

LIFE: 1885-1886

1885 was a busy and productive year for Sharp. He joined the staff of the *Academy*, under the editorship of James Cotton, and also contributed to the *Art Journal*, the *Examiner*, the *Athenaeum*, and *Good Words*. Following a summer holiday in a cottage on West Loch Tarbert in Argyll, Sharp developed disquieting rheumatic symptoms (*Memoir*, 122), but still managed to write in the fall a three volume sensational novel set in Scotland and Australia called *The Sport of Chance*. It was published serially in *The People's Friend* in early 1887 and, in 1888, in book form by Hurst and Blackett. In fall 1885, he also began to plan a biography of Shelly for Walter Scott's Great Writers Series which was edited by his good friend Eric Robertson and, later, by Frank T. Marzial. For this series, Sharp wrote, in addition to the Shelly (1887), biographies of Heine (1888) and Browning (1890). Also during 1885 he was appointed General Editor of a complimentary Walter Scott poetry series, the Canterbury Poets, and wrote introductions for two of its volumes, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* and *The Songs, Poems, and Sonnets of William Shakespeare*, both published in 1885. Ernest Rhys, another friend, edited a prose series for Walter Scott, the Camelot Classics, and he invited Sharp to write the introduction for De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1886). Rhys claimed (*Wales England Wed*, p. 90) that when illness in 1886 forced Sharp to delay work on the introduction he wrote it himself and signed Sharp's name.

These three series published by the Walter Scott firm marked a turning point in the marketing of English literature. The firm paved the way in the production in inexpensive format of important works of English and European literature and biographical and critical studies of important writers. Scott's early editors - Eric Robertson, Ernest Rhys, and William Sharp - were pioneers in satisfying the appetite of an increasingly literate public for important works of literature in books they could afford to buy. Through their work on the Scott volumes, the three men gained recognition and a degree of influence in London literary circles since they could parcel out volumes to their friends to write or edit. The pay for this work was modest, but not insignificant for aspiring writers. Rhys, of course, went on from the Scott firm to that of Dent where he became famous as Everyman, Editor of Everyman's Library.

Sharp's health declined again in 1886. A bout with scarlet fever in the early spring was followed by phlebitis and then a prolonged attack of rheumatic fever. For many days his life hung in the balance (*Memoir*, 125). He spent two summer months recuperating, with Elizabeth in attendance, at the country house of their friends, Mona and Henry Caird, in Northbrook, Micheldiver, Hampshire. This illness permanently damaged Sharp's heart.

With Sharp unable to work, the Sharps were desperately short of money. The Cairds helped by loaning them their house in Hampshire for the summer. In the fall some relief was provided by an unsolicited check from Alfred Austin, which came to assist a fellow poet in distress. Sharp was not entirely idle during 1886. He wrote several poems which appeared in his third volume of poetry, *Romantic Ballads and Poems of Phantasy* (1888). Three of his Scott volumes were published in 1886: 1) *Great English Painters*, which contained selected biographies from Allan Cunningham's *Lives of Eminent British Painters*; 2) *Days of the Year*, a poetic calendar compiled from the works of Alfred Austin, whose decision to help Sharp financially may have been influenced by the favorable introduction to this volume; and 3), Sharp's most popular contribution to the Scott enterprise, *The Sonnets of this Century*, which he selected and arranged and for which he wrote a lengthy preface: 'The Sonnet: Its History and Characteristics.' Most of the work on the latter volume was completed in the fall of 1885, and Elizabeth Sharp contributed substantially to the selection and arrangement of poems. Published in January, the volume sold well and was reissued several times during the year. A revised edition was published in December 1886. It continued in print, went through several editions, and became, after the turn of the century, *The Sonnets of the Nineteenth Century*. In 1886, Sharp also published serially a story for boys called 'Jack Noel's Legacy' in *Young Folk Papers* and, in May, an article in *Good Words* called 'May in Surrey.'

LETTERS: 1885-1886

To Eugene Lee-Hamilton, January 5, 1885

46 Talgarth Road | West Kensington | W. | 5:1:=85

My dear friend,

At last I find a moment wherein I am at leisure to send you a brief line concerning your last volume, the present of which has given me such genuine pleasure.¹

Among the "Poems", I like best: "Apollo and Marsyas", the "Bride of Porphyriion", "Abraham Carew", "A Pageant of Siena", and "Ipsissimus".

Among the Sonnets, "Idle Charon", "Lethe", "Signorelli's Resurrection", "The Phantom Ship", "Sunken Gold", "Torso of Venus", and the last three in the book.

If you will permit me to say so, I think your metrical gift is much more measurely than lyrical: your sonnets, your blank verse, your heroic couplets, are (to me) invariably immeasurably superior to the majority of your more formally lyrical strains, and I notice this more forcibly in the present volume than in "The New Medusa".

When I contrast "Hunting the King" with such powerful poetic efforts as "Porphyriion" or the "Wonder of the World" I cannot but be struck by the essential difference. I am convinced that in either of the two last-named it would have been impossible for you to have written such a line as

And more stars overhead came and winked

or

When their horses - mid clapping of hands tugged away,
And the live limbs of Damius resisted!

The whole of the "Introduction" I liked, and especially noted one line, "The hum of sun-ripe Nature's million strings".

There is some exquisite descriptive writing in a "Pageant of Siena", for instance, the vivid and beautiful lines of the second stanza, though it is almost invidious to pick out any single verse when all are good. I don't like the 4th line in "Ipsissimus", for I don't see how "vitals" could get "limp" with anything save some medicinal purge: but the poem as a whole is very powerful.

The sonnets have greatly charmed me: in this measure I think you are strongest. They are full at once of true poetry and vigorous mental insight and grasp, and, as in the case of "Lethe" and the "Phantom Ship," of something higher still.

There are beautiful lines in "Acheron":

¹*Apollo and Marsyas, and Other Poems* (1884).

And no other light
Evokes the rocks from an eternal night
Than the pale phosphorescence of the wave

The “Phantom Ship” seems to me worthy to rank with that splendid sonnet in your last book on the Sea-Shell. The whole of “Sunken Gold” is very fine, noticeably the last three lines of the sestet.

Altogether I most heartily congratulate you on your new volume – and hope, as I believe, it will bring you more friends and increased reputation.

Excuse a short note, but I am not very well C and am writing in bed. I have been working exceptionally hard lately, and after finishing a “Quarterly” article under great pressure I caught a rheumatic chill, which rather floored me.

Watts is greatly pleased with your work – as I dare say you saw from his review in the “Athenaeum.”² He has been unwell, but is now up again.

With sincere good wishes for you for 1885 – in which my wife heartily joins, with many kind remembrances –

Ever, my dear Hamilton, | Yours faithfully, | William Sharp

ALS Colby Library

*To Miss Violet Paget, [January 5, 1885]*³

Dear Miss Paget,

Just a line since I am writing to your brother at any rate. As I have told him, I am writing in bed, not being very well – otherwise you wd. have something more from me than a mere note. I am not going to write at length to you about “Miss Brown,” for in honesty I am bound to say that I am deeply disappointed with it, not only as a story or as a social sketch but with the manner in which it is written.⁴ You cannot but be aware of the deep offence it has given to many good friends, but of course I believe this was unintentional. I do not wish to enlarge on the subject, but will say simply that if I had never read anything else of yours, “Miss Brown” would effectually have prevented my ever reading or having the faintest curiosity to read anything from your pen.

