know the subjects and sizes etc. of some of those for sale — and I have always replied, that while I should let them hear from me on any one or more drawings which I wd know wd be suitable, they would in all probability find all the information in my Supplementary Catalogue, when they could write you direct.

In haste | Yours most sincerely | William Sharp

ALS, private.

²³ This incomplete letter is taken from a summary which was transcribed by the Manx Museum.

²⁴ The reference is to the Supplementary Catalogue Sharp included in his biography of Rossetti. The “unsold drawings” by D. G. Rossetti were sold at Christies in 1883.

To Eugene Lee-Hamilton, November 18, 1882

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | London W. | 18/11/82

My dear Hamilton,

I last night finished the perusal of your volume,²⁵ most of which was not new to me. I must congratulate you most sincerely and heartily on what seems to me a great advance in poetic power and in technical grasp — not that I mean your previous volumes were not up to the mark on either point, only, from my point of view, this volume contains decidedly the best things you have done. Your dramatic power is very noticeable, so much so that I shd. fancy you could manage very successfully some scenes in dialogue or tragic action, even perhaps a sustained and equable play. *The New Medusa* and *The Mandolin* are in this respect specially fine: as to the former, you already know my opinion of it — that it stands at the head of your compositions. It seems to me that there is too great a condensation of narrative preceding the account of the woman on the wreck: of course it is understood that the wreck has been reached, that nothing is found of life or anything else on the dismasted ship save the woman, and that she has been taken off from her support — but the narration of this is so very rapid that the effect is rather an artistic break instead of artistic coherency. The lines beginning

I was awake; there was no sound, no light —

down to

And sought the breeze of night etc.

are very beautiful and powerful.

I think on such an occasion as that which occurs in the fifth line of page 23 it is better to have an extra syllable than an ugly word. “Contradictory” wouldn’t scan but it is preferable to “contradict’ry”.

Another very powerful passage is that beginning

I was about to wake her, when the moon etc. (p. 26)

But I must again make the strong objection I made before to your sister, regarding the last line. So greatly does it detract from the fine effect of the poem (I am speaking personally of course) that I have struck a broad line through it so that the poem in my copy finishes with “Moonlit Rocks”.

I like the *Sack of Prato* better than the *Ballad of the Plague of Florence*, though the latter is fine also: and the *Idyl of the Anchorite* is at once dramatic and a terrible satire.

I am not certain but I fancy your sister considered *The Raft* your best poem. I cannot agree with this, though [there] are fine things in it.

²⁵ *The New Medusa and Other Poems* (1882).

“On a Tuscan Road” is indeed beautiful; I think the most musical thing you have written, and in its natural features recalling that vague delicious charm you must have experienced in looking at some of the landscapes of Corot and Millet.

A volume of lyrics with such music as: —

Slowly the sunset departs from the shrine
Close to the road, but still touches the fountain;
Fewer are those who pass by with a sign;
Dark grow the maize and the hemp and the vine,
Blue is the Mountain. —

would be welcome to all those who know your poems, I am sure.

On the whole, *The Mandolin* is in my opinion the most flawless thing you have done. There are verses in *A Letter* as fine as anything of the kind I remember: but though in the *Elegy* there is one fine passage or rather passages (p 109) I do not care so much about it from a poetical point of view.

There is not one of the sonnets that is not fine; and *Waifs of Time* I am going to copy into *Caine’s Treasury of Sonnets*,²⁶ as I see you are not represented there as you ought to have been. If a second edition should be required (as is not improbable) I will see that this Sonnet or some other you might prefer is inserted, as I have some influence with *Caine*, who is now a friend of mine.

Altogether, I have received a great deal of pleasure from your book, and only regret it is so short.

Remember me most kindly to Miss Paget. I shd. like to have sent you a copy of my *Rossetti book*²⁷ but it is the publisher’s matter, and I only get a very few copies which I must give to those who have been of special service to me during its composition, and as I am not exactly revelling in the flesh-pots of Egypt I can’t purchase copies as I wd. like to do.

My cousin sends you her most kind remembrances. She has had equal pleasure with myself in perusing both the old and new friends in your volume.

If I can come to Florence and Italy — O ye Gods! — but I dare not say anything more. Dreams nearly always evaporate if you concentrate your mind upon them: so I hope the dream will enfold me till I waken in the South.

Your sincere friend, | William Sharp

E.A.S. wanted me specially to mention “*A Tuscan Road*” as specially beautiful, and “*The Mandolin*” as forcible and dramatic.

ALS Colby College Library

²⁶ *Sonnets of Three Centuries: A Selection*, ed. T. H. Caine (1882).

²⁷ *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Record and a Study* (1882).

To Frederick Langbridge,²⁸ December 2, 1882

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens W., London | 2/12/82

My dear Sir

I have just received your kind letter and thank you for wishing to include something of mine in your forthcoming collection.²⁹ I don't quite gather if it must be something unpublished: if not, I shall be gratified if you can find something in my volume,³⁰ which I send herewith, worthy of insertion, and I have ventured to mark in pencil one or two passages or poems that might suit for the department of your volume you specify. If it is essential that it must be something unpublished kindly send me a card, and I will look amongst my MSS or else write something specially for you — but the truth is that I have just returned to town after an absence of about four months in the country and have all my MSS (except what were composed during that period) locked up and as yet not disinterred or copied out, and moreover I am more than pressed for time with several important articles and also the issue of a large volume on the work in art and poetry of the late Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the proofs of which entail continuous and arduous labour.

You will find the passages I have marked at 78, 106, and 175. Overleaf I enclose a sonnet you may care for. It is by a Mr. Eugene Lee-Hamilton, the author of 'Gods, Saints, and Men', 'Poems and Transcripts', and 'The New Medusa' from which last mentioned and just published volume it is taken. It was addressed to me in reply to one of mine affirming my intense belief in individual immortality, and though I do not agree with its conclusion I consider it a really remarkable sonnet; in the words of my friend Theodore Watts, "every poet since Landor and Shakespeare has been trying to say something new about the murmurs of a sea-shell and no one has yet notably succeeded, and yet here is an almost unknown and by no means great poet (though true one so far as he goes) who succeeds where so many have failed." The author, poor fellow, exists and has existed for long in a living death (from a terrible spinal affliction) and cannot possibly survive many years. How he can still cling to life (only 2 hours in the day wherein he dare be read to or compose), especially with absolutely no hope or belief for the future as regards to himself, is a mystery to me.

I must thank you doubly for your "Songs in Sunshine": — in the first instance for your courtesy in sending it to me, and in the second for the real and genuine pleasure it has afforded and will continue to afford me. Such a lyric gift as you are the happy possessor of is very unusual, and nowadays is specially welcome when such a tide of Rossettian, Swinburnian, and wearisomely repetitive verses is constantly flowing forth. Many of the poems have the charm that is so characteristic of Herrick at his best, especially such really lovely little lyrics as *Norah at the Fair* and *The Little Roundhead Maid*, which I have read several times already. *Moonshine* and *Ripe Cherries* have the same delightful charm, and *My*

²⁸ Frederick Langbridge (1849-1922) was a clergyman who lived for many years in Limerick. He wrote poems, plays, novels, and books for children. Some of his books: *Songs in Sunshine* (1882), *Sent Back by the Angels* (1885), *Ballads of the Brave* (1890), *A Cluster of Quiet Thoughts* (1895), *The Scales of Heaven* (1896), *Clear Waters* (1897), *Little Tapers* (1899), *Ballads and Legends* (1903), *The Peaks of Proud Desire* (1906), and *The Power of Red Mitchell* (1909).

²⁹ This proposed collection has not been identified.

³⁰ *The Human Inheritance*; *The New Hope*; *Motherhood* (1882).

