

SECTION XVII

LIFE: 1898

Early in 1898 Sharp suffered a “severe nervous collapse” which caused “an acute depression and restlessness that necessitated a continual change of environment.” He told Catherine Janvier he was “skirting the wood of shadows,” “filled with vague fears,” in “a duel with other forces than those of human wills.” Periodically he recovered his “physic control over certain media,” but that control was only temporary. For the first two months of the year he moved from place to place on the south coast of England: “He went, in turn, to Dover, to Bournemouth, to Brighton, and St. Margaret’s Bay,” which is near Dover. Elizabeth described the causes of his illness:

The production of the Fiona Macleod work was accomplished at a heavy cost to the author as that side of his nature deepened and became dominant. The strain upon his energies was excessive: not only from the necessity of giving expression to the two sides of his nature; but because his desire that, while under the cloak of secrecy F. M. should develop and grow, the reputation of William Sharp should at the same time be maintained. Moreover each of the two natures had its own needs and desires, interests, and friends. The needs of each were not always harmonious one with the other, but created a complex condition that led to a severe nervous collapse.

During this time, he “was much alone, except for the occasional visit of an intimate friend.” Elizabeth “could go to him at the week-ends only,” as she “had the work in London to attend to. The sea, and solitude, however, proved his best allies.” Elizabeth implied she and the “intimate friend,” Edith Rinder, were co-operating to provide the companionship and affection Sharp needed. Elizabeth surely recognized the extent of Edith’s “intimacy” with her husband, but she did not reveal any concerns about their relationship here or elsewhere in the *Memoir*. In early 1898, she was focused on her work as an art critic and on restoring her husband’s physical and mental health (*Memoir*, 292).

Elizabeth was aware of Sharp’s efforts to obtain rituals for Yeats’ Celtic Mystical Order, and she was convinced they had a deleterious effect on his mental health. She had attributed his illness in December 1896 to both the “heavy dual work” and “experimentation with certain psychic phenomena . . . efforts in which at times he and Mr. W. B. Yeats collaborated (*Memoir*, 282). Though Elizabeth did not mention those efforts as a cause of Sharp’s illness and restlessness in early 1898, they were certainly a contributing factor, as evidenced by his letter to Catherine Janvier. Her reticence on this matter here and elsewhere in the *Memoir* may have been due, in part, to her desire to protect Yeats and other living participants in those matters. There was also the fact Sharp’s confederate in the psychic experiments was not Elizabeth, but Edith Rinder. Though Sharp and Yeats may have engaged together in psychic experiments earlier, their collaboration began in earnest in January 1897 when Sharp agreed to join Yeats in the psychic search for rituals and talismans for his proposed Celtic Mystical Order. Yeats convinced Sharp, referencing his own relationship with Maud Gonne, that visions came more easily when

jointly evoked by a man and a woman who were deeply in love. Yeats urged Sharp to partner with Fiona Macleod in the project, whereupon Sharp convinced Edith Rinder to join him. The experiments and the mental disturbances they produced continued through 1898 and for several years thereafter with varying degrees of seriousness.

Although Sharp attributed his need to move from place to place along England's southern coast to his poor health and mental instability, he was also trying to create conditions that induced dreams and visions he could share with Yeats and use in the Fiona Macleod stories. He had convinced himself and he seems to have convinced both Elizabeth and Edith that he needed to be alone with Edith to facilitate visions and evoke the female persona that enabled him to write as Fiona. Whether or not Edith shared his faith in the supernatural, her willing participation in the spiritualist activities certainly reflected her love for Sharp and her desire that he remain healthy and productive. In this regard, it is interesting to note that a diary (now in the British Library) which Elizabeth kept for some years after her husband died in 1905 records in considerable detail her contacts through a medium with the spirit/soul of her dead husband. Since such spiritualist sessions were in vogue, Edith must have had at least an open mind about Sharp's efforts to evoke visions and communicate with spirits.

In mid-February, Sharp wrote a letter to his wife from the St. Margaret's Bay Hotel shortly after arriving there from Dover. In it he expressed the sense of peace and happiness that came to him that afternoon after leaving the station, walking through the village, and finding himself "alone, alone 'in the open.'" It was not "merely healing to me but an imperative necessity of my life." He was weary of "the endless recurrence of the ordinary in the lives of most people." To his own "wild heart . . . life must come otherwise or not at all." He wished he was "a youth once more" so he could "lie down at night smelling the earth and rise at dawn, smelling the new air out of the East, and know enough of men and cities to avoid both, and to consider little any gods ancient or modern, knowing well that there is only 'The Red God' to think of, he who lives and laughs in the red blood." He went on to describe the tension he was experiencing between the need to keep his bond, earn his wage, and his desire to live freely in nature, "a wild instinct to go to my own." In a letter to a friend about this time he was even more specific about his desire to shed his human qualities and become a creature of nature:

I wish I could live all my hours out of doors: I envy no one in the world so much as the red deer, the eagle, the sea-mew. I am sure no kings have so royal a life as the plovers and curlews have. All these have freedom, rejoice continually on the wind's wing, exalt alike in sun and shade: to them day is day, and night is night, and there is nothing else (*Memoir*, 298).

Elizabeth said the February letter to her "gives an insight into the primitive elemental soul that so often swayed him, and his work." Taken together, the two letters express an intense desire to escape the bonds of rational life and suggest his "severe nervous collapse" could easily tip into a complete mental breakdown.