If it were not for my sincere admiration for you as a writer of much delightful, admirable, and original work – I should not have written to you as I have now done: but it is because of my admiration for the “Vernon Lee” whom I know that I refuse to recognise as

² Theodore Watts’ review was published in the issue of December 13, 1884, pp. 764 ff.

³ This undated letter was enclosed with Sharp’s 5 January letter to Eugene Lee-Hamilton.

⁴ *Miss Brown* (1884) was Violet Paget’s first attempt at a novel. Peter Gunn, in *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget, 1856-1935* (1964), notes: “Ouida, who had experience in these matters, remarked that it showed signs of having been written at a gallop” (p. 99).

genuine or characteristic a production in every sense inferior to anything she has done.

Although this may not be a palatable compliment, it is a true compliment all the same. I think you must know what a great regard I have for your brilliant talent – (I forget if I sent you word as to the extreme pleasure I had derived from “Euphorion”⁵ – a truly remarkable series of essays) – and therefore you will not be offended, I hope, at my being so candid.

I have been working very hard lately – so much so as to render myself liable to a touch of my old trouble: but today, though still in bed, I am practically all right again. Quite a number of people looked in yesterday to see my wife, among whom were Mary Robinson and Walter Pater.

The latter and Theodore Watts are going to spend the evening with us tomorrow. Elizabeth is very busy also just now, and has got sufficient literary work to keep her busy for some time to come.

Both she and I wish health, prosperity, and all good things for you throughout 1885 – and believe me ever, dear Miss Paget,

Your sincere friend, | William Sharp

ALS Colby Library

*To Hall Caine, [mid-February, 1885]*⁶

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W.

My dear Caine,

Just a hasty line to congratulate you on the *Athenaeum* notice which can hardly fail to have a most beneficial effect on the “Shadow of a Crime.” From what Robertson told me I am most anxious to hear what you have done of your new story (in the name of which, by the bye, I don’t think you have made a hit) - so hope that some time soon after next Thursday you will do me the great pleasure of reading your MS to me. R.⁷ is quite enthusiastic about it, - and I rejoice at your success - present & prospective. I wd. have been at your “reading” the other night C but that I had to write the Pater paper for the *Athenaeum*.⁸ You have begun well - and that you may prosper continuously is the wish of

Your sincere friend | William Sharp

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

⁵ The essays collected in *Euphorion* (1884) were written by Miss Paget over several years, and many were published earlier in periodicals.

⁶ Having run serially in the *Liverpool Mercury* in the fall of 1884, *Shadow of a Crime*, Caine’s first novel, was published by Chatto and Windus in February 1885 and went through several editions. Well reviewed and widely read, this book launched Caine’s forty-year career as a popular romantic novelist.

⁷ Sharp’s friend and fellow Walter Scott editor Eric Robertson shared lodgings with Hall Caine in London..

⁸ Sharp had written a review of *Marius the Epicurean* for the *Athenaeum*.

To Edward Dowden, [?Winter, 1885]⁹

46 Talgarth Road | West Kensington | W

Dear Dowden

Your card just to hand. Don't forget that if you can arrange to spend a few days in London on your return to Ireland my wife and I wd. have sincere pleasure in putting you up. A spare bedroom always is ready for friendly occupation, C and you wd. at least have a warm welcome here.

Do you know Mrs. D. O. Hill in Edinburgh¹⁰ - the sister of Sir Noel Paton and the most eminent woman-sculptor our country has produced? She is an ardent Shelleyan - and has, moreover, produced a fine bust of Shelley.

Hoping your lectures will be highly successful, & cautioning you to be more careful against cold etc. than poor Sydney Dobell was when *he* lectured for the first & last time at the Philosophical - also trusting that you may return via London -

Sincerely yours | William Sharp.

ALS TCD

To Edward Dowden, July 22, 1885

Kilchamailly Cottage | Whitehouse | West Loch Tarbert | Cantyre | N.B.

Dear Prof. Dowden

I am writing to ask your advice (if you are not too busy with your own lity work to give heed to a casual correspondent).

I am editing a volume containing Songs, Selections from the Poems, and the Sonnets of Shakespeare.¹¹

Do you agree or disagree with me in thinking that the sonnet forming the 8th division of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, "If music and sweet poetry agree" is one of the "dark-woman" sequence in the regular series: - and that the sonnet forming the third division of the *Passionate Pilgrim* "Did not the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye" also belongs to the dark-woman sequence?

In my edition I am placing the sonnets thus

I.

Sonnets I to CXXV.

"Sonnet" CXXVI (Envoy).

⁹[Check Dowden bio to establish a more precise date.]

¹⁰ David Octavius Hill (1802-1870) was an Edinburgh landscape painter who was the first to use photography as an aid to painting. He was married to Amelia Robertson Paton, a respected sculptor who was deeply involved in the artistic and intellectual life of Edinburgh. She was the sister of the painter/poet Noel Paton

¹¹ *The Songs, Poems, and Sonnets of William Shakespeare*, ed by William Sharp (Walter Scott: London, 1885).

II.

Sonnet CXXVII.

“ Music and Poetry (but unnumber'd)

Sonnets CXXVIII to CXXXVI.

“ “Did not the heavenly rhetoric etc.” (unnumber'd)

“ CXXXVII to CLIV.

(i.e. Sonnets 127 to 154 in unbroken sequence save for the two unnumbered additions)

I have put the “Music and Poetry” second in the 2nd section (i.e. between Sonnets CXXVII & CXXVIII) because, as seems to me, internal evidence points to its connection with this series. By Sonnet CXXVIII we learn that the dark-haired mistress was a musician, hence the greater likelihood of his addressing her in such lovers' logic as we find in this 8th division of the *Passionate Pilgrim*. I at one time fancied it might have been written as a pendant to Sonnet VIII, but here the internal evidence is not nearly so strong, is indeed antagonistic to the conjecture. The octave of No. VIII seems to be a reproach against S's friends' indifference to music, hardly agreeing with the assertion in lines 4-5 and 9-10 of “Music and Poetry,” while the statement “*You* delight specially in sweet music, I in sweet poetry” harmonizes with what we could well imagine S. saying to his dark mistress.

Again, I have placed it before no. CXXVIII, because it seems to be the fitting prelude to that sonnet.

“*Did not the heavenly rhetoric etc.*”

I have inserted this between Sonnets CXXXVI and CXXXVII, because it seems to me to fit in here with peculiar applicability. It is the last time in this series that S. hints there is anything more in his love than thralldom to a strong and subtle passion: while there is also a suggestion of the feebleness of spiritual resolution struggling against the “power of the flesh,” of vows being as vapour, with the half-passionate half cynical conclusion

“If by me broke, what fool is not so wise
To break an oath, to win a paradise.