Own Girl is such a song as must surely reach far and wide. The book has also the great merit of not being too large, and of containing nothing poor; and I only hope I may still get it for review in some magazine or periodical: — if I do; I will write a review of it with a pleasure that is very infrequent in this branch of literature as I have experienced too often. Although in themselves joy in life, gladness in the human delights that make life after all so beautiful, and belief in divine goodness and in immortality do not constitute poetry, they undoubtedly add much to it when spontaneously and convincingly accompanying it, and this is certainly the case in your volume, which I hope again and again to recur to and always with pleasure and refreshment. Indeed, speaking personally, it is refreshment that is its most happy characteristic. My own volume is in a very different style and it is not in the nature of things it can afford you so much enjoyment as yours can myself, unless perhaps you are very susceptible to nature which I passionately love and have loved since I can remember and with which my verse is charged throughout. It may interest you to know that the first three parts of *The Human Inheritance* are personal and practically literally exact, but this information is of course private.

If I do not hear from you to the contrary I shall understand you have found something in my volume that will serve your purpose.

Believe me, | Yours very Sincerely, | William Sharp

ALS Pierpont Morgan Library

To Edward Dowden, [December 10, 1882]

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | London | W.

My dear Mr. Dowden,

You may have heard (or I may have told you myself when writing you before) that Macmillans are going to issue a vol. of considerable length (450 pp) on Rossetti's art-work and on his poetry. As a frontispiece Christina R. & her mother kindly gave me D.G.R.'s beautiful Sonnet-Design for engraving purposes, & it has been finely done on wood. This design has a triple interest — it is the last original design Rossetti made (1880), it has great beauty as a piece of fine draughtsmanship, and it has a special interest to the poet and the lovers of poetry.

I felt certain you would like to have a proof, both for the sake of having something of R's art-work and because of the interest you must necessarily take in such a design as a poet and sonnet-writer yourself — and so I send by this post one of the half dozen proofs in India I have been able to procure.

I shd. like to have sent you a copy of the book when it comes out (from the 16th to the 20th I understand) but I am obliged to be niggardly in respect of private distribution, as it is a big venture for Macmillians & I have but few to give away & can't afford to buy others. Perhaps, however, you may be able to get it for review from the Academy, by application therefor, which I shd. be glad of on two accounts.

Faithfully yours | William Sharp

P.S. If over to see the Rossetti exhibit at Burlington House³¹ I hope I may have the pleasure of seeing you.

ALS TCD.

Elizabeth A. Sharp, March 14, 1883

Florence³² | Wednesday, 14:3:83.

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

The monumental sculpture is not so fine as in Santa Croce, but on the other hand there are some splendid paintings and frescoes — amongst others Cimabue's famous picture of the Virgin seated on a throne. I admired some frescoes by Filippino Lippi — also those in the Choir by Ghirlandaio: 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 finally 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. . . .

Memoir 79-80

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, March 18, 1883

Florence, 18:3:83.

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

³¹ In 1883 there were exhibitions of Rossetti's art works at both the Royal Academy's Burlington House and at the Burlington Fine Arts Club. The Burlington Fine Arts Club offered a supplementary and concurrent exhibition at least partly due to the shortcomings of the Royal Academy's exhibition. The Burlington Club's exhibit began January 13, 1883 and the Royal Academy's appears to have begun in middle or late December, 1882. These were the first exhibitions of Rossetti's work in London. The London Times commented that "the two Rossetti exhibitions now open will be remembered for a long time to come. They have dispelled more than one prejudice, and thrown a new light on the origin of a movement which has played an important part in the development of English art and of the external surroundings of English life" (Monday, January 15, 1883, p. 8).

³² Sharp's four-month visit to Italy, which began in late February, 1883, was made possible by the gift of 200 pounds from a friend of his grandfather who heard from Sir Noel Patton that Sharp was "inclined to the study of literature and art" (Memoir 78). Of all the letters Sharp wrote to his fiancé from Italy, only the letters and fragments she printed in the Memoir survive since she destroyed toward the end of her life all the letters she had received from him.

more famous than himself, who merely duplicated unimaginative and stereotyped religious ideas. . . .³³

Yesterday being Holy Thursday we went to several Churches and in the afternoon and evening to see the Flowers for the Sepulchres. Very much impressed and excited by all I saw. I was quite unprepared for the mystery and gloom of the Duomo. There were (comparatively) few people there, as it is not so popular with the Florentines as Sta. Maria Novella — and when we entered, it was like going into a tomb. Absolute darkness away by the western entrances (closed), a dark gloom elsewhere, with gray trails of incense mist still floating about like wan spirits, and all the crosses and monuments draped in black crape, and a great canopy of the same overhead. Two acolytes held burning tapers before only one monument, that of the Pieta under the great crucifix in the centre of the upper aisle — so that the light fell with startling distinctness on the dead and mutilated body of Christ. Not a sound was to be heard but the wild chanting of the priests, and at last a single voice with a strain of agony in every tone. This and the mystery and gloom and pain (for, strange as it may seem to you, I felt the agony of the pierced hands and feet myself) quite overcame me, and I burst into tears. I think I would have fainted with the strain and excitement, if the agony of the Garden had not come to an end, and the startling crash of the scourging commenced, the slashing of canes upon 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. . . .

Memoir 80-1

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, April 3, 1883

Florence, 3:4:83.

...The last two days have been days of great enjoyment to me. First and foremost they have been heavenly warm, with cloudless ardent blue skies — and everything is beginning to look fresh and green. Well, on Monday I drove with Mrs. Smillie³⁴ 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.³⁵ I found her alone, with two of her famous and

³³ The Brancacci Chapel of the Santa Maria del Carmine is a landmark of Florentine art. Its frescos were painted by Masolino, beginning in 1424, and by his pupil Masaccio, who worked until his death in 1428 at the age of 27. The were completed by Filippino Lippi in the 1480s. Many of the scenes are among Masaccio's masterpieces, and many artists of the 1400s and 1500s came to the chapel to sketch and discover how Masaccio achieved his dramatic effects. See Facaros and Pauls "Italy," Cadogan Guides, London, 1994.

³⁴ An aunt of Elizabeth Sharp who had a villa on the outskirts of Florence.

³⁵ Ouida (Louise de la Ramee) (1839-1909) was well-known on the continent as well as in England and America for her stories and criticism. Her mother, Susan Sutton, was English, and her father, Louis Reme, French.

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.³⁶

Yesterday I perhaps enjoyed more than I have done since I came to Italy. In the morning Arthur Lemon,³⁷ the artist, called for me, and being joined by two others (Lomax,³⁸ an artist, and his brother) we had a boat carried over the weir and we 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 — Monta Beni on the right and Monte Morello on the left glowing with a haze of heat, and beyond all, the steeps of Fallombrosa in white — and Carrara's crags also snow-covered behind us. We passed the quaint old church and village of San Stefano and swung in-shore to get some wine. . . .

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

When she was not traveling, she lived and worked at her Villa Farinola outside Florence. She wrote glamorous, unreal, but extremely popular stories. Among her most successful books were: *Held in Bondage* (1863), *Chandos* (1866), and *Under Two Flags* (1867).

³⁶ William Wetmore Story (1819-1895) was an American poet, sculptor, and novelist who lived in Rome. *Roba di Roma* (1862), according to Peter Gunn, is the novel in which "the genial width of Story's enjoyment, his humanity, humour and erudition are most clearly seen," [Vernon Lee: *Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 45]. He was a friend of the Brownings, Hawthorne, Thackeray, Lytton, and Henry James who wrote his "life." John Rollin Tilton (1828-1888), a close friend of Story, was a landscape painter who worked chiefly in watercolors. Also an American, he settled in Rome in 1852 and remained for the rest of his life.

³⁷ Arthur Lemon (1850-1912) was a British painter who spent his early years in Rome and was, for ten years, a cowboy in California, where he painted Indians and wildlife.

³⁸ John Arthur Lomax (1857-1923) studied in Munich and did his major work in Manchester and London.

and myself are going on a sketching trip down the Arno amongst the old villages — the length of Pisa — taking about two days.