The two weeks he spent in St. Margaret's Bay were restorative. Near the end of that time, he explained his situation to Murray Gilchrist:

I know you will have been sorry to hear that I have been ill — and had to leave work, and home. The immediate cause was a severe and sudden attack of influenza which went to membranes of the head and brain, and all but resulted in brain fever. This evil was averted — but it and the possible collapse of your friend Will were at one time, and for some days, an imminent probability. I have now been a fortnight in this quiet sea-haven, and am practically myself again.”

And at the letter’s close: “I have suffered much, but am now again fronting life gravely and with laughing eyes.” He also told Gilchrist that Fiona had nearly finished before she became ill a group of stories that might appear in the spring under the title *There is but One Love*, a volume Elizabeth identified as *The Dominion of Dreams* which was not published until the spring of 1899. Four of those stories were published in 1898: “Children of the Dark Star” (*The Dome*, May); “Enya of the Dark Eyes” (*Literature*, September); “The Wells of Peace” (*Good Words*, September); and “The White Heron” (*Harper’s*, December). Two more that did not make their way into *The Dominion of Dreams* appeared in periodicals in 1898: “The Four Winds of Desire” (*Good Words*, 245) and “The Wayfarer” (*Cosmopolis*, June). The influence of Sharp’s psychic experiments and of his search for Celtic rituals is apparent in some of these stories. Most interesting in this regard is the comment in his mid-May letter to Gilchrist that Fiona Macleod’s “life thought is in another and stranger thing than she has done yet.” Elizabeth identified the “thing” as “The Divine Adventure,” a mystical/philosophical story that appeared first in two parts in the November and December numbers of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1899 and later in book form (*The Divine Adventure: Iona: By Sundown Shores*, Chapman and Hall, 1900). That work which he was writing in the late spring of 1898 improbably separates the Will (or reasoning power), the Soul, and the Body and sends the three off to interact with each other on their way to paradise. Now difficult to read – even to understand how it could have been taken seriously -- *The Divine Adventure* illustrates Sharp’s preoccupation with his splitting selves and reflects his involvement with psychic phenomena. Despite his illnesses during the first several months of 1898, he had produced by mid-year a considerable volume of writing.

In a letter to Elizabeth dated March 29, portions of which she included in the *Memoir* (294-6), Sharp made a forceful and protracted argument against the conventional morality that dictated marriage to one woman and faithfulness to that woman for life. It is not an argument for free love, but for loving more than one person at a time. Those of us who can see clearly, Sharp told his wife, attempting to bring her under the umbrella of the insightful, recognize that loving more than one person can “widen and deepen heart and spirit.” In that state of mind, what might be a cause of deep pain “is transmuted into hope, into peace, and even into joy.” Elizabeth said the letter “relates to views we held in common” which must mean she shared its opinions about love and the harmful effects of conventional restrictions on love. These views are similar to those Mona Caird, Elizabeth’s best friend, was expressing in widely read periodicals. They were also shared by Edith Rinder, who was not only a close friend of Mona Caird, but her cousin by marriage. Years later, in the 1960s, Edith Rinder’s daughter, Esther Mona Harvey (1901-1993), told me several times that her parents when young in the 1890s had “some very advanced ideas,” but they rejected those ideas and regretted some of their actions as they grew older.

In a March first letter to Stedman, Sharp had expressed his hope that he and Edith would be in Paris for the last two weeks of April:

If all goes well, you can think of me (and my friend) in a lovely green retreat, on the Marne, near Paris, during the last fortnight of April. If you were there too I would drink to you in white wine, and she would give you a kiss – which, with the glory in her beautiful eyes, would make you “wild with the waste of all unnumbered Springs.” You will be with us in Spirit, dear poet of youth and romance — and I will kiss her for you, and likewise drink the sweet wine of France!

The projected trip was delayed. On April 22, a Friday, he told Murray Gilchrist he was leaving for Paris “next Friday,” the 29th. An April 26 letter to Grant Richards indicates he was still in London and still intending to go to Paris, where he would finish the revisions of *Wives in Exile* for publication in England.

The main purpose of Sharp’s postponed trip to Paris was to introduce Edith Rinder to Yeats, Maud Gonne, and Macgregor and Moina Mathers. There they would continue their psychic experiments with Yeats and discuss the plays Sharp intended as Fiona’s contributions to the Celtic Theatre. For Yeats, who knew the writings of Fiona Macleod were the work of Sharp, or rather a female self or spirit within him, she would be the woman Sharp was in love with, the muse who inspired him to write as Fiona Macleod, and the woman who was working with Sharp psychically on the Celtic Mystical Order. But he would have been curious about her real identity. Assuming neither Maud Gonne nor the Mathers knew the secret and assuming Sharp did not intend to tell them, she would have been simply the female writer, Fiona Macleod.