To the possible objection that S. would never have addressed the lady of the 130th Sonnet as “Thou fair sun” etc. (10th line) there could be opposed the line in the 147th Sonnet
C

“For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright”

(or, again, the 13th line of No. 152).

Of course these additions to the regular sequence being merely conjectural, I would never dream of numbering them, thus throwing out the universally recognized numerical arrangement- and every reader, noting them as conjectural additions, can include them or not

as he or she thinks fit. The only book of yours I have beside me here is the delightful Parchment edition of the Sonnets, and from this I have not gathered what conjecture you may entertain on the subject.¹² Even if you shd. consider it highly probable that the two sonnets in question were originally (or subsequently to the nominal completion) meant for the Dark-Woman series, you may totally disagree with my placement.

Though an ardent student of Shakespeare from the individual standpoint I have but (comparatively speaking) limited acquaintance with the mass of Shakespearian annotation, - moreover, I am here remote from all authorities, save the two books I have with me, viz: the Globe edn. of Shakespeare's works and your Parchment Sonnets: So, for all I know to the contrary, these views of mine may have been already urged.

But I should be very glad to hear what you, one of the foremost authorities, have to say on the subject. I have written to no one else, as at present I wish neither my proposed additions discussed nor my editing the volume to be known. The book may be out in the late autumn, but of course an editor has nothing to do with the appearance of commissioned work.

I hope you are getting on with your "Shelley" - for the publication of which I have been all the more anxious since the issue of Jeaffreson's most unnecessary and (to me) objectionable book, which, however, I only know by many lengthy quotations, as I have no wish to wade through it in detail.¹³ I hope also that your many labours have not prevented your accomplishing some work in verse.

I came here from London some weeks ago, with my wife and a young sister who lives in Glasgow. I forget, by the by, whether I ever told you that I was married late last autumn? I am always glad to get north, both loving and knowing the Western Isles and Highlands, and all places whereover broods the Celtic glamour. West Loch Tarbert is one of the loveliest of the Atlantic sea-lochs: severing Knapdale (Northern Argyll) from "wild Cautyre," its length is about 11 miles, from its commencement east of the islands of Giglia and Islay up to the narrow Isthmus of Tarbert on the western side of Loch Fyne. From our windows we get a lovely view up the loch, looking out on the mountainous district of Knapdale and the small-islanded water towards Tarbert. To the North-east is Shobli-Ghoil - the Hill of Love - the mountain where that Celtic Achilles, Diarmid, met his death by a wound in the heel through the envy of Fingal. Behind us are endless moorlands, and only one or two cottages at wide distances. I have a stirring and heroic Celtic subject in my mind for poetic treatment, and hope to make a start with it ere long. What with a measure of work, boating, bathing, walking, Royal Fern hunting, and occasional fishing the days fly past rapidly. We live as

¹² Dowden's *Sonnets by William Shakespeare* (London: C. K. Paul and Company) was published in 1889.

¹³ John Cordy Jeaffreson (1831-1901) was the author of *The Real Shelley, New Views of The Poet's Life*, 2 vols, (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1885). Among his other books are *Novels and Novelists, From Elizabeth to Victoria* (1858), *A Book About Lawyers* (1866), and *The Real Lord Byron* (1883).

simply as possible - chiefly on milk and eggs and butter, on trout from a little tarne in the moorland behind, and Loch Fyne herrings (40 for 1/!!).

It will be with regret that we will leave at the end of the month - but we have two or three other places to go to in Scotland before returning to London - which we do not intend doing till the end of September. When in London I hope you will come and see us: I think you have my address, but in case you have not, I add it - 46 Talgarth Road | West Kensington | W.

Hoping you are well and having a pleasant summer, I remain

Very sincerely yours | William Sharp

P.S. I enclose [for] you copies of the last sonnet & last lyric I have written, thinking you might care to read them.

ALS TCD

[To Theodore Watts, October 12, 1885]

To A Poet.

Out of the heart flew a pray'r
Till far in the blue sky
It met a thought, most fair,
That all alone did fly:

“O whither, golden pray'r?”
“Pray come with me, fair thought –
Thou shalt make the world more fair,
For long it hath thee sought.”

This prayer is born of me:
O may it meet its mate –
For the generations then
Thy name shall consecrate.

W.S

To Theodore Watts | On a New Year C Oct. 12. =85

APS British Library

To William Allingham,¹⁴ November 11, 1885

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington, | W. | 11:11:=85

¹⁴ Born at Ballyshannon, Donegal, William Allingham (1824-1889) knew Leigh Hunt, was a friend of Tennyson, and associated with the Pre-Raphaelites. He edited *Fraser's Magazine* from 1874-1879. He was the author of *Poems* (1850), *Day & Night Songs* (1854), *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland* (1864), *Irish Songs and Poems* (1888), and a posthumous volume entitled *Varieties in Prose* (1893). *Sonnets of This Century* was published by the Walter Scott firm in January 1886. See below.

Dear Sir,

I am about to bring out a selection of the Best Sonnets of this Century, giving to all save the very foremost sonneteers (Wordsworth, Rossetti, Mrs. Browning) an average of two representative sonnets. I have always much admired your work in this direction, and should be glad to see you represented by *three*.

As beautiful sonnets and *coming within my strictly defined plan*, I have selected

I. “*Autumnal Sonnet*”

II. “*After Sunset*”

(“The vast and solemn company of clouds”) from a little book edited by Isa Knox Craig, in 1863.)

III. *A Day Dream’s Reflection*

(“On the Sunny Shore”) “Checkered with woven shadows as I lay”

I should be glad to hear that you are agreeable to my representing you by these three sonnets.

Yours faithfully | William Sharp

William Allingham Esq | etc. etc

ALS University of Illinois

*To Wilfred S. Blunt,*¹⁵ *November 11, 1885*

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W. | 11:11:=85

Dear Sir,

I am shortly going to bring out a Selection of the Best Sonnets of This Century (i.e. from Wordsworth’s down to those of contemporary date), and would certainly not consider it complete if your fine sonnet-work were unrepresented.

¹⁵ Wilfred Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), poet, traveler, and explorer, served in the British diplomatic service from 1858-1870. Later he became an opponent of British imperialism and supported Egyptian, Indian, and Irish nationalist movements. In Ireland he was arrested and imprisoned for two months. His publications include *Love Sonnets of Proteus* (1881), *Future of Islam* (1882), *Ideas About India* (1885), *Griselda: A Society Novel in Rhymed Verse* (1893), and *My Diaries* (1919-1920).

I have allowed an average of two to each writer of genuine standing, but in your case I have determined to give *five*. These I have already selected (subject to your consent), and are as follows – having been chosen not only as specially fine sonnets but as coming within my strictly-defined rules in selection.

From “*Proteus*”

“An Exhortation”	p 33
“Vanitas Vanitatis”	p 53
“The Pride of Unbelief”	p 97
“On the Shortness of Time”	p 103
“The Sublime”	p 113

I should be glad to hear that you are agreeable to being represented by this selection. Allow me to take this opportunity of expressing the very great pleasure I have again and again had in “The Love Sonnets of Proteus” – and the genuine satisfaction I have in being able to draw the attention of some others thereto.