Memoir 81-3

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, [early April, 1883]

Rome

...It is too soon to give you my impressions of Rome, but I may say that they partly savour of disappointment. . . . Of one thing however, I have already seen enough to convince me — and that is that Rome is not for a moment to be compared to Florence in beauty — neither in its environs, its situation, its streets, nor its rivers. Its palaces may be grander, the interiors of its churches more magnificent, its treasures of art more wonderful, but in beauty it is as far short as London is of Edinburgh. But it has one great loveliness which can never tire and which charms immeasurably — the fountains which continually and every here and there splash all day and night in the sunlight or in green grottoes in the courts of villas and palaces. I am certain that I should hate to live here — I believe it would kill me — for Rome is too old to be alive — unless indeed a new Rome entirely overshadows the past. I don't suppose you will quite understand, and I cannot explain just now — but so I feel. Florence (after the cold has gone) is divine — air, atmosphere, situation, memory of the past, a still virile present — but Rome is an anomaly, for what is predominant here is that evil medieval Rome whose eyes were blind with 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 medieval ages. . . .

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

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

How I hate large cities! Even Florence is almost too large, but there at least one can always escape into open space and air and light and freedom at will — and the mountains are close, and the country round on all sides is fair, and the river is beautiful. Do not be provoked with me when I say that Signa, for instance, is more beautiful to me than Rome — and that the flashing of sunlight in the waters of the fountains, the green of Spring in the flowered fields and amongst the trees, and the songs of birds and the little happy-eyed children, mean infinitely more to me than the grandest sculptures, the noblest frescoes, the finest paintings. This is my drawback I am afraid, and not my praise — for where such hundreds are intensely interested I am often but slightly so. Again and again when I find myself wearied to death with sight-seeing I call to mind some loch with the glory of morning

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

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

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

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

Memoir 83-6

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, April 16, 1883

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, and 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 today, for I was peculiarly fortunate in seeing one or two picturesque things I might have missed. First, as I was listening to what a dear spark of a lintie was whistling to its mate, I heard a dull heavy trampling sound, and on going to a neighbouring rise I saw two wild bulls fighting. I never realised before the immense weight and strength these animals have. Soon after, a herd of them came over the slope, their huge horns tossing in the sunlight and often goring at each other. I was just beginning to fancy that I had seen my last of Rome (for I had been warned against these wild cattle especially at this season) when some picturesquely-attired horsemen on shaggy little steeds came up at full speed, and with dogs and long spears or poles and frantic cries urged the already half furious, half terrified animals forward. It was delightful to witness, and if I were a painter I would be glad to paint such a scene. I then went across a brook and up some slopes (half buried in flowers and grasses) till I came to a few blackthorn trees and an old stone-pine, and from there I had a divine view. The heat was very great, but I lay in a pleasant dreamy state with my umbrella stuck tentwise, and I there began the first chapter of the novel I told you before I left that I intended writing. I had been thinking over it often, and so at last began it: and certainly few romances have been begun in lovelier places. Suddenly, through one eye, as it were, I caught sight of a broad moving shadow on the slope beyond me, and looking up I was electrified with delight to see a large eagle shining gold-bronze in the sun. I had no idea (though I knew they preyed on lambs, etc., further on the Campagna and in the Maremma) that they ever came so near the haunts of men. It gave one loud harsh scream, a swoop of its broad wings, and then sailed away out of sight into the blue haze beyond the farthest reaches I could see.

Away to the right I saw a ruined arch, formerly some triumphal record no doubt, and near it was a shepherd, clad in skins, tending his goats. No other human sign — oh, it was delicious and has made me in love with the very name of Rome. Such swarms of lizards there were, and so tame, especially the green ones, which knew I wouldn't hurt them and so ran on to my hands. The funniest fly too I ever saw buzzed up, and sat on a spray of blackthorn blossom and looked at me: I burst out laughing at it, and it really seemed to look reproachfully at me — and for a moment I felt sorry at being so rude. I could have lain there all day, so delicious was the silence save for these natural sounds — and all these dear little birds and insects. What surprised me so about the flowers was not only their immense quantity, but also their astounding variety. At last I had to leave, as it is not safe to lie long on the Campagna if one is tired or hungry. So I strolled along through the deep grasses and over slope after slope till at last I saw the clump of stone pines which were my landmark, and then I soon joined the road. . . .

Sienna | April, 1883

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

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

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

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

hideous liquid; and without sound, save the blast of the winter-wind and the rattle of dislodged stones.

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

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

Memoir 88-90

To Edward Dowden, April 30, 1883

Casa Tognazzi | 19 Via Sallustio Bandini | Siena | Italy | 30 Apl '83

My dear Mr. Dowden

Your kind note of last Thursday has been forwarded to me from London. I greatly regret the lost opportunity of seeing you, as I have often looked forward to making your personal acquaintance — but I hope Fortune may be more favourable again. I shall not be returning to London till the late autumn, but if you should be crossing the Irish Channel again in the winter or following Spring season, I hope you will not forget my desire to meet you.

I am here — in Italy: learning and unlearning. You probably know Siena: — now, with the glory of Spring brightening every hill and valley in this Umbrian country it is at its best — and there is magic in the air. I do not think Italy so winningly beautiful as the north or so glorious as the tropical south, but it has a pathetic loveliness — exquisite and peculiar to itself.

Hoping you are well, and that our meeting is not always to be in futuro.

Sincerely your | William Sharp

ALS TCD.

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, May 7, [1883]

Florence | 7th May

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

refreshment in the way of hard bread and wine and cheese — their mode of life being too simple to have anything else to offer.

Owing to the great heat and perhaps over-exposure while toiling up some of the barren scorched roads, where they became too hilly or rough for the horses — I had succumbed to an agonising nervous headache, and could do nothing for a while but crouch in a corner of the wall in the shade and keep wet handkerchiefs constantly over my forehead and head. In the meantime the others had gone inside, and as Mrs. S.³⁹ had told the abbé I was suffering from a bad headache he came out to see me and at once said I had a slight touch of the sun — a frequent thing in these scorched and barren solitudes. He took me into a private room and made me lie down on a bed — and in a short time brought me two cups of strong black coffee, with probably something in it — for in less than twenty minutes I could bear the light in my eyes and in a few minutes more I had only an ordinary headache. He was exceedingly kind altogether, and I shall never think of Monte Oliveto without calling to remembrance the Abbé Cesareo di Negro. I then spent about three hours over the famous 35 noble frescoes by Sodoma and Signorelli, illustrating the life of Saint Benedict, the founder of the convent.⁴⁰ They are exceedingly beautiful — and one can learn more from this consecutive series than can well be imagined. While taking my notes and wondering how I was to find time (without staying for a couple of days or so) to take down all particulars — I saw the abbé crossing the cloisters in my direction, and when he joined me he said, “la Signora” had told him I was a poet and writer, and that I thought more of Sodoma than any of his contemporaries, and so he begged me to accept from him a small work in French on the history of the convent including a fairly complete account of each fresco. A glance at this showed that it would be of great service to me, and save much in the way of note-taking — and I was moreover glad of this memento; he inscribed his name in it. . . .

The more I see of Sodoma’s work the more I see what a great artist he was — and how enormously underrated he is in comparison with many others better known or more talked about. After having done as much as I could take in, I went with the abbé over other interesting parts and saw some paintings of great repute, but to me unutterably wearisome and empty — and then to the library — and finally through the wood to a little chapel with some interesting frescoes. I felt quite sorry to leave the good abbé. I promised to send him a copy of whatever I wrote about the Sodomas — and he said that whenever I came to Italy again I was to come and stay there for a few days, or longer if I like — and 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

³⁹ Probably Mrs. Smillie, Elizabeth Sharp’s aunt.