Sharp did leave for Paris on Friday, April 29, but he got only as far as Dover and from there he went to the nearby St. Margaret’s Bay Hotel where he had spent two weeks in February. He was faced immediately with the need to explain to Yeats why he and Fiona were not coming to Paris. On Saturday, April 30 when he wrote to Yeats: “A sudden and serious collapse in health will prevent Miss M. from coming to Paris” and will “probably end in her having to go to some remote Baths for 2 months.” He added, “As for myself, partly for this and partly because being myself (as you will understand) seriously indisposed in the same way, I am unable to go to Paris either.” Edith Rinder was at this time translating the work of contemporary Belgian writers and, I believe, living temporarily in Belgium. Sharp’s original plan was to meet her in Paris, where they would engage for a time with Yeats and company, and then go to “the lovely green retreat on the Marne, near Paris,” as Sharp had described his intention to Stedman on March first. Edith must have been apprehensive from the start about playing the Fiona role for Yeats and his friends in Paris as she had done for an hour or two with George Meredith the previous June. She was neither a Scot nor an expert in the myths and legends of the Hebrides. She probably viewed the Paris plan as one of Sharp’s romantic fantasies that would evaporate as so many did. Whether or not she was suffering the illness Sharp claimed for Fiona, she certainly put her foot down at the last minute, refused to go to Paris, and instead, I believe, joined Sharp at the St. Margaret’s Bay Hotel on the British side of the channel where ensuing events bordered on the fantastic.

As soon as Yeats learned neither was coming to Paris, Yeats sent Sharp a letter (on May 3), with a separate sealed letter enclosed for Fiona Macleod, in which he asked about *Sharp's* family tartan and wanted to know what sort of person Fiona Macleod's father was, what he looked like, and what *his* tartan was (*Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, II*, 219-20). He then asked Sharp if he had been "conscious of being in any unusual state on either May 1 or May 2." He would explain later why he was asking these questions. For now he can only say he has "had an astral experience of the most intense kind" and that Sharp's "answers are necessary before certain things, which I was asked to do can be done." In the separate letter to Fiona, Yeats said that on the night of May 2 he was "suddenly visited by the intellectual body of someone who was passing through an intense emotional crisis." He was "inclined to believe" this visitor was Fiona. He then asked "Were you, either last night [May 2] or Sunday night [May 1] (the intellectual body sometimes appears a little after the emotional crisis that causes its appearance) passing through some state of tragic feeling?" Fiona's answer was very important because someone "undoubtedly asked last night" for Yeats' help and "the help of the far more powerful occultist, with whom I am working." Though not identified in this letter, that more powerful occultist was Macgregor Mathers who was walking around Paris in a Macgregor tartan and, with the assistance of his wife Moina, trying to establish a Paris branch of the Order of the Golden Dawn. In a postscript Yeats said he had hoped to see Fiona in Paris and informed her that "the opening ceremonial of the celtic mysteries, of which he [Sharp] will have told you, is now ready to be considered."

Sharp's response to this letter, posted two days later (Thursday May 5), is a remarkable and amusing reflection of the predicament in which he found himself. No, he had not experienced anything but "a singular depression, and a curious sense of unreality for a time" on Sunday, but on Monday, May 2, he "suffered in a way I can't explain, owing to what seemed to me an unaccountable preoccupation of Miss M." That is vague enough. Fiona's father was a "tall, fine looking man," and, by the way, Fiona sees at times "a startling likeness between me & her father, though I am taller & bigger & fairer than he was." There are many similarities between them, including their first names. In this regard it is interesting to note that Edith Rinder's father was *William Wingate* (1828-84) of Ludford, Leicestershire.

In a hurried postscript, Sharp informed Yeats Fiona had awakened and read the letter he had written to her. She had experienced a series of emotions similar to those of Sharp: "I *have* been going through an intense emotional crisis." There was one "poignant period" on the Sunday night, but a far more poignant period on Monday, May 2: "But of this, being private, I cannot speak further. [Was Sharp implying that sex was somehow involved in that poignant moment?] I was, on both occasions (though differently & for different reasons) undergoing tragic feeling. I am at present at a perilous physical & spiritual crisis. I can say no more. The one who shares my life & self is here. It is as crucial for him. I will talk over your letter to us — for to us it is, though you send it to me." Sharp was then moved to add a question from Fiona: "Are you sure it was not Will whom you felt or saw?" Why, Sharp wondered, bring Fiona's father into the mix? He saw no need to shift the spotlight by introducing another male into the mix of characters making appearances.

In a second postscript Sharp added for Yeats' benefit a more immediate and serious element of psychic stress:

Hurriedly adding this at the PO to say that my friend's neuralgia was too severe to talk any more. The subject too was exciting her. She will show me your letter when I get back. Note *this* time today. About 3 p.m. today Thursday she went through (& I too) a wave of intense tragic emotion — and last night, between 10 and 12 or later, we nearly lost each other in a very strange way. Something I did by the will was too potent, & for a time severed some unconscious links (we were apart at the time: I thought she was sleeping) — & we both suffered in consequence. But I think the extreme crisis of tragic psychic emotion is over.

Some of this frenetic mystery was, no doubt, invented for the consumption of Yeats and his friends, but it also reflects the pattern of emotions Sharp and Edith were experiencing as they attempted to establish contact with other human beings, alive and dead. The letter also reflects the mental instability that resulted from having joined Yeats' spiritualist quest. It is always difficult, a difficulty shared silently by his wife in writing the *Memoir*, to distinguish between what Sharp was making up in a calibrated effort to mislead people and what arose from genuine experiences. Although the mix differed from time to time, it was always, I believe, a combination of the two.