Yours faithfully | William Sharp

Wilfred S. Blunt Esq | etc. etc.

P.S. I would have written to you sooner but that I fancied you were abroad. I hope it is the case, as I understand, that you are now in England – as the Sonnet-matter must be “struck off” at once.

ALS West Sussex Record Office

To James Ashcroft Noble,¹⁶ November 11, 1885

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington.W

Dear Sir,

I am shortly going to bring out a Selection of the Best Sonnets of this Century (with a lengthy introductory dissertation on the Sonnet as a vehicle of poetic thought and on its history and place in English literature) and I should be pleased to see you represented therein.

I have already (subject to your approval) marked down “A Supreme Hour” – but if there is any other you would rather be represented by I would be agreeable. I *might* be able to print two but cannot fix anything definitely just yet.

I know that the subject is one of interest to you, your essay being one of the best dissertations on the sonnet that I know.

Yours faithfully | William Sharp

¹⁶ James Ashcroft Noble (1844-1896) was a writer and critic. Among his publications are *Morality in English Fiction* (1886), *Impressions and Memories* (1895), *The Poets and the Poetry of the Century* (1903).

J. Ashcroft Noble Esq

ALS, private

To Edward Dowden, [November 12, 1885]¹⁷

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W.

Dear Mr. Dowden

I am shortly going to bring out a selection of the Best Sonnets of This Century, and would certainly not consider my selection complete if you were unrepresented.

I have always greatly admired your sonnet-work, and give practical proof thereof in the fact that while I am giving each writer (with the exception of Wordsworth and Rossetti) an average of *two*. I have selected *five* of your sonnets: viz:

“An Interior”

“Evening near the Sea”

“Awakening”

“Two Infinities”

“Brother Death”

These seem to me specially fine and at the same time come within my strictly defined plan.¹⁸

I should be glad to hear that you are agreeable to my using the above.

The principles which have in the main actuated my choice are (1) Structural correctness -

(2) Individuality, with distinct poetic value - and (3) adequacy of sonnet-motive.

The book will be out towards the end of January, & will also contain an exhaustive essay on the Sonnet as a poetic vehicle and on its place and history in English literature.

My little book of Shakespeare's Songs, Sonnets, & Selected poems, should be out on the 1st proscimo - and I shall take pleasure in sending you a copy.¹⁹

Hoping you will come and see me when next you are in London -

Sincerely yours | William Sharp

P.S. I have just had a line from our mutual friend, Wm Bell Scott²⁰: he is stronger, but the doctor won't let him travel - so he will spend the winter at Penkill in Ayrshire. Poor old fellow.

ALS TCD.

¹⁷ Date from postmark on envelope.

¹⁸ All eventually appeared in the order listed here in Sharp's *Sonnets of this Century*.

¹⁹ Published by Walter Scott in the Canterbury Poets Series in December 1895.

²⁰ See WS letter to W. B. Scott 22 April 1882, fn.

To John Addington Symonds, November 12, 1885

12:11:85.

My dear Mr. Symonds,

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

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

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

Sincerely yours, | William Sharp

Memoir 113

To Edward Dowden, November 14, 1885²¹

Dear Mr. Dowden,

Thanks for your note. You may rest assured as to accuracy in printing - as I shall in each case compare with the original, word with word & punctuation with punctuation. A sonnet above all things loses thro' some small flaw.

W. Bell Scott's address is

Penkill Castle | Girvan | Ayrshire

I know he will be greatly pleased at a friendly line from you.

Yrs. sincerely | William Sharp

ACS TCD.

To The Reverend R. P. Graves,²² November 18, 1885

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. W. | 18:11:85

²¹ Date from postmark.

²² Robert Perceval Graves was a friend and biographer of Sir William Hamilton. He was the recipient of Hamilton's voluminous papers and letters upon the latter's death. Graves wrote the 2040 page *Life of Sir William Rowan Hamilton, Including Selections from His Poems, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous Writings*, 3 vol. (1882-1889; addendum, 1891).

Dear Sir

I am very shortly going to bring out a selection of the Best Sonnets of this Century, and would regret not seeing Sir W. R. Hamilton²³ represented therein. Can you tell me if I am at liberty to excerpt any one, or two Sonnets I may decide upon? I write to you, as I think you are Editor of his "Remains."

Faithfully yours | William Sharp

The Reverend R. P. Graves | Dublin

ALS Private

To Edward Dowden, [December, 1885]

46 Talgarth Road | West Kensington | W.

My dear Mr. Dowden

May your Xmas be pleasant and 1886 a happy and prosperous year. Is there anything of interest to you in your Shelley work in the enclosed note of Leigh Hunt? A great mass of material has lately come into my hands C with much of interest relating to Keats & others, including Shelley.²⁴ I am engaged, spiderlike, in absorbing it before I spin it out again in book-form - a book bound to be widely interesting to all lovers of literature on a/c of its bearings on the revered names of two of our great poets of this century, besides "many other attractions" as theatrical slang has it.

I have not had time to examine it except very superficially, yet: but I have made one or two most important "finds." One of the features of my book when it does appear (probably not for 18 months yet at any rate)²⁵ will be the *Adonais* with ample notes by Joseph Severn, a commentary of exceeding interest.

But all this is private, of course.

Again with all good wishes -

²³ Sir William Rowan Hamilton (1805-1865) was an important mathematician who also wrote poetry. He was friends with both Wordsworth and Coleridge. In 1827, while still an undergraduate, he was named Andrews Professor of astronomy at Trinity College in Dublin. He was the author of *General Method in Dynamics* (1834), *Lectures on Quaternions* (1853) and *The Elements of Quaternions* (1866).

²⁴ Sharp must be referring to the papers of Joseph Severn which were given to him by Severn's son Walter on the condition that he write a biography of the artist and diplomat who nursed Keats in his last illness in Rome. EAS dates the occasion of this understanding as the early Spring of 1889 or 1890, but this letter shows it was much earlier, perhaps in the Spring of 1885. EAS describes the occasion as follows: "We spent a week-end in Surrey with some old friends of my mother, Sir Walter and Lady Hughes, and one morning Mr Walter Severn, the painter, walked over to luncheon. He spoke about my husband's Life of Rossetti, then of the quantity of unpublished MSS. he and his family had written by and relating to his father, Joseph Severn, 'the friend of Keats.' Finally, he proposed that his listener should take over the MSS., put them in form and write a Life of Severn, with, as the special point of literary interest, his father's devoted friendship with and care of the dying poet." Working on the Severn papers and life, according to EAS, brought Sharp into pleasant relationship not only with Mr. Walter Severn, and with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, but also with Ruskin, who he visited later at Coniston.

²⁵ Sharp did not finish the Severn book until August 1891, and it was published (Sampson Low and Co.) in February, 1892.

Sincerely yours | William Sharp

P.S. Please let me have the Leigh Hunt letter back when you have read it.

ALS TCD

*To Wilfred Meynell,*²⁶ [late 1885?]

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W.