⁴⁰ Giovanni Antonio Bazzi Sodoma (1477-1549) was a Lombard painter originally influenced by Leonardo. His style became more complex when he went to Sienna. He worked at Monte Oliveto from 1505-1508. Sodoma’s continuation, *Scenes of the Life of St. Benedict*, painted at Monte Oliveto between 1505 and 1508, is exuberant and worldly. Luca Signorelli (1450-1523), an Umbrian painter and a pupil and collaborator of Piero della Francesca, worked at Monte Oliveto in 1497, where his dramatic lighting and powerful draughtsmanship show to best advantage. Signorelli’s *Legend of St. Benedict*, a work known for its anatomical detail, its foreshortening, and its conveyance of pathos, was probably painted at Monte Oliveto in 1497.

lodging. Altogether, Monte Oliveto made such an impression on me that I won't be content till I take you there for a visit of a few days. . .

Memoir 90-2

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, May 10, 1883

Venezia | 10th May

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

All yesterday afternoon and evening (save an hour on the Piazza and neighbourhood) I spent in a gondola — enjoying it immensely: and after dinner I went out till late at night, listening to the music on the canals. Curiously, after the canals were almost deserted — and I was drifting slowly in a broad stream of moonlight — a casement opened and a woman sang with as divine a voice as in my poem of *The Tides of Venice*⁴¹: she was also such a woman as there imagined — and I felt that the poem was a true forecast. Early this morning I went to the magnificent St. Mark's (not only infinitely nobler than St. Peter's, but to me more impressive than all the Churches in Rome taken together). I then went to the Lido, and had a glorious swim in the heavy sea that was rolling in. On my return I found that Addington Symonds⁴² had called on me — and I am expecting W. D. Howells.⁴³ 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-

⁴¹ Sharp wrote "The Tides of Venice" before he visited Italy. It was published in *The Human Inheritance; The New Hope; Motherhood* (1882).

⁴² John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) settled in Switzerland in 1877 and remained there until his death, with regular trips to Italy, especially Venice. He and Sharp developed a warm friendship, and Symonds encouraged Sharp's literary pursuits throughout the eighties.

⁴³ William Dean Howells (1837-1920), a novelist, poet, and essayist, was a sub-editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* under James T. Fields and editor-in-chief from 1872 until 1881. He wrote the "Editor's Study" column for *Harper's Monthly* from 1886 to 1891 when he edited *Cosmopolitan* for a year. He returned to *Harper's* in 1900 and wrote the "Editor's Easy Chair" until his death. Howells was the U.S. Consul in Venice from 1861 until 1865, and he returned frequently for visits thereafter. His works include: *Poems* (1873), *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), *Modern Italian Poets* (1887), *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), *Literature and Life* (1902), *Years of My Youth* (1916), and *The Leatherwood God* (1916).

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.

Memoir 92-3

To Emma Lucy Rossetti,⁴⁴ June 5, 1883

Hotel des Postes | Dinaut-sur-Meuse | Belgium | June 5/83

Dear Mrs. Rossetti,

After long wanderings a card of date sometime in April last has reached me — asking me to come and see you on a specified date.

In case you did not know (tho' I called twice to tell you and Mr. Rossetti — and told Miss Rossetti) I left England for Italy the end of last February — and have been in that country ever since till two or three days ago when I came to this district of the Ardennes, where (or whereabouts) I shall be with friends till the end of July.⁴⁵

My going to Italy was sudden, but in every way pleasant — having friends in many parts to stay with.

I was glad to hear the “Rossetti Sale”⁴⁶ had been a success, and I hope it came up to your anticipations.

Hoping you have learned long before this that my silence and not calling on you arose out of absence and from not having heard from you —

Believe me | With kind regards to Mr. Rossetti — | Yours very truly | William Sharp

P.S. I hope your father has now quite recovered from his recent serious illness.

ALS John Carter Brown Library, Brown University

To Hall Caine, [early August, 1883]

Primrose Bank | Innellan | by Greenock | N.B.

⁴⁴ William Rossetti and Emma Lucy Brown, the daughter of Ford Maddox Brown, were married in 1874.

⁴⁵ EAS confirms that Venice, where he enjoyed the “frequent companionship of John Addington Symonds” and long hours in the gondola, was the “crowning pleasure” of Sharp’s Italian sojourn. He stayed there through May, spent June in the Ardennes with Elizabeth and her mother, and returned to London briefly in July before going on to Scotland to stay with his mother and sister at Innellan on the Clyde. *Memoir*, 93.

⁴⁶ Sharp is probably referring to the second of the two sales described by Oswald Doughty: “On July 5th [1882] and the two following days, the sale of Rossetti’s household effects took place at Cheyne Walk. To William’s [William Michael Rossetti] pleased surprise it produced, together with some of the pictures sold privately, about three thousand pounds. . . . It chanced to be Gabriel’s birthday, May 12, 1883, when the remaining paintings were sold at Christie’s for about the same sum as the household sale had realized; the total thus raised, almost six thousand pounds, proved sufficient to pay Rossetti’s debts and even leave a small balance in hand.” Dante Gabriel Rossetti (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 674.

My dear Caine,

I have not long returned from my long absence on the continent — and amongst many things not forwarded to me I found two journals addressed to me in your handwriting, both containing reviews of my “Rossetti”.

I think I am right in supposing that you are not the author of either — but for kindly thinking of sending them to me pray accept my sincere though tardy thanks. The notice in the Lity World, consisting of 9 columns, ought to have helped the book — i.e. if the L.W. has an influential circulation.

I was only 3 days in London, when passing thro’ — so hadn’t time to look you up. I hope you are flourishing professionally, and that your health is better than when I saw you last. I don’t expect to be settled in London again till early in October, but look forward to seeing you again then or a little later.

I enjoyed myself greatly in Italy — and was favoured indeed by circumstance: to such an extent indeed that it would be difficult to imagine any subsequent visit transcending in pleasure the one I have just spent.

But since coming north a great misfortune has happened to me. En route, a large portmanteau was lost or stolen — and this portmanteau, in addition to new clothes got in London and valuable souvenirs and presents from Italy, contained all my MSS., both prose & verse, all my Memoranda (many of them essential to work in hand), all my Notes taken in Italy, my private papers and letters, some proofs, three partly written articles (two of them much overdue), my most valued books — and indeed my whole literary stock-in-trade pro-tem.⁴⁷

Its nonrecovery means at least an immediate loss of about 30, and prospectively a good deal more. Nine days have passed, & nothing has been heard of it yet — and I am beginning to lose my last fragments of hope. As a literary worker yourself you will understand what a “fister” this is to a young writer. I must take this buffet of Fate, however, without undue wincing — and tackle to again all the more earnestly for the severe loss and disappointment experienced. There’s no use crying over spilt milk.

I suppose you are at work on something of more permanent interest than leaders for the L’pool Mercury?

Will be glad of a line from you if you have time, and believe me

Sincerely yours | William Sharp.

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

⁴⁷ EAS reports the portmanteau was lost when Sharp was returning to London from Innellan. This letter makes clear that it was lost on his way to Innellan to stay with his Mother & sisters. It was found about a month after its loss with its contents, according to EAS, “in a soaked sodden condition, but still legible and serviceable.” Elizabeth reported that his search for the portmanteau in the wet & cold of Scotland caused him to become ill with rheumatic fever which attacked his heart when he returned to London in September (Mem, 94).

*To Hall Caine, [September 18, 1883]*⁴⁸

13 Thorngate Rd. | Sutherland Gardens | W. | Tuesday Night

My dear Caine

You will have recd. my hurried note from Edinburgh.

On my return to London I at once looked about for the recipe you wanted — but have been unsuccessful in finding it — indeed I am afraid it must be lost, perhaps destroyed amongst other papers when I went to Italy.

The embrocation was a good for all kinds of rheumatic cold (stiff necks — strained muscles — effects of draughts etc.) but I know next to nothing of its composition. The man who ordered it for me for external use in case I shd. require it during the winter following my rheumatic fever in autumn 1880 was Dr. Griffittes, of Portmadoc, North Wales. This, alas, is all the information I can give you about it.