Yeats' response on May 7 to Sharp's strange letter was even stranger (*Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, II, 222-3*). He described in detail the dreams and visions he and the Mathers were having about Sharp/Fiona. The letter illustrates the depth of Yeats' interest in and psychic involvement with Sharp and his mysteries. After Fiona's father appeared to Macgregor Mathers in a dream in a Macleod tartan on Sunday, Yeats, on Monday, "fell into a strange kind of shivering & convulsive trembling" whereupon he felt the astral presence of first Fiona and then Sharp. Moina Mathers then saw a face which she drew and it seemed to Yeats to be the face of William Sharp's daimon which George Russell (AE) had seen in the spring of 1897. Next Moina saw someone who seemed to be Fiona along with the man in the tartan. After all these sightings, Yeats and Moina and probably Macgregor retired "into a room used for magical purposes & and there made ourselves magical principles rather than persons." Fiona then appeared and told them "certain things about her spiritual & mental state & asked for Occult help, of which I prefer to talk rather than to write." Fiona, Yeats continued, "is suffering physically," as Sharp had just told him she was, "but the cause of this suffering is not physical & can be remedied." It would be best if you, presumably Sharp and the woman who somehow embodied the Fiona within Sharp, "could come to Paris for a couple days on (say) Monday." Otherwise Yeats would probably see Sharp in London at the end of the next week.

Yeats was left shaken for a time by this very intense experience. He had spoken in a dream to Sharp's daemon during the past night. If Sharp can come to Paris, his friends in "the order of the Rosy Cross," really the Order of the Golden Dawn, and specifically the Mathers, will give any help they can. These friends "have a boundless admiration for the books of Fiona

Macleod.” As if all this was not enough to set Sharp’s teeth on edge and feed his manic fantasies, Yeats added a postscript which reads as follows:

I think you should do no magical work with Miss Macleod until we meet. I mean that you should not attempt to use the will magically. The danger of doing so just now is considerable. You are both the channels of very powerful beings & some mistake has been made. I tried to send a magical message, as I have said, last night. It was something which you were to say to Miss Macleod. I can but remember that it was a message of peace. I did not try to appear or make you aware of my presence. I was in a dream for a <time & believe that I met> time too, far off from my surroundings, & believe that our daimons met in someplace of which my bodily self has no memory & that the message which I spoke with my bodily lips was carried thither.

The activities described in this letter, including Yeats’ encounter with Sharp’s daimon, emerged from the secret rituals of the Order of the Golden Dawn wherein Yeats’ motto was *Daemon est Deus*. Sharp was not a member of either the London chapter of that society or of the new chapter Mathers was establishing in Paris, but he knew its purposes and something of its rituals.

Many years later Yeats wrote of the St. Margaret’s Bay exchange of letters:

I was fool enough to write to Sharp and [received] an unbelievable letter from a seaside hotel about the beautiful Fiona and himself. He had been very ill, terrible mental suffering and suddenly my soul had come to heal him and he had found Fiona to tell her he was healed -- I think that I had come as a great white bird. I learnt, however, from Mrs. Sharp years afterward that at the time he was certainly alone but mad. He had gone away to struggle on with madness (*Memoirs*, 105).

It is possible that Sharp wrote another letter to Yeats, now lost, in response to Yeats’ May 7 letter and that letter contained the “great white bird.” If he was referring to Sharp’s May 5 letter, his recollection of its contents was almost completely inaccurate. Not only is there no bird, but the assertion, attributed correctly or falsely to EAS, that Sharp was surely alone and struggling with madness was wrong. Since the descriptions of Fiona’s actions are beyond even Sharp’s ability to create out of thin air, Edith must have been with him at least during the first of his two weeks at St. Margaret’s Bay. Moreover, many of the letters he wrote to others during the two weeks were perfectly sane and rational. He was experiencing manic depression, a condition exacerbated by the psychic experiments, but he was not insane. The depression and “tragic emotion” he described in his May 5 letter, the “perilous physical & spiritual crisis” he attributed to Fiona Macleod, and the drama the letter projects surely had some basis in fact, but the lack of specificity suggest real experiences that were heightened to maintain Yeats’ confidence.

Yeats three May letters from Paris – one to Fiona and two to Sharp – also demonstrate his genuine attraction to both Sharp and the idea of Fiona in 1898 and the closeness of his relationship with Sharp. Yeats was conducting psychic experiments and encouraging Sharp and

Fiona to do the same. They were joined in a secret project known to only a few of Yeats' close friends. His later disparaging remarks arose, in part I believe, from his effort to obscure the extent of his own psychic activities in the 1890s. Sharp was trying his best to comply with Yeats' wishes and contribute to his project. In his "Autobiography," Yeats wrote of Sharp, "I feel I never properly used or valued this man, through whom the fluidic world seemed to flow, disturbing all; I allowed the sense of comedy, taken by contagion from others, to hide from me my own knowledge. To look at his big body, his high colour, his handsome head with the great crop of bristly hair, no one could have divined the ceaseless presence of that fluidic life (*Memoirs*, 128-9). On the other hand, Yeats remarked many years later that Sharp "never told one anything that was true" (*Autobiographies*). For all the unfairness and ingratitude of the latter remark, it contains a grain of truth. Taken together the two comments show that Yeats continued for years to try to unravel the complexities and grasp the truth about Sharp/Fiona and never succeeded. They also demonstrate the complexity of Sharp's personality and reflect the frustrations felt by everyone who has tried to understand him while he was alive and after he died

When we set the amazing exchange of letters between Sharp and Yeats against the letters Sharp was writing from St. Margaret's Bay to Grant Richards about *Wives in Exile*, the contrast is stark. It is no wonder Sharp's state of mind was fragile, that he was frequently depressed and on the edge of mental collapse. His life was defined by dichotomies and contradictions – all of his own making -- as he tried to comply with Yeats' spiritualist expectations, write poems and stories as though by two different writers, get them published to produce income, and deal with the tensions that inevitably arose from his love for two remarkable women, both of whom loved him and worried about his mental and physical well being. Yeats warning that Sharp not engage with Miss Macleod in any "magical work" until they can meet freed Edith to leave St. Margaret's Bay after a week, so I believe, and provided Sharp some respite for some serious writing during his second week at the St. Margaret's Bay Hotel.