My dear Mr. Meynell,

If you could do anything towards “placing” my novel²⁷ in another quarter for me I should be much obliged.

It has just been accepted by the “*People’s Friend*,” an influential weekly paper published in Dundee and having a large circulation in Scotland and the north of England and Ireland. I retain all rights save that of permitting any other journal to print the story in advance of “*The People’s Friend*.” I should be specially glad if it could run (beginning sometime next Spring, the “P.F.” not intending to issue it till the end of February or perhaps later) in some Australian paper – partly because of my connection with that country and partly because some important chapters have an Australian “background”, the scenery and incidents introduced having been written from actual memory and not at second-hand.

“*False Lights*” is a story of exciting incident: it is what is generally called melodramatic, but this in the right sense – and strange and almost incredible as some of the incidents may appear they are all true to fact, though of course, the *real* incidents did not happen sequently as in *False Lights*, but at different times and in various parts of the civilised and uncivilised world where I have sojourned.

The 2 opening chapters describe a terrible storm that visited the Cornish Coast a long time ago: here a character is introduced that much later is destined to play an active part, and here occurs a shipwreck, with the saving of a single life – a rescue on which the whole plot depends.

After this prelude comes the story itself. The scene is in Perthshire, and deals mainly with a fever, strange mystification anent a forgery on the hero, Hew Armitage, by a person who is really Hew’s wife’s brother – though of this Mr. Armitage knows nothing, not even the fact of the brother’s existence. The mystery deepens, and there is a gradual intensifying of interest on this and other counts. At last comes an accident to Mrs. H.A. – her child is prematurely born – she has brain fever, but is left in that curious state wherein, while

²⁶ Likely the husband or son of Alice Meynell, Wilfred Meynell was a literary agent. [Identify more precisely].

²⁷ This novel, here called *False Lights*, ran serially in *The People’s Friend* as *The Deathless Hate*. It was published in 1888 in three volumes as *The Sport of Chance* (London: Hurst and Blackett, Ltd.). See *Memoir* (121-9) for a discussion of its reception. Sharp began writing the work in the fall of 1885 and submitted it to *The People’s Friend* for a contest. He did not win the prize of £100, but the editor accepted it for publication.

reasonable in most things, she has a sudden insuperable dislike and dread of her husband. He never fully realises this, & when at last she secretly leaves the house he is played upon by the villain Leith (the brother) – so that – to be brief – he becomes convinced that his wife and Leith have gone off together. Later chapters describe his despair and further action, his exciting rencontre with Charles Leith, the latter's escape and his plans of mystification to which H.A. succumbs, and at last H.A.'s pursuit of the couple (as he thinks) to Australia. (Leith has sailed, but of course alone)

Book II. describes Mona Armitage's flight – her shelter with an old highland nurse – and her tragic death. Also second-sight is introduced. The child born is left with the nurse – every precaution being taken.

In Bk III there is described the running down of Leith's vessel by that in which H.A. is a passenger – and their subsequent terrible adventures. Then comes Australia, and his long chase of Leith there – with various exciting incidents – and at last he tracks him down in Queensland. Ultimate escape of Leith. The unhappy H.A. makes his way home again, but it is on this voyage that the wreck takes place on the Cornish Coast described in the prelude. In the shock, H.A. loses absolutely his memory – and for 20 years remains thus – an actual fact by the way.

Meanwhile the girl Lora grows up – makes good friends – and finds a lover. Suddenly a guardian appointed by her dead father (as it appears) turns up in the shape of a Mr. Farquhar (really Leith).

The plot becomes intricate & more exciting than ever, & chapter by chapter things evolve towards a long-way-off but ultimately satisfactory denouement.

The story was written for serial publication – and it would run to 32 installments of about 3 cols each (average newspaper columns).

Any further information that would be wanted I would willingly afford at once.

Sincerely yours | William Sharp.

P.S. In enclosing [for] you some press opinions on my books I send nothing anent any work in fiction, for what I have hitherto done in that way has been under a pseudonym which I particularly wish to stick to without identifying it with my own name. Although I have a story running through a monthly magazine just now no one knows that the author – Mr. "Blank" – is me, save a few necessary persons – and even my wife has not read my serial – so you can see my secret has been well kept: nor do I intend to let it eke out if I can help it.

To Wilfred Meynell, [late 1885?]

46, Talgarth Road., | West Kensington, | W.

My dear Mr. Meynell,

Just as I was about to send for the enclosed, with a supplementary note, I received a letter from the Proprietors of the *People=s Friend* stating that they would prefer that “False Lights” (a name that is to be changed, by the bye – at any rate in the first instance)²⁸ did not appear elsewhere simultaneously.

They add that this will be no real drawback to me, as neither an Australian nor an English journal is likely to object to print a story that has run through a paper whose circulation is in great part confined to Scotland. If it could be managed, I should like to have it run through some Australian paper *after* its appearance in the *People’s Friend* and *before* its issue in book-form – beginning in Australia say at the commencement of 1887. It would be more satisfactory if some arrangement could be made now – but if this can’t be managed, and if the matter were still “open” for consideration later on I should be willing next Spring to submit duplicate proofs as they come out.²⁹ Of course if I could arrange satisfactorily otherwise I would do so – as I would rather have the matter settled.

Of course this must be a business arrangement – as indeed it is only right it should be. If you should be able to “place” my story anywhere, you must of course accept the commission customary in such cases. None the less am I sensible of your friendly interest – and with sincere regards to Mrs. Meynell,

Believe me, cher confrère, | Yours very truly | William Sharp.

P.S. If you could let me have a copy of the *Register* I shd. be much obliged.

ALS Fales Library, New York University

To Frederick Langbridge, [?January 15, 1886]

This is my “permanent address.” | 46 Talgarth Road | West Kensington. W.

My dear Mr. Langbridge

I was glad to hear from you again. Like you, I fancied that your old address no longer held good – for when last year (1884) I sent you a copy of my second vol. of verse – *Earth’s Voices* – I never heard from you in reply. Perhaps, on the other hand, you never received it: if so, you must permit me to remedy the mischance at this late date.

²⁸ It was changed to *A Deathless Hate*. See previous note. Sharp believed his serial novel would start running in *The People’s Friend* in the Spring of 1886. It did not begin until early 1887.

I forget whether I was in Italy or Belgium or France when I last heard from you – or where: anyway, I think it is since then that I “married my old love” and have since been correspondingly happy – neither of us regretting that as yet no children have made their appearance. My wife’s first book is to be out this Spring,³⁰ but she has had literary experience before this, though she is more the artist and musician than the writer.

I am glad that you have collected your charming ballads into a volume³¹ (one or two of which, dipping into the uncut volume, I find to be old acquaintances) and as soon as I have the leisure I will read the book through and write to you my opinion thereon.

I am frantically busy at present with an appalling amount of literary work of different kinds to attend to: and I only returned yesterday from the Lake Country where I have had the honour and pleasure of being Ruskin’s guest for a most delightful visit – so you will understand my present inability to read the volume you have so kindly sent to me.