I am greatly better, so much so that I find it difficult to credit the doctor's doleful prognostications: I feel I must take care, but beyond that I have no immediate cause for alarm. The worst of it is that I am one day in exuberant health and the next very much the reverse. The doctors agree that it is valvular disease of the heart, a treacherous form thereof still further complicated by hereditary bias. However, a fellow must "kick" some day — and I would as soon do so "per the heart" as, like no small number of my forbears in Scotland, from delirium tremens, sheep-stealing (in hanging days), and general disreputableness.

I am afraid poor Marston's book has fallen rather flat.⁴⁹ I have seen only one brief and worthless notice in the 'Lity. World' — tho' I heard from someone today that there was a notice in the Academy of last week, which I have not seen yet.

The truth is, people are tired of the "wail" in poetry, either the individual caterwaul or the general 'howl' — and though P.B.W. is worth a dozen of most of his detractors he is bound to go to the wall unless he will forego what unfortunately he cannot do. Independently of this, he, despite his fine and rare gifts, is too much under the shadow of Rossetti to flourish on his own little open piece of ground.

Thinking people want Hope, Faith, Energy, Joy — more than anything else do they crave that at least some one else should proclaim the last, on which the others are attendant. Joy in life, joy in death, the world will yet come to realize what that means. It is because humanity is sadder at heart than of yore that it must turn from the personality of sorrow to the impersonality of world-joy.

I rejoice to hear that you are fairly well, and that Sandown suits you. But indeed almost any place must be better than the Inferno of London — which I am going to make a strenuous effort in the Spring to leave. Even if pecuniarily able, I am forbidden to marry for a year to come — and though waiting is hard now for us both, it is better even for my fiancée that nothing should be done which might result in what would be such a grief to her. Moreover, I am medically advised that London is not the place for me at all — so if I can

⁴⁸ Letter dated by enclosed manuscript poem.

⁴⁹ *Wind Voices* (London: Stock, 1883).

possibly see my way I must try a move in the Spring. Hearing of my illness, Mrs. Craik⁵⁰ offered me her house in Dover for two months in the Spring or early summer, as it wd. then be unoccupied — and there it is possible I may go.

But my art-journalistic work (a very material ‘staff’ indeed) is the main obstacle. I would need to be in London at least one day every week besides Sunday, and coming up regularly from Saty till Monday would be expensive. How do you manage with the “L’pool Mercury” at Sandown?

I have just today seen an announcement of your “Cobwebs of Criticism” — most heartily do I wish it success. I hope I may get it for review somewhere — I remember seeing a small portion of it at Birchington. What memories that name calls up — and what a blank he has left behind him!

When I last saw Watts he was well, and Swinburne kindly condescended to be less deaf than usual. Watt’s article on Lewis Morris has been much discussed — bardically approved, publicly but half assented to.

The interest of the hour is fixt on Lord Lytton’s⁵¹ autobiography and literary remains. I have the first two vols, and they are certainly most interesting.

You will be sorry to hear that Mary Robinson has had an attach of smallpox — fortunately she has weathered it all right — and when I called yesterday with some flowers to cheer her beautiful eyes the servant told me she was soon to be taken downstairs again.⁵² The Gods preserve her fair young life. Her sister Mabel has also been ill, but I am glad to say is now better.

I am hard at work, in addition to my art-editorial work and commissioned articles for the Art-Journal and other magazines, upon two books which may see the light — God knows when.⁵³

As in some way relative to my remarks on page 5 of this letter, I enclose some lines written one day last September.

Drop me a line when you have time, and believe me ever yours affectionately

William Sharp

Don’t forget, if you ever want a bed for a night to let me know.

Mater Dolorosa

She, brooding ever, dwells amidst the hills;

⁵⁰ Sharp accepted Mrs. Craik’s offer and spent part of February, all of March, and early April at 9 Hubert Terrace, Dover.

⁵¹ Edward George Earle Bulwer-Lytton, first Baron Lytton (1803-1873) was a prolific novelist, poet, critic, and Member of Parliament. His novels include Pelham (1828), The Last Days of Pompeii, 3 vol. (1834), King Arthur (1848), and The Caxtons, 3 vol. (1849). In 1883 his son, (Edward) Robert Bulwer-Lytton (1831-1891), a diplomat and poet, published Life, Letters and Literary Remains, 2 vol. of his father. The two volumes covered the period 1803-1832. Subsequent volumes never emerged. Lytton’s wife, Lady Rosina (Doyle Wheeler) Bulwer-Lytton, who was Irish, was also a novelist. They separated after about six years of marriage (1827-1836). In 1839 she published a novel called Cheveley, or the Man of Honour, where her husband was the villain.

⁵² Agnes Mary Frances Robinson (1857-1944).

⁵³ One of these books would have been his second volume of poems, Earth’s Voices, etc. (1884).

Her Kingdom is call'd Solitude; her name —
 More terrible than desolating flame —
 Is Silence; and her soul is Pain.
 Day after day some weightier sorrow fills
 Her heart, and each new hour she knows
 The birth of further woes.
 And who so, journeying, goes
 Unto the land wherein she dwells for aye
 Shall not come thence until have pass'd away
 For evermore the bright joy of his years.
 She giveth rest, but giveth it with tears,
 Tears that more bitter be
 Than drops of the Dead Sea:
 But never gives she peace to any soul,
 For how could she that rarest gift bestow
 Who well doth know
 That though in dreams she can attain the goal,
 In dreams alone her steps can thither go:
 Solitude, Silence, Pain, for all who live
 Within the twilight realms that are her own
 And even Rest to those who seek her throne,
 But these her gifts alone:
 Peace hath she not and therefore cannot give.

W.S. | 18 Sept/83

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

To Harry Buxton Forman, [1883]

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | W.

Dear sir

Since my volume on Rossetti was published I have come across one or two drawings by D.G.R. which therefore do not appear in my catalogue at the end of the vol. Amongst these is a pen and ink drawing done in the Artist's 19th or 20th year — evidently the study for a later composition — “La Belle Dame Sans Merci”. On this study the following verses from Keats' beautiful poem are inscribed, but as they are somewhat differently worded from every edition I have (4) I take the liberty of asking you if you can tell me if they are part of Keats' first draft of the poem — or if they appear in any published copy.

It is a great pleasure to myself as to all lovers of Keats to know that you are engaged upon such an edition⁵⁴ as has been long looked for — and I hope its appearance is not to be delayed long.

Believe me | Yours very truly | William Sharp

Inscribed on a sepia drawing (14 7/8 by 6 7/8) by D. G. Rossetti in 1848 —

“I met a lady in the wood,
Most beautiful, a fairy’s child;
Her hair was long, her step was light,
And her eyes were wild.
I walked with her in the green shade,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sideways would she lean and sing
A fairy’s song.”

ALS Berg

To Harry Buxton Forman, [1883]

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | W.

Dear Sir

Thanks for your reply. I enclose a printed slip from the catalogue of the Burlington Fine Arts Club’s Rossetti Exhibition to open on Monday. The drawing in question has not, as you will see, the verses upon it — but the original sepia has. Two figures only in the composition, and no horse as you infer. The original would lend itself for mechanical duplication — but it is at present in the North of Scotland. In the course of six weeks I expect to see it and its owner at Oxford, and if you like would submit your letter to him — unless you would prefer to write direct and at once. I for one would be glad if your idea could be carried out.

The two other drawings I referred to are about the same time (1848 to ’51) and are illustrations to poems — one called Genevieve to Coleridge’s “Love”, and one to Sordello. Another is a design called “Poe’s Study”.

Very truly yours | in haste | William Sharp

H. Buxton Forman Esq

ALS Berg

⁵⁴ The Poetical Works of John Keats, ed. H. Buxton Forman (1884).

To Theodore Watts, October 12, 1883

(A Birthday Sonnet)

12 Oct./83.

Thou hast the crown of laurel, though thy name
 Is not yet bruited through the land as one
 Whose fire-wing'd words like falling stars have spun
Past many worlds of minds: but yet thy fame
Grows and is sure, as when a forest-flame,
 Seen first alone by few, at last doth run
 From furthest boundaries where the eastern sun
Uprises, till it rushes the west its aim.