Yet another spiritualist was entering Sharp's life at this time as evidenced by a letter he drafted at St. Margaret's Bay, a Fiona Macleod letter to Dr. John A. Goodchild. This was the first of many letters Sharp wrote to this gentleman, whom he met through their mutual friend Grant Allen, an uncle of Grant Richards. Goodchild was an admirer of the Fiona Macleod writings, and in this letter she thanked him for a copy of a book of his poems and for a proof copy of his *Light of the West* which had been published in April by Grant Richards. Goodchild was an established, highly-regarded medical doctor who cared for his British patients both in England and, in the darker months, in Italy where they went for their health. He was also a serious student of the early civilizations of Ireland, England, and Scotland and had a special affection for the Celts and their early converts to Christianity. More significantly, he was a spiritualist to whom important messages were delivered during sleep and reveries. Such communications were common at the time; many believed dead loved ones were trying to get through, and sometimes succeeding, with messages of love and encouragement.

What interested Sharp about Goodchild was the fact that a master spirit had instructed him to take a beautiful glass bowl he had acquired, improbably from a tailor in Italy, to

Glastonbury in the West of England, the reputed domain of King Arthur and his grail-seeking knights, and bury it in a holy place. Goodchild and many others thought this object might in fact be the Holy Grail, the cup Jesus used at the last supper. Given Sharp's involvement with Yeats in the search for talismans for his Celtic Mystical Order, one can see why he was drawn to Goodchild who, in turn, was drawn to the Celtic and mystical stories of Fiona Macleod. More will be said about Sharp's relationship with Goodchild in succeeding sections, but it is useful to note that their friendship, which lasted until Sharp died in 1905, began shortly after the appearance of Goodchild's *Light of the West* in 1898

After returning to London from St. Margaret's Bay on May 15, Sharp stayed only long enough to celebrate his wife's birthday on the 17th before leaving again on the 18th for what Elizabeth called "a delightful little wander in Holland" with Thomas Janvier, "a jovial, breezy companion." She hoped a walking trip with a sane friend would be restorative, and it had that effect for a time. Not many Sharp/Macleod letters survive from the summer of 1898, and surprisingly few from the last half of the year. Elizabeth glossed over this seven-month period by commenting only that her husband had to sustain the reputation of William Sharp despite his need to write as Fiona Macleod.

There was a great difference in the method of production of the two kinds of work. The F.M. writing was the result of an inner impulsion, he wrote because he had to give expression to himself whether the impulse grew out of pain or out of pleasure. But W.S., divorced as much as could be from his twin self, wrote because he cared to, because the necessities of life demanded it.

In this context, Elizabeth referred to two William Sharp novels: *Wives in Exile*, which he had written several years earlier for the defunct Stone and Kimble Chicago, and *Silence Farm*, the novel he was writing in 1898.

When the Stone and Kimble enterprise failed, the sheets of the unpublished *Wives in Exile* were acquired by Lamson, Wolfe, & Company in Boston, and that firm issued the novel in 1897. Efforts to find a British firm for simultaneous publication that would secure copyright had failed. When Grant Richards, a nephew of Sharp's friend Grant Allen, started a publishing firm, Sharp moved in on the ground floor, so to speak, with his yachting romance set in southwest Scotland. In the late spring and early summer of 1898, he was revising the American edition of *Wives in Exile* for British publication and starting a new William Sharp novel, *Silence Farm*, which Richards would publish in June 1899. Of those two books, in which Sharp was "deeply interested," Elizabeth said her husband "felt W.S. ought to produce some such work as a normal procedure and development; and also felt it imperative to show some result of the seclusion he was known to seek for purposes of work." In writing *Silence Farm*, "a tragic tale of the Lowlands, founded on a true incident," Sharp

"never forgot that the book should not have obvious kinship to the work of F.M., that he should keep a considerable amount of himself in check. For there was a midway method, that was blending of the two, a swaying from the one to the other, which he desired to avoid, since he knew that many of the critics were on the watch. Therefore, he strained the realistic treatment beyond what he

otherwise would have done. . . . Nevertheless, that book was the one he liked best of all the W.S. efforts, and he considered that it contained some of his most satisfactory work (*Memoir*, 301).

Despite Sharp's fondness for *Silence Farm*, it was not well received, and today it is unreadable. What Elizabeth said here about the two writing methods and styles and a third "midway method" is interesting because as the Fiona Macleod writings move, after 1898, away from the retelling of Celtic myths and stories about people of the Western Isles into mystical allegories and ruminations on the beauties of the natural world and the presence of spiritual forces within it, that middle method becomes more dominant. And Sharp, after *Silence Farm*, turned increasingly for W.S. publications to travel writing, art history, and art criticism.