My sonnet-book is to be published tomorrow.³² It consists of 265 select sonnets, with a prefatory essay on the sonnet of about 70 pages, and about 60 pages of notes in nonpareil type on the authors represented. If I can get Scott’s people to allow me another copy – which is uncertain – I shall send you one. They look upon it more as a splendid advt. than as a paying thing, as you may imagine when I tell you it consists of 400 pages. I think he has made all arrangements for a long time to come, and not accessible to any new offers.

Meanwhile I must say *au revoir*.

Sincerely Yours | William Sharp

ALS Princeton

To Edward Dowden, February 3, 1886

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W. | 3:2:=86

My dear Dowden,

Many thanks for your most kindly worded notice of my “*Shakespeare’s Songs and Sonnets*” in the “*Academy*” of last week which I have just seen - a pressure of correspondence, proof-correcting, and other literary work having prevented my glancing through that paper heretofore. Ten days ago I sent to you a copy of my just published

³⁰ George F. Ferris, *Great Musical Composers: German, French and Italian*, ed. with an introduction by Mrs. W. Sharp, The Camelot Classics (London: Walter Scott, 1887).

³¹ Frederick Langbridge, *Sent Back by the Angels, and Other Ballad of Home Life* (London: Simpkin & Co., 1886).

³² *Sonnets of This Century*, ed. and arranged, with a critical introduction, by William Sharp (London: Walter Scott, 1886). It was published in mid-January 1886; thus the date of this letter. The book proved to be very popular, and was reprinted several times before Sharp made some revisions in it during the summer and fall of 1886 for a new edition in 1887. Sharp was hired by the Scott firm to prepare this anthology and later to revise it so he did not share in the book’s long term financial success. He told Dowden (3 February 1886), however, that the publishers had “behaved very decently,” to him, implying his satisfaction with the payment he received for the book from the Scott firm.

“*Sonnets of this Century*,” which duly reached you, I hope. I trust you like the appearance of your five beautiful sonnets therein. I believe there is a great run upon the book - of which I am glad for the publisher’s sake, as they behaved very decently to me.

There are several provoking misprints - but these I hope to rectify before long. I trust your’s are free from flaws of this kind? I hope you will be in London this Spring that we may meet at last.

In haste | Sincerely yours | William Sharp

ALS TCD

To Eric S. Robertson, [early February, 1886]

46 Talgarth Road, W.

My dear Friend,

I join with Lillie in love and earnest good wishes for you as man and writer. Accept the accompanying two sonnets as a birthday welcome.³³

There are two “William Sharps” – one of them unhappy and bitter enough at heart, God knows – though he seldom shows it. The other poor devil also sends you a greeting of his own kind. Tear it up and forget it, if you will.

But sometimes I am very tired – very tired.

Yours ever, my dear Eric, | W.S.

TO ERIC SUTHERLAND ROBERTSON

(On his birthday, 18:2:86)

I.

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

Let not spring’s breath blow vainly past thine heart,
Dear friend: for Time grows ruinously apace:
Yon tall white lily in its holy grace
The winds will draggle soon: for an unseen dart

³³ Of this letter and the two sonnets, EAS wrote: “The opening of the new year 1886 - from which we hoped much - was unpropitious. A wet winter and long hours of work told heavily on my husband, whose ill-health was increased by the enforced silence of his ‘second self’” (*Memoir*, 124). This letter and the sonnets were written in a state of dejection resulting from these circumstances. Soon after writing this letter, Sharp became seriously ill.

Moves ever hither and thither through each place,
Nor know we when or how our life 'twill part.

II

A little thing it is indeed to die:
God's seal to sanctify the soul's advance –
Or silence, and a long enfevered trance.
But no slight things is it – ere the last sigh
Leaves the tired heart, ere calm and passively
The worn face reverent grows, fades the dim glance –
To pass away and pay no recompense
To life, who hath given to us so gloriously.

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

Memoir 124-5

To Hall Caine, [?February, 1886]

46, Talgarth Road | West Kensington. | W.

My dear Caine,

I have sent the undernoted para: to the *Athenaeum*, among one or two other bits of gossip. It has just occurred to me that you [may] not be agreeable to its appearance - & if this be the case, drop me a line and I will countermand it. (I suppose you got the "Sonnet-Book" all right?)³⁴

Yours in haste | William Sharp

"We understand that Mr. Hall Caine, in collaboration with Mr. Robert Buchanan, is engaged on the dramatisation of his highly successful novel of last season, *The Shadow of a Crime*."³⁵

ALS Manx Museum, Isle of Man.

To Theodore Watts³⁶, February 15, [1886]

15.2.1886

My dear Watts,

I have not a copy of the reissue of the *Sonnets of this Century*, or I would send it to

³⁴Sharp's *The Sonnets of this Century*.

³⁵Nothing came of Caine's plan to collaborate with Robert Buchanan on a dramatization of *The Shadow of a Crime*. The latter was published serially in the *Liverpool Mercury* in the fall of 1884 and in book form by Chatto & Windus (London) in February, 1885. See Vivien Allen's *Hall Caine, Portrait of a Victorian* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

³⁶Later Watts-Dunton. The date A15-2-1886" is written at the top of the first page of the MS letter in another hand.

you. Browning's sonnet is all right (as are Symonds's) and the old boy wrote me such a nice letter there anent this morning.

I have had a preposterous letter from that ass Pfeiffer³⁷ this morning about Symonds' reference to Mrs. Pfeiffer in his article. He thinks it an insult to class her with such names – & says she is acknowledged *by all the best judges* as the first living sonneteer: that she and Rossetti are the acknowledged masters of the craft, & so forth: and that Symonds is one of the ring of London authors banded together to depreciate his wife.

What a fool the man is.

Ever yours affectly | William Sharp

ALS Brotherton Library, University of Leeds

*To Theodore Watts, August 14, 1886*³⁸

Northbrook | Micheldever | Hants

My Dear Watts,

I sent you a line by this morning's post, acknowledging receipt of your letter and sonnet-matter.³⁹

Best thanks again for all the trouble you have taken with the latter. Your suggestions are always valuable, and in the majority of instances I have acted upon them. I think I shall adopt, pretty well in your own words, those on pp. 313 & 320 – and undoubtedly they do, as you say, enrich the notes. I quite agree with the Swinburne additions. What a charming subject you have in the *Rosy Scar*, and the sonnet is worthy of it – though I must say my ear revolts at *leaned* (1st line) and *wind* as rhymes.

I won't forget to let you see the proofs of all the prose matter (Introdn. & notes) – also your own sonnets – *if you will give me your address*, for there is no time to lose. The book is to appear in October (but don't announce it yet, please) – and I send the Introdn. to

³⁷ J. E. Pfeiffer (d. 1889) was a German merchant who lived in London. He married Emily Jane (Davis) Pfeiffer (1827-1890) in 1853. She was a poet who prided herself on her ability as a sonneteer. Her many publications include *Glan Alarch* (1877), *The Rhyme of the Lady of the Rock* (1884), and *Woman and Work* (1888), for which she collected periodical articles on the subject of women's social position.