Crowned by the few; is it not better thus
 Than with a wider praise to hear the cries
 Of those who yell their envy and their spite?
He loved and crowned you who was late with us⁵⁵ —
 This is thy truest laurel! and the wise
 Discern at last the true from tinsel light.

William Sharp

ALS British Library

To Eugene Lee-Hamilton, [early], 1884

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens | London, W.

My dear Hamilton,

We are such slaves to petty incidents that the best intentions are constantly being frustrated. I have a frequent wish to write to you — and succeed, well I won't say how seldom: but there are such innumerable little as well as important things always awaiting one's attention that I have let all my correspondence drift hopelessly behind hand. I need hardly say I often think of you, and of our pleasant morning drives. I earnestly hope you are freer from pain than heretofore, and that your Muse is no fickle jade but a constant and cherished friend. Have you been writing much lately — and is there any chance of another volume coming out within mentionable time. It was only the other day that I was reading the "New Medusa"⁵⁶ vol over again — and I was even more struck by it on this third complete perusal than on the first occasion. It is remarkably equal, and it has the altogether unusual merit of containing nothing poor — no padding! The sonnets seem to me amongst the strongest of their kind in contemporary literature. I don't know what kind of commercial success it has had, but its readers have neither been very limited nor unappreciative — not

⁵⁵ Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

⁵⁶ *The New Medusa, and Other Poems* (1882).

only in the literary world but amongst many of the outside public, as I have personally ascertained. I am curious to know what your subsequent work has been — other than the fine MS you lent to me in Florence. It must be a great pleasure to you to know as well as to hope that your poetry has appealed so strongly and (in a literary sense) so widely: and I sincerely hope (and believe) that your next volume will not only sustain but also increase the deserved reputation you have gained. I read a beautiful sonnet of yours in the yearly vol of the Art-Journal for 1883 — but of this, by the bye, I think I have already written to you.

I am looking forward to the publication of Mary Robinson's vol.,⁵⁷ very little of which I already know. You have seen Marston's *Wind-Voices*,⁵⁸ I know. It contains some very beautiful work, but on the whole it is not as fine as I had hoped. I do not think he has the vivid dramatic emotion, though he has dramatic insight. But his sonnets and lyrics are most beautiful — though the unchanging monotony of sentiment palls at last dreadfully upon even the most sympathetic reader. It is doubtless better to play well on one string than to cause frequent discords along the whole diapason of artistic endeavor — but it is a mistake to suppose that the audience of a one-stringed player will never weary. And monotony of sentiment (as in Marston's 2nd Vol, "All in All")⁵⁹ is more fatal than monotony in expression.

Mary Robinson seems well, I am glad to say — and is hard at work as you doubtless know. My cousin⁶⁰ is also working hard, in a different way, at Caldron's⁶¹ studio, and is getting on well. As for myself, I am greatly better, tho' still needing to take care. I hope to bring out my second vol. of poems late in April or early in May.⁶² I know the contents to be very much in advance of my first book — both in imaginative reach and intellectual grasp as well as descriptive power — this being endorsed by P.B.M.,⁶³ Watts, and others. Before then my *Romance*⁶⁴ will be concluded, but not published till the Autumn — and I have also a great amount of art-work in hand and other literary labour.

I can remember no other news at present — save that Swinburne is engaged upon an essay on Wordsworth which will either be extremely (and insincerely) flattering or very condemnatory.

I was visiting Pater⁶⁵ recently, and found him well and hard at work upon his slow but sure 'building'.

Give my kindest remembrances to your sister and mother — and if not too great a trouble drop me a line about yourself and your doing, which will always interest.

⁵⁷ *New Arcadia, and Other Poems* (London: Ellis and White, 1884).

⁵⁸ Published in 1884.

⁵⁹ *All in All: Poems and Sonnets* (1875).

⁶⁰ EAS

⁶¹ Philip H. Caldron was born in France in 1833, went to England in his early boyhood, and began the study of art in London in 1850. He is best known for his painting "The Day of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew" (1863).

⁶² *Earth's Voices: Transcripts from Nature: Sospitira and Other Poems* (London: Elliott Stock) was published in June, 1884.

⁶³ Philip Bourke Marston.

⁶⁴ The identity of this "Romance" is uncertain. Sharp's first published piece of prose fiction was "Jack Noel's Legacy: A Story for Boys" which appeared serially in *Young Folks' Papers*, 8 (London: James Henderson and Co., Ltd.) in 1886.

⁶⁵ Walter Pater (1839-1894).

Your affectionate friend, | William Sharp

ALS Colby College Library

To Mr. _____ Parsons,⁶⁶ [1884]

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens W. | Wendy Night

My dear Mr. Parsons

I have just returned from a brief visit to Oxford — or would have sent you the accompanying ere this.⁶⁷

I hope you may find something in it worthy of your attention — in any case accept it as a token of the regard of

Yours very truly | William Sharp

ALS Princeton

To Hall Caine, [February 11, 1884]⁶⁸

Monday night

My dear Caine

Thanks for your note. I am afraid I shall have left London by the time you return, but some Saty. or Sunday morning we must meet somewhere & renew our conversation in re bardic aims — (for I am coming up from Dover each Saty. till Monday — tho' not to Thorngate Road) —

With reference to our conversation the other night — the drift of it was to effectually put an end to my going on with the poem I was last reading. I am perhaps too indifferent to praise or blame as regards my poetic work — but I have my weak place, and that is, hostile criticism during composition of the poem — while it is yet unfinished.

But if there is anything to regret in it (which I don't know that there is) I have only myself to blame — knowing as I do my inability to take up any subject again after the spell of being possessed by it has been broken. Not even to my cousin can I venture to do this — and though she was eager to hear something of “Sospitra”⁶⁹ while I was working at it I wisely refused to gratify her. In all probability I should never have gone on with it if I had shown it — or the subsequent stanzas would not have been equal.

So I have only myself to blame that my latest bardic effort was, if not exactly nipped in the bud, at any rate prevented from blossoming into full flower.

⁶⁶ [Identify]

⁶⁷ Probably either Sharp's first volume of poetry, *The Human Inheritance*, or his second, *Earth's Voices*. If the latter, this letter would date after June 1884 when EV was published.

⁶⁸ Date from postmark on accompanying envelope. The letter was posted on Wednesday, February 13, 1884.

⁶⁹ “Sospitra” appeared in Sharp's second volume of poetry *Earth's Voices* which was published in June 1894 (London: Elliot Stock).

So it will be published almost as it stood when I read the opening verses of it to you — the addition since being a batch of asterisks and three winding-up stanzas. So I will still call it “A Record” but will add A Fragment.⁷⁰

My view of Poetry entirely coincides with what Watts⁷¹ says and you agree to — but where we perhaps differ is on the scope of Life as the only basis for true work. Two people may look over the same sea and both agree that it is the real ocean that they are looking out upon — yet to one the horizon may seem much more remote than to the other. Another instance: I possess great keenness of vision — and some time ago a friend and myself were looking up at the full moon, & owing to some atmospherical state I distinctly saw three extended rims ‘lapping’ over each other above the orb — but my friend could only make out one, and that indefinitely. I saw a little further, that is all. In a sense he would have been quite right in previously objecting to a written description wherein this phenomenon was referred to — as quite beyond the pale of experience. But what worth has negative criticism compared with positive assurance?

Perhaps this instance is not a very clear one — but I can’t go further into the question just now. The rack many people split upon is Reality. They say so-and-so is merely subjective — or it is not nature — or it is not real. To me everything is real — humanity and its passions most of all. But I do not confuse time with reality: a momentary flash of summer lightning is as real as a prolonged bonfire — a sudden gleam of moonlight on a cloudy night as the star that has been a flaming chaos for aeons past & which we call the Sun.

Moreover, as Geo. Macdonald⁷² (I think) — has said — “To the philosopher a possibility is a fact.”