In June 1898, however, the "two writing methods," their origin and the relationship between them, were very much on Sharp's mind. On June 28 Fiona Macleod responded to a Yeats letter which has not surfaced. It praised two Fiona stories and asked for a further explanation of the relationships among the man the world knew as William Sharp, the real woman who inspired Sharp to write as F.M., and the female personality that existed within the body of W.S. and expressed herself through the Fiona writings. It is not surprising that Yeats, who understood both the role of female muses and the possibility of more than one person inhabiting a single body, remained curious about what was operating in the case of Sharp/Fiona. In the June 28 Fiona letter Sharp invoked the metaphor of a torch, a match, and a flame to explain his relationship with Edith Rinder and her role in the creative process. Portions of the letters have been crossed out or erased, but it is possible to read some lines through the markings and infer some of the erased words. In a postscript that is not decipherable, he asked Yeats to destroy the letter, and when he had not received word that Yeats had done so Sharp wrote again as Fiona on July 6 to tell Yeats he was anxious about the letter. In 4 July letter to Sharp, Yeats said he had heard from Fiona and "done as she wished about the letter" (*LWBY II*, 250).

Fortunately, he had not done as she wished as the letter survives. The relevant section reads as follows:

I have been told that long ago one of the subtlest and strangest minds of his time — a man of Celtic ancestry on one side and of Norse on the other — was so profoundly influenced by the kindred nature and spirit of a woman whom he loved, a Celt of Celts, that, having in a sense accidentally discovered the mystery of absolute mental and spiritual union of two impassioned and kindred natures the flame of [?vision] that had been his in a far [?back day was in him], so that besides a strange and far [?reaching] ancestral memory, he remembered anew and acutely every last clue and significance of his boyhood and early life, spent mostly among the shepherds and fishers of the Hebrides and Gaelic Highlands. His was the genius, the ancestral memory, the creative power — she was the flame — she, too, being also a visionary, and with unusual and all but lost old wisdom of the Gael. Without her, he would have been lost to the Beauty which was his impassioned quest: with her, as a flame to his slumbering flame, he became what he was. The outer life of each was singular, beyond that of any man

or woman I have heard of: how much stranger that of their spiritual union. A profound and resolute silence lay upon the man, save when he knew the flame of the woman “through whom he saw Beauty,” and his soul quickened. She gave him all she could, and without her he could not be what he was, and he needed her vision to help his own, and her dream, and her thought, and her life, till hers and his ceased to be hers and his and merged into one, and became a spirit of shaping power born of them both.

How does that strike you as a subject for a tale, a book? It be a strange one. Does it seem to you impossible? It does not seem so to me.

Although he cast the vignette in the ancient past, he was talking about himself (half Celt and half Norse) and Edith Rinder, a Celt only by adoption. She was the match that brought flame to the otherwise dark and silent torch. They became one in the resultant fire, which was the fire of passion, the fire of creativity. The torch (Sharp) was the vehicle that carried that fire while the match survived within the fire and sustained it. The metaphor came to dominated Sharp’s imagination. About this time, in the summer of 1898, he began a Fiona Macleod story called “The Distant Country,” which was included in Fiona’s *The Dominion of Dreams* (Archibald, Constable) in May 1899. It is the “tale” which did not seem impossible to Fiona for it incorporates the imagery of the match, the torch, and the flame. It will be discussed in some detail in the introduction to the letters of 1899.

Sharp was in London for most of July writing and dealing with the publication details of *Wives in Exile*. In mid-month, he received a letter from Yeats addressed to Fiona informing him that a certain legal impediment to the establishment of a Celtic Theater in Dublin had been resolved and asking which plays Fiona would have for possible production by the fall. I have not seen Fiona’s reply, which remains in private hands, but she said three plays (“Fand and Cuchulain,” “The King of Ys,” and “Dahut the Red”) would be ready for consideration. And possibly there would be a fourth, “The Hour of Beauty.” The first three were never finished, but “The Hour of Beauty,” having become “The Immortal Hour,” was published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1900. Though the play was never performed by the Yeats’ Celtic Theater in Dublin, it became the libretto for Rutland Boughton’s opera which was an enormous success on the London stage in the 1920s and is still performed. Though Sharp was working on plays during the summer of 1898, he managed to complete only two (“The Immortal Hour” and “The House of Usna’). His plan to write a series of short dramas under the general title *The Theatre of the Soul* came to naught. “The House of Usna” was also published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1900 and, on April 29 that year, it was performed at the Globe Theatre in London under the auspices of the Stage Society of which William Sharp was President. Only a few of those who joined Sharp in the audience knew he was the author of the play.

On the 19th of July, 1898, William and Elizabeth went to Derbyshire to visit Sharp’s friend Murray Gilchrist at Cartledge Hall, Holmesfield, where Gilchrist lived with his mother, his sisters, and George Garfitt, his lifelong companion. They returned to London on the 26th, and Sharp left for the West of Scotland on the 31st. A letter carrying that date from Fiona to Benjamin Burgess Moore, the American fan she had enlisted in approaching publishers,

informed him that “it is not quite true that Mr. Yeats and I are collaborating on a drama: but we are each writing a drama, which we hope to see brought out in the new Celtic Theatre in Dublin next year.” She concluded by telling him that as soon as she finished her new book (*The Dominion of Dreams*) she would “get on with two short plays, ‘The Hour of Beauty’ and ‘The King of Ys and Dahut the Red.’” Yeats’ efforts to encourage Sharp/Fiona to write plays for his projected theatre in Dublin soon came to abrupt end when he was forced under the pressure of Irish Nationalism to change its name to the Irish Theatre and exclude all but Irish authors.