³⁸ Date from postmark on envelope. The absence of letters between February and August 1886 is due partially to the fact that Sharp's serious illness prevented him from writing many. The Sharps were staying at the country house of Henry and Mona Caird in Hampshire at this time. See introduction to this section and *Memoir*, 125ff.

³⁹ Sharp had asked Watts (or Watts had volunteered) to read the proofs of a revised edition of *Sonnets of this Century*. Page 314 of this edition contains the notes to Swinburne's sonnets, and pages 320ff contain the notes to Watts' sonnets. A letter from Watts to Sharp in the *Memoir* (114-15) dated 8 January 1886 indicates that Watts had changed the order of printing of his five sonnets when the first edition was being printed and sent the revised sequence directly to the printer. Someone must have complained that the book was in press since he told Sharp he would be "vexed, indeed, if the printers are put to trouble." In the revised edition of 1887, Watts substituted his sonnet called "The First Kiss" for "The Damsel of the Plain." Watts, who was on the staff of the *Athenaeum* and wielded a good deal of influence from that position, was especially concerned about his contributions and Swinburne's to the *Sonnets* volume and about what Sharp said about them in his notes. Sharp was grateful for Watts' input.

the printer on Monday (16th).⁴⁰

Thanks for lending me your interesting sonnet article – which I won't forget to return to you early next week. I have been reading with interest your review of Stevenson's book⁴¹: I like the article much, & think R. L. S. will be greatly pleased. By the by, I think I recognised your hand in a notice of a new novel by Robinson⁴² some two or three weeks ago. When *is* Aylwin⁴³ to be out: I wish you would send me the proofs of the 3rd vol; do, like a good fellow.

I am gaining strength very satisfactorily.⁴⁴ My doctor ran down to see me before going off to Canada on his autumn holiday, and he told me he could now find no trace of heart disease, though I undoubtedly inherited from the Rheumatic fevers (the recent attack & that of 5 years ago) a heart-complaint which would require my care for a year or so to come. I am not to work too hard, and never after the afternoon. This is all very well, but whether I can keep to such orders is a different matter.

I heard today from the Newspaper Press Fund. My application was considered a thoroughly just one – but alas! the amount of the grant they have made to me is only £25 – which won't go far to meet material and other bills. However, I daresay I'll pull through all right somehow.

I shall be here till about the 25th at any rate – after that date my movements are as yet somewhat uncertain, so, unless you hear from me to the contrary, my best address will be 46 Talgarth Road.

What have you arranged to do for Eric Robertson's series?⁴⁵ G. Borrow, I suppose, if any. And have you heard if Meredith is going to do Rossetti? I have promised to undertake Shelley, though not among the first 6 or 8 volumes.⁴⁶

Yours ever affectly | William Sharp

⁴⁰ The publication of the revised edition was delayed until December.

⁴¹ *Kidnapped; being the adventures of David Balfour in the year 1751* (London: Cassell & Co., 1886).

⁴² Probably Frederick William Robinson (1830-1901), a novelist, periodical writer, and critic. His publications include *Grandmother's Money*; *Jane Cameron*; *Lazarus in London*; *Owen, a Waif*; and *Mattie, a Stray*.

⁴³ *Aylwin* was published in London by Hurst and Blackett in October, 1898.

⁴⁴ Sharp was ill during the early months of 1886, and he contacted scarlet fever and phlebitis in the spring. That was followed by a life-threatening case of rheumatic fever. After ten straight weeks in bed, he was well enough to go with Elizabeth to Micheldever in August where the Cairds had given them their house - Northbrook - for six weeks. There, in the peaceful setting and warm sunshine, Sharp recovered, but his heart was permanently damaged. He was only thirty years old at this time. Through most of the year, he was unable to bring in the money from journalistic work on which the Sharps depended. They were saved from dire circumstances in the fall by a "substantial check" from Alfred Austin who asked that it be repaid not to him but to "someone else who stood in need" (*Memoir* 125-6).

⁴⁵ The *Great Writers Series* which Eric Robertson edited for Walter Scott.,

⁴⁶ No volume on either Borrow or Rossetti appeared in the *Great Writers* series. Sharp's volume on Shelley, number 11 in the series, was published in Fall, 1887.

P.S. Don't forget to let me know your address when you leave town *and* please don't forget to send me proofs of the 3rd vol of *Aylwin*.

ALS Edinburgh University Library

To Frederick Shields, September 7, 1886

Northbrook House | Micheldever | Hants | 7:9:=86

My dear Shields,

It was a true pleasure to me to see your handwriting again. I am sorry to see that you are in London during this fine weather – but perhaps you have already had a change somewhere.

Since Dr. Moir left for his holiday I have progressed slowly but steadily. I am not of course robust yet, but I can now walk a fair distance (half a mile or so) without fatigue. The quiet and fresh air here have done us both good – but the place is a little relaxing.

I am not sure yet when we shall be settled in town again – probably about the middle or latter part of October. After leaving here we go for “bracing up” to Edinburgh for a fortnight or so – and then I hope I shall see Sir Noel Paton. I had a long letter from him about a fortnight ago. In it he wrote “Shields’ drawing for Lady Dundas⁴⁷ is *very* fine. He sent it here some time ago, where it awaits her coming north – and as yet I am ashamed to say I have only acknowledged it by a brief telegram. But heaven help me! What can I do? Correspondence becomes more & more impracticable.”

I am afraid he is far from being up to the mark. We are going to stay for a week with Mrs. D. O. Hill (his sister, and a well-known sculptor)⁴⁸ – & I am much looking forward to seeing her again. No nobler-natured woman was ever born.

I still write very little – so excuse more at present. My wife sends her kindest remembrances to you both – and I am ever, my dear Shields

Affectionately Yours | William Sharp

P.S. I look forward to seeing you again soon after we settle down once more.

ALS Spencer Library, University of Kansas

To Ford Madox Brown, September 13, 1886

Northbrook House | Micheldever | Hants. | 13th Sep/86

Dear Mr. Brown,

Thanks for your note and kind invitation. Since I wrote to you our plans have

⁴⁷ [Identify]

⁴⁸ See note to Winter, 1885 letter to Edward Dowden.

changed, and we do not now expect to be in the Manchester neighborhood until next Spring. My doctor thinks I want bracing & that [I] should go to my native air – so my wife and I go shortly to Edinburgh.

Otherwise I – or rather my wife and I would have had genuine pleasure in accepting your kind invitation.

I am pretty sure to take a run down to Manchester either in the winter or in the spring, and in that case would be very glad indeed to stay at any rate a night with you.

We are going to stay with Mrs. D. O. Hill in Edinburgh, the sister of Sir Noel Paton and, in Scotland, a well-known sculptor. She is a most delightful woman – but perhaps you know her?

I am now nearly robust again – & have greatly benefited by my long stay at this pleasant country house. I have begun to do a little work again – chiefly reviewing: tho' I must wait another month at least before getting in full sail again.

Looking forward to seeing you and your fine work when I am next in Manchester, and again with thanks for your kind invitation.

Yours most sincerely | William Sharp

ALS private (Sold by Sotheby's on December 18, 1995, perhaps destined for the V&A. Transcript provided by a friend.)