If Shakespeare — greatest because widest and deepest seeing of all men — had drawn only upon life recognizable by all men at once he would not have been the supreme poet he is. He is supreme through his magnificent sanity — but it was a sanity that recognized no limits to man’s speculative insight. The truest portraitist, he was also the truest Seer. The greatest men have always realized that we are encompassed with mystery. Shakespeare, Goethe, Emerson, — how they would have smiled at the suggestion that the aim of poetry must invariably be human action.

Mostly fervently I agree with you on one point — that we have had more than enough of the personal wail. I am sick of contemporary minor verse, greatly on this score. Who, by all that’s pleasant in life, wants to hear the yaup of each damned poetaster over some fancied individual grievance which in reality is common to all men?

My advice to young bards is as follows: —

- (1.) Don’t write at all if you can do without it.
- (2.) If you do write, see first that you have something in itself worth writing about.
- (3.) Certain of the worth of your subject (whether a ‘daisy’ or ‘Humanity’) do your utmost to render its presentment in verse not only a fitting one but the fitting one.

⁷⁰ Sharp did add “A Fragment” to the title of “A Record” when it was published in *Earth’s Voices*.

⁷¹ Later Theodore Watts-Dunton.

⁷² George MacDonald (1824-1905) was a poet, novelist, and fantasy writer. His reputation lies mostly in his fairy tales, examples of which are contained in *Dealings with Fairies* (1867), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and *Lilith* (1895).

(4.) Having reached this length (knowing your powers and the direction of their development) take no heed of critical opinion save as regards the pointing out of technical flaws.

Each year — perhaps each month — brings more & more home to me the fact that the creative artist, whether painter, sculptor, poet, or novelist, must attend only to the ‘shaping’ instinct that is in him and not to what this or that contradictory critic states. We both know the truth of this in literature — and I for one see it daily in art.

Please, in futuro (after the 3rd), remember my only certain address will be
72 Inverness Terrace | Bayswater | W.⁷³

Tho’ I may tell you now that my Dover address during March & April will be
9 Herbert Terrace.⁷⁴

Please let me have back the Paper on Rossetti by Pater — as I have promised to lend it to some one this week.

Wishing you success in the North | Yours ever | William Sharp.

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

To Theodore Watts [-Dunton], February 18, 1884

13 Thorngate Road | Sutherland Gardens W. | 18:2:84

My dear Watts,

I was exceedingly sorry to hear from Caine that you have been unwell — and most sincerely hope you are quite or nearly right again.

I should like if convenient to come out and see you some evening (except Saty. & Sunday) before the 1st of March. After that date I go to Dover for 2 months.

I am greatly better — and physically as strong as a horse, so long as I don’t run or overwalk myself.

In haste | Affectionately yours | William Sharp

ALS Brotherton Library, University of Leeds

To Hall Caine, [March, 1884]

9 Hubert Terrace | Dover | Monday

My dear Caine,

Just a line to ask you to come and pay me a short visit here. I have a pleasant house at my disposal, and the scenery in the neighbourhood is endlessly charming — while I am certain the fresh bracing cliff & sea-air would do you good. Moreover, it would be very

⁷³ The home of EAS’s mother with whom she lived.

⁷⁴ “9 Herbert Terrace” was Dinah Maria Craik’s home in Dover. On hearing of Sharp’s serious illness and his need to be away from London in the winter of 1884, Mrs. Craik offered him the use of her Dover house. (See Sharp letter to D. G. Rossetti of July 28, 1881.) In October 1884, she lent her Dover house to the Sharp’s for a portion of their honeymoon.

pleasant for me to have your company. Could you come down next Friday or Saty (as suits you) for a few days say till Tuesday at any rate. You could bring your work with you, and work as much or as little as you choose.

Please telegraph to me the conclusion you come to — so that I may make consequent arrangements and as time is precious.

If you can come (as I hope) let me know the day and hour and I will meet you.

In haste | Yrs affectly | William Sharp

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

*To Elizabeth A. Sharp, April 10, 1884*⁷⁵

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 study⁷⁶ — 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 letter or inscriptions inside from the corresponding contemporary critics, philosophists, etc. M. Bourget is fortunate in his friends.

I then went to breakfast with him at a famous Café, frequented chiefly by hommes de lettres. At our table we were soon joined by Hennequin⁷⁷ and two others. After breakfast (a most serious matter!) I adjourned with Bourget to his club, La Société Historique, Cercle St. Simon, and while there was introduced to one or two people, and made an honorary member with full privileges. I daresay Bourget's name is better known to you as a poet, but generally his name is more familiar as the author of "Essais de Psychologie"—an admirable series of studies on the works and genius of Baudelaire, Renan, Gustave Flaubert, Taine, and Stendhal. He very kindly gave me a copy (which I am glad to have from him, though I knew the book already) and in it he wrote:

À William Sharp
de son confrère

Paul Bourget.

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

⁷⁵ Although this letter is dated 10 April by EAS in the Memoir, Sharp's 26 April letter to Dowden (below) clearly states that he will be in Paris from 5 May until 20 May. Since it is unlikely that Sharp made two trips to Paris, this letter may have been written on 10 May or thereabouts.

⁷⁶ Paul Charles Joseph Bourget (1852-1935), a French Catholic and conservative, wrote novels, short stories, plays, poetry, criticism and travel books. He was the author of, among others: *Essais de Psychologie* (1883), *André Cornélis* (1887), *Le Disciple* (1889), and *Un Divorce* (1904).

⁷⁷ Emile Hennequin (1858-1888) was a literary critic who wrote *Edgar Allan Poe* (1885), *La Critique Scientifique* (1888), and *Etudes de Critique Scientifique* (1890).

On Sunday, if I can manage it, I will go to Mdme. Blavatsky.⁷⁸

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,⁷⁹ the writer of the best of the many books on Raphael and an influential person in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Somebody else is to take me to look at some of the private treasures in the École des Beaux Arts. In the course of the week I am to see Alphonse Daudet, and Bourget is going to introduce me to Emile Zola.⁸⁰ As early as practicable I hope to get to Neuilly to see M. Milsand,⁸¹ 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.⁸² Amongst artists I am looking forward to meeting Bouguereau, Cormin, Puvis de Chavannes, and Jules Breton.⁸³ As much as any one else, I look forward to making the acquaintance of Guizot⁸⁴ to whose house I am going shortly with M. Bourget. There is really a delightful fraternity here amongst the literary and artistic world. And every one seems to want to do something for me, and I feel as much flattered as I am pleased. Of course my introductions have paved the way, and, besides, Bourget has said a great deal about me as a writer — too much, I know.

Memoir 95-7

To Edward Dowden, April 26, 1884

72 Inverness Terrace | Bayswater | London. W. | 26:4:84

Dear Professor Dowden,

Just a line to say that in the course of a few days you will receive through Elliot Stock a copy of my vol. of verse.⁸⁵ I have not forgotten your kind words about my first vol., and I

⁷⁸ Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891) was Helena P. Hahn until she married General Nicephore Blavatsky (whom she left within the first year of marriage). Born in Ekaterionslav, Russia, she traveled through Europe and the mid-east between 1848 to 1873. She first visited Paris in March 1873 and later that year went to America where she founded the Theosophical Society and became an American citizen. From America she went to India in 1878 and returned to Europe in February, 1884. Subsequently, she spent a good deal of time in England, but continued her travels until her death in London in 1891. Her special brand of spiritualism — with elements of eastern religions and of the kabbalah — was very attractive to young artists and intellectuals, chief among them W.B. Yeats, in the eighties and nineties.

⁷⁹ Eugène Müntz (1845-1902) was a historian of French art. Sharp's reference is to his *Raphael, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre, Son Temps* (1881).

⁸⁰ Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897) and Emile Zola (1840-1902) were eminent French novelists.

⁸¹ Joseph-Antoine Milsand (1817-1886) was a French critic and philosopher whose works include a book on Ruskin, *L'Esthétique Anglaise* (1864).