In a July 4 letter from Coole Park, Yeats told Sharp that Edward Martyn was too upset by his mother’s death (on May 12) to invite anyone to Tillyra Castle, his home near Lady Gregory’s in the West of Ireland. If he changed his mind, Yeats would speak to him about inviting Sharp. Apparently Martyn did invite Sharp, but the formality of Sharp’s early August letter to Martyn suggests the invitation was less cordial and welcoming than that of the previous year which led to Sharp’s spending nearly three weeks at Tillyra and proving an embarrassment to Martyn and some of his friends. Sharp stayed in and around Kilcreggan, near where Edith Rinder was vacationing, until August 24 when he returned to London and went on to Holland to gather material for an article on Rembrandt which *Cosmopolis* had commissioned and published in its November issue. He was back in London by September 17, the date of a Fiona Macleod letter to Benjamin Moore which mentioned “prolonged absence” as reason for his delay in writing. Sharp’s annual birthday letter to E. C. Stedman on September 28 mentioned “illness – followed by heavy work & latterly a big exigent writing commission in Holland for *Cosmopolis*” as excuses for the relative brevity of the letter. Still he managed to inform Stedman that he “had a very wonderful & happy time this summer with the dear friend of whom you know, & whose writings you admire so much — & I look to another week at least about mid-October.” The dear friend was Edith Rinder who Stedman knew as Fiona Macleod and who was with Sharp frequently during the three weeks he had spent in the West of Scotland. He concluded by highlighting his recent successes: “In another letter I must tell you of my many literary doings — more ambitious now. (In magazine way, see *Fortnightly* for August, etc. etc. Also *Cosmopolis* in Nov. — am now writing for *all* the big mags here and U.S.A.)” The *Fortnightly* contained his tribute to Edward Burne Jones, the Pre-Raphaelite painter who recently died.

It is difficult to chronicle Sharp’s activities in the fall of 1898 because very few letters survive from those months. He may have had another holiday with Edith Rinder in October, as he told Stedman he was planning, and they were continuing their mystical efforts to assist Yeats. In that connection, it is interesting to note that Sharp proposed to Grant Richards that he contract with Edith Rinder to translate from French Jules Bossière’s *Fumeurs d’Opium*, a collection of stories first published in 1896, dealing with the effects of opium on mind and body. Near the end of December, just before Christmas, he was at the Pettycur Inn, across the Forth from Edinburgh. From there he wrote to Catherine Ann Janvier, with whom he enjoyed a very close friendship, “What a glorious day it has been. The most beautiful I have ever seen at Pettycur I think. Cloudless blue sky, clear exquisite air tho’ cold, with a marvelous golden light in the afternoon. Arthur’s Seat, the Craggs and the Castle and the 14 ranges of the Pentlands all clear-cut as steel, and the city itself visible in fluent golden light.”

He then proceeded mysteriously and ominously to reflect on his mortality and to configure his death as a new birth:

And now I listen to the gathering of the tidal waters under the stars. There is an infinite solemnity — a hush, something sacred and wonderful. A benediction lies upon the world. Far off I hear the roaming wind. Thoughts and memories crowd in on me. Here I have lived and suffered — here I have touched the heights — here I have done my best. And now, here, I am going through a new birth. ‘Sic itur ad astral!’

“Thus onward to the stars.”

It is fitting that the first and last surviving letters of 1898 were addressed to Catherine Janvier. On February 8, 1906, following Sharp’s death at the Castle Maniace in Sicily on December 15, 1905, Mrs. Janvier wrote as follows to Roselle Lathrop Shields, a young American archaeologist who fell in love with Sharp when he and Elizabeth visited Greece in the winter of 1904:

My dearie, I am beginning to think that it is you and I who best know and understand our dear boy. Do not be influenced by others or their opinions. How I wish you could have been with him [at Maniace during his last days]. It always will be a bitter pain to me that he put off writing to me, so that I have nothing of any account after he went to Maniace. On the other hand, I have a treasury of letters dating back to 1889 – What I have is but a small part, too, because many letters were destroyed, otherwise he could not have written with the freedom he did. I do not know what he did with my letters. Should E. read them, if he kept them, she will be greatly puzzled. . . . How I envy you your four last letters – had I had but one! Well I feel I know how he longed for his wee ‘Roseen.’ How weary he was of many things. It breaks my heart to think of him there – alone – I know that the best care was taken of him, that every comfort was his, but I know that he was ‘alone.’ He knew too, I am sure, that it had to be.”

Elizabeth, of course, was with “her poet” when he died, but such was the effect William Sharp had upon many women.

LETTERS: 1898

To Catherine Ann Janvier, [January/February, 1898]

. . . I am skirting the wood of shadows. I am filled with vague fears — and yet a clear triumphant laughter goes through it, whether of life or death no one knows. I am also in a duel with other forces than those of human wills — and I need all my courage and strength. At the moment I have recovered my phisic control over certain media. It cannot last more than a few days at most a few weeks at a time: but in that time *I am myself* . . .

Let there be peace in your heart: peace and hope transmuted into joy: in your mind, the dusking of no shadow, the menace of no gloom, but light, energy, full life: and to you in your whole being, the pulse of youth, the flame of green fire

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, [mid-February, 1898]¹

St. Margaret's Bay

I have had a very happy and peaceful afternoon. The isolation, with sun and wind, were together like soft cream upon my nerves: and I suppose that within twenty minutes after I left the station I was not only serenely at peace with the world in general, but had not a perturbing thought. To be alone, alone 'in the open' above all, is not merely healing to me but an imperative necessity of my life — and the chief counter agent to the sap that almost every person exercises on me, unless obviated by frequent and radical interruption.

By the time I had passed through the village I was already 'remote' in dreams and thoughts and poignant outer enjoyment of the lovely actualities of sun and wind and the green life: and when I came to my favourite coign where, sheltered from the bite of the wind, I could overlook the sea (a mass of lovely, radiant, amethyst-shadowed, foam-swept water), I lay down for two restful happy hours *in which not once a thought of London or of any one in it, or of any one living, came to me.* This power of living absolutely in the moment is worth not only a crown and all that a crown could give, but is the secret of youth, the secret of life.

O how weary I am of the endless recurrence of the ordinary in the lives of most people — the beloved routine, the cherished monotonies, the treasured certainties. I grudge them to none: They seem incidental to the common weal: indeed they seem even made for happiness. But I know one wild heart at least to whom life must come otherwise, or not at all.

¹ EAS dated this letter May 1898, but it was probably written during an earlier visit to St. Margaret's Bay in February. In writing to his wife, Sharp frequently omitted a date and since EAS assigned a month but no day to this letter, it probably contained no date. The St Margaret's Bay Hotel stationery, which Sharp used for some of his letters from that establishment, contained a picture of the hotel and its address. EAS assumed it was written during her husband's May visit to the hotel, but its content reflects, I believe, his state of mind in February, not in May when he was writing to Yeats about the psychic emotions he and Fiona Macleod were having after aborting the plan to join Yeats and Maud Gonne in Paris. This is the first of the two letters EAS received from her husband in the spring of 1898 and used in the *Memoir* to reflect his thinking (294-8). This letter, she said, "gives an insight into the primitive and elemental soul that so often swayed him, and his work." The Introduction to this section says more about the letter and its context.

Today I took a little green leaf o' thorn. I looked at the sun through it, and a dazzle came into my brain — and I wished, ah I wished I were a youth once more, and was 'sun-brother' and 'star-brother' again — to lie down at night, smelling the earth, and rise at dawn, smelling the new air out of the East, and know enough of men and cities to avoid both, and to consider little any gods ancient or modern, knowing well that there is only 'The Red God' to think of, he who lives and laughs in the red blood. . . .

There is a fever of the 'green life' in my veins — below all the ordinary littleness of conventional life and all the common place of exterior: a fever that makes me ill at ease with people, even those I care for, that fills me with a weariness beyond words and a nostalgia for sweet impossible things.

This can be met in several ways — chiefly and best by the practical yoking of the imagination to the active mind — in a word, to work. If I can do this, well and good, either by forced absorption in contrary work (e.g. Caesar of France²), or by letting that go for the time and let the more creative instinct have free play: or by some radical change of environment: or again by some irresponsible and incalculable variation of work and brief day-absences.

At the moment, I am like a man of the hills held in fee: I am willing to keep my bond, to earn my wage, to hold to the foreseen: and yet any moment a kestrel may fly overhead, mocking me with a rock-echo, where only sun and wind and bracken live — or an eddy of wind may have the sough of a pine in it — and then, in a flash — there's my swift brain-dazzle in answer, and all the rapid falling away of these stupid half-realities, and only a wild instinct to go to my own.

Memoir 296-8

To a friend, [mid-February, 1898]³

. . . but then, life is just like that. It is glad only 'in the open' and beautiful only because of its dreams. I wish I could live all my hours out of doors: I envy no one in the world so much

² See letter dated October 4, 1897 (#646) and the statement in his March 1, 1898 letter to Stedman that he is working on "a romance of the destinies of France."

³ Mrs. Sharp implied this letter "to a friend" was written shortly after the preceding letter. See *Memoir 298*. Since the friend is not identified, she may have been Edith Rinder. EAS in the *Memoir* was meticulous in identifying the recipients of her husband's letters except in cases where there was a reason not to do so.

as the red deer, the eagle, the sea-mew. I am sure no kings have so royal a life as the plovers and curlews have. All these have freedom, rejoice continually on the wind's wing, exalt alike in sun and shade: to them day is day, and night is night, and there is nothing else. . . .

Memoir 298

To Benjamin Burgess Moore, February 25, 1898

c/o Miss Rea. | The Columbia City Agency | 9. Mill Street. | Conduit Street. | London. | 25:2:98
Dear Mr. Moore

I was very pleased to get your letter, which ill health prevented my answering before this; and to learn that you like “The Laughter of Peterkin” so well. Its reception altogether has been a pleasant surprise to me — for though but a volume of old tales of beauty re-seen and re-told across an individual temperament, it has had many long articles and important reviews as well as the ordinary run of notices. In America, however, I understand there was little or no demand for it — partly due to the fact that the book was not published there.

My English publishers did what they could — but the invariable reply was “there is no market here for such books.”

I am sorry.

I had intended to publish this Spring a volume of tales — but on account of an important historical romance on hand have postponed publication of the vol. in question indefinitely — certainly for a year hence at