To J. Stanley Little,⁴⁹ [mid-October, 1886]

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W. | Saturday Afternoon

Dear Sir,

I have been incapacitated, through sudden illness, from applying ere this for tickets for "*Hellas*".⁵⁰

Will you kindly give bearer (or send me, when I will remit whatever may be due) the following: - the 2 Balcony Tickets which are due to me as a member – also 4 others (2/6 Balcony Tickets) which I will take and give to friends so as in a small way to help the performance-funds.

Yours faithfully, | William Sharp

⁴⁹ James Stanley Little (1856-1940) was a prolific writer of fiction and non-fiction. The son of Thomas Little, of Woodville, Forest Hill, London, and John Cockerell's daughter Lilla, he married the Viscomtess Fanny Maude Therese de la Blache, and they had a daughter and a son. He lived variously in France, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium as well as in England; at the time of his death he resided in Cichele, Parkstone, Dorset. He and Sharp became close personal friends during the late eighties. He wrote *What Is Art?* (1884), *My Royal Father: A Story for Women* (1886), and *Doubt* (1888).

⁵⁰ The Shelley Society sponsored a performance of Shelley's *Hellas* in London in October, 1886. Few notable people attended, and the event resulted in a grave financial loss to the Shelley Society [Sylva Norman, *The Flight of the Skylark, The Development of Shelley's Reputation* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), pp. 269-270]. In *Some Reminiscences* [Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), pp. 390-391] William Michael Rossetti mentions the performance as occurring sometime before the end of 1886.

Jas. Stanley Little Esq | Hon: Sec: "Shelley Socy" ⁵¹

My servant will pay what is due, if you will ask her for it.

ALS Princeton

To _____, November 8, 1886

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W. | London | 8th November/86

Dear Sir

Would it be agreeable to you if I were to submit for your consideration an article entitled *Boy-Poets*. It wd. be partly biographical and anecdotal, and partly wd. consist of critical and comparative exposition of the highly interesting work in verse of certain English poets, known and unknown, - from Cowley and Chatterton down to Rossetti and Oliver Madox Brown.⁵² In addition to known poets who wrote striking verse at a very youthful age, I know others (three or four living) whose precocity is really remarkable.

The paper wd. deal with poems written between the ages of nine and seventeen: and accompanying the description of several writers there cd. be engraved portraits.

Yours very truly | William Sharp

Author of "Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Record & A Study"

"The Human Inheritance: And Other Poems"

"Earth's Voices: Sospitá, and Other Poems"

"Transcripts from Nature" etc. etc.

Editor of "Shakespeare's Sonnets"

"Sonnets of This Century. An Anthology". etc. etc. etc.

I enclose also for your consideration two sonnets and two short lyrical pieces. If you should care to accept one of them - please do so knowing that I reserve the copyright, and that I intend to print all four in a forthcoming volume of poems which will probably be published next *May*.⁵³ W.S.

ALS Fales Library, New York University

⁵¹At the first meeting of the Shelley Society, on March 10, 1886, at University College, London, the Reverend Stopford Brooke substituted for W. M. Rossetti as the principal speaker. His audience consisted of about a hundred members of the Society. Before its dissolution in 1895 from lack of funds, the Shelley Society produced a few of Shelley's plays (*Hellas* among them) and printed several of his works. The Society's notebooks are largely a record of its practical politics (see Sylva Norman, *The Flight of the Skylark*, p. 268).

⁵² Oliver Madox Brown (1855-1874), the son of Ford Madox Brown, was a painter and writer. He published his first prose story, "Gabriel Denver," in 1873 and died the following year, at age 19, of blood poisoning after an attack of gout. He was a close friend of Philip Bourke Marston who wrote an article about him in *Scribner's Monthly*, 12 (1876), 425-428.

⁵³ Sharp's next volume of poems was *Romantic Ballads and Poems of Phantasy* (London: Walter Scott, 1888).

To Edward Dowden, [November 26, 1886]⁵⁴

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W. | Friday Evening

Dear Mr. Dowden,

On reaching my house this evening I found your note awaiting me. I am glad you like the Sonnet book: it has been a great success, I am glad to say.

It is exceedingly kind of you to send me your "Life of Shelley"⁵⁵ - a book I shall always value for its own sake and for that of the donor. Your gift of it is specially welcome - as I was just persuading myself that I ought to buy it - a proceeding which I am hardly able to afford at present. In the new series of "Great Writers" that is shortly to come out, I am to do Shelley - and of course could do nothing worth [while] unless I had your new work to go upon for definite facts etc. So the book you so kindly send me will be of great service to me as well as affording me much & frequent pleasure.

I see long & important notices of it in the "Daily News" and "Standard" of today. I think, however, it is hardly fair in the Standard or any paper to quote the hitherto unpublished poems you give in your book: a journal ought simply to direct readers, not to pick out "tit-bits" from important books.

I'm afraid our mutual friend, poor old Bell Scott, won't be south again: not, however, that he is specially unwell at present.

Sidney Colvin's "Keats" will be out in Jany, I believe; & tho' on a much smaller scale than your "Shelley," will hold something like the same authoritative place. Wm. Rossetti is going to do "Keats" in the "Great Writers" series: Garnett is to do Carlyle: Joseph Knight, Rossetti: Hall Caine, Coleridge: Darcy Thompson, Darwin. My Shelley, I fancy, is to be out either in May or June.⁵⁶

The "Life of Shelley" has not yet come from K. Paul & co. - but doubtless will do so shortly.

Again, with sincere thanks,

Cordially yours | William Sharp.

ALS TCD

To Edward Dowden, November 27, 1886

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. | W.

⁵⁴ Envelope postmarked November 27. Friday was November 26.

⁵⁵ *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co, 1886).

⁵⁶ Sharp's *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Walter Scott) was published in 1887. It includes, following a table of contents, a single page "Note" which reads in part: "A special acknowledgment of indebtedness is due to Professor Edward Dowden, whose two comprehensive volumes on Shelley form the completest and most reliable record extant, and at the same time constitute the worthiest monument wherewith the poet=s memory has yet been honored."

My dear Mr. Dowden,

Your "Shelley" has come since I posted my letter to you. The volumes are beautiful, and the matter tempting on every page glanced at. I am indeed glad to possess it.

Alfred Austin has just looked in to see me. I have shown him the book, and (being one of the fortunates with abundance of cash) he is going to purchase a copy at once, rightly judging it to be a necessity for any lover of Shelley's poetry to possess this work.

In haste, & with renewed thanks, | Sincerely yours | William Sharp

ALS TCD

To Mrs. Bland,⁵⁷ December 26, 1886

46, Talgarth Road, | West Kensington. W

Dear Mrs. Bland,

I have just received your volume of "Lays and Legends" – which I am very glad to possess. I hope to be able to notice it in an influential quarter in due time.

I am so very busy at present & have had so many Xmas packages that I have been unable to do anything more than glance through some uncut pages. That glance, however, afforded tempting perspectives. With best wishes.

Yrs very truly | William Sharp

ALS private

⁵⁷ Identify Mrs. Bland.