⁸² François Coppée (1842-1908) and Frederic Mistral (1830-1914) were poets, while Jean Richepin (1849-1926), a popular figure in the "Latin Quarter" of Paris, was a poet, novelist, and dramatist.

⁸³ Adolphe William Bouguereau (1825-1905) was born at La Rochelle, studied art in Paris, and became a decorative painter, best known for his "The Body of St. Cecilia Borne to the Catacombs." Fernand-Anne-Piastre Cormon (1845-1924), also an artist, was a professor at L'École des Beaux Arts. Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) painted in a traditional manner though his works have imaginative power and complexity. Jules Breton (1827-1906) was a French poet who became a member of L'Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1886.

⁸⁴ Maurice-Guillaume Guizot (1833-1892), a literary scholar, was appointed acting professor of the Department of French Language and Modern Literature at the Collège de France and, in 1874, was named to the Chair of Germanic Language and Literature at the same university. In 1882 he published a partial translation of Macaulay's essays on history and literature.

⁸⁵ *Earth's Voices, Transcripts from Nature, Sospitira, and Other Poems* (Elliot Stock: London, 1884).

earnestly hope this one may not disappoint you. Personally, it seems to me an advance in every way.

I did not see my way to putting in this book what you advised — viz some naturally poetic and striking Celtic legend — tho! I yet hope to do so — but you will find instead a rendering of a strange and very beautiful Eastern legend with which I have as yet met no one acquainted. It is called “Sospitra.”

The two other long poems are “Gaspara Stampa” (the Venetian Sappho, as some Italian chronicler has described her), and “A Record,” the latter embodying my belief in past existences on earth.

Fully half the book is devoted to nature pure and simple — under the headings “Earth’s Voices” (26 in all), “Transcripts from Nature” (first and second series), “Australian Sketches,” “Graffiti d’Italia,” Moonrise-Sketches and Rainbow-Sketches.

Amongst my shorter poems I consider I have reached my highest mark as yet in “The Shadowed Souls” and in the lines printed in italics at the end of the vol. and called “Madonna Natura.”

My next object in writing is to say that if you could get the book for review in the Academy I should be very glad indeed. I think Cotton⁸⁶ will give it into friendly hands in any case, but of course a notice by an authoritative critic is worth double that of a comparatively unknown man.

This (with characteristic bardic assurance!) is taking for granted that in the first place you thought the book worth reviewing, & in the next that you cared to do so.

I think Stock will send the book to the Academy etc. on Friday the 2nd.

If you are to be in town this summer I wd. greatly look forward to the pleasure of seeing you. Up to the 20th of May or so (from the 5th) I shall be in Paris on art-work (the Salon etc.) — but during the end of May and all June I shall be in London, & the above address would always find me.

Hoping you are well, and that before very long we shall have another volume of poems from you.

Believe me | Yours sincerely | William Sharp.

ALS TCD.

To Edward Dowden, [May 21, 1884]

53 Crowndale Road | Oakley Square | N.W.

Dear Mr. Dowden,

On my return from Paris I saw W.B. Scott & learned that you had been in town. I regret having missed you, but hope for better luck the next time you are in this wearisome metropolis.

I trust the copy of my last book I sent reached you all right — and that you found in it something to please you. You may be interested to hear that it is doing well, and that its critical reception has been gratifying in the extreme.

⁸⁶ James Cotton, editor of The Academy.

Hoping you are well, and with much interest in your present Shelley labours —

Believe me | Sincerely yours | William Sharp

ALS TCD

*To Hall Caine, [June 15, 1884]*⁸⁷

My dear Caine

If really not inconvenient, could you put me up tomorrow night? I have had, this afternoon, a narrow escape from rheumatic fever & must leave here at once. I think I have fought it down but I must not risk such another chance.⁸⁸

I have been crouching over a large fire and with my medicine have got the better of the cursed complaint.

On Tuesday I go to Inverness Terrace — but as you said Robertson⁸⁹ was not coming back till Tuesday I thought you might be able.

If in an way inconvenient, a postcard will do if you only say all right on it. Wd. come in the evening — but must go west early in day from here on urgent-matter.

Can't say how thankful I am to have escaped this sharp and sudden attack, & there's no saying what a second bout would do. Excuse a hideous scrawl, but my hands are so chilled and pained I can hardly hold the pen — and have to write at a distance —

Yrs ever | William Sharp⁹⁰

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

To Hall Caine, August 26, 1884

Orinbeg | Loch Ranza | Isle of Arran | N.B. | 26:8:'84

Just a line, my dear Caine, in the midst of pressure from urgent work and accumulated correspondence, to let you know (what I am sure you will be glad to hear for my sake) that at last my long engagement is drawing to a close, and that Lillie and I are to be married on All Saints Day — just about two months from date. What we have got to marry on, Heaven

⁸⁷ This pitiful letter is postmarked June 16, 1884, a Monday. Sharp must have written it on Sunday night for he was asking Caine to put him up on Monday night (“tomorrow night”) since he could not, or did not want to, go to Elizabeth’s mother’s house until Tuesday. How Sharp received a reply from Caine is uncertain since he had to go West on Monday morning on an “urgent matter.” According to Caine’s biographer, Sharp spent that Monday night at Caine’s house — Yarra in Worsley Road, Hampstead — where he was looked after by Caine’s fifteen-year-old mistress, Mary Chandler, and her maid. Vivien Allen, *Hall Caine: Portrait of a Victorian Romancer* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 171.

⁸⁸ “& bedroom damp” is written in the margin here.

⁸⁹ Eric Sutherland Robertson who shared rooms with Caine and served as best man to Sharp at his wedding on October 31, 1884. He edited the “Great Writers” series for Walter Scott, for which he wrote the *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (1887). He was also the author of *The Dreams of Christ, and Other Verses* (1891), *From Alleys and Valleys* (1918), and *The Limits of Unbelief; or Faith Without Miracles* (1920). In the spring of 1887 Robertson assumed the chair of Literature and Logic at the University of Lahore. Upon leaving London, he had to vacate his position as Editor of the “Literary Chair” in *The Young Folk’s Paper*. He suggested William Sharp succeed him as Editor, and Sharp did so which provided the Sharp’s a steady income for three year.

⁹⁰ This letter is written in a nearly illegible scrawl that demonstrates the pain Sharp was suffering when he wrote it.

knows — for I don't: yet I hope a plunge in the dark will not in this instance prove disastrous. It is not a plunge in the dark as regards love and friendship — and that is the main thing.

I hope you are in good health and that things are going well with you. Are you still at Yarra, & have you fixed on your next place of residence?

Loch Ranza is a lovely northern sea-loch, surrounded by lofty hills and the serrated ridges of the "Peaks of the Castles" — and for some weeks past I have been enjoying myself here greatly, & would have done so infinitely more but for the amount of work & correspondence I have daily to go through.

The other day I had a visit from the Madox Browns and Miss Blind, who drove in a buggy over the mountains from Corrie, where they are staying a few days.

I believe it is terrifically hot in London — so I hope you are going to have a change.

Is the hour of paternity drawing nigh?⁹¹ I wonder if Maccoll would accept for the Athenaeum a sonnet on "Caine's Firstborn"? I must try. If a boy, please call it "Abel", or in case this would give rise to too many poor jokes, what do you say to "Tubal". Most people would simply think you had called him after "that fellow, you know, in one of George Eliot's poems"!

After Saturday, my letter-address will be 16 Rosslyn Terrace, Kelvinside, Glasgow — and I expect to be in London about the end of September.

In haste | Affectionately yours | William Sharp

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

⁹¹ Mary Chandler had given birth to Caine's son on 15 August, and Caine immediately named him, not Abel, but Ralph Hall Caine. Caine registered his birth on 15 September as the son of Thomas Henry Hall Caine, journalist, and Mary Alice Caine, formerly Chandler. Caine considered himself married to Mary, though he was not, since he had slept with her. They married in 1886 and enjoyed a long life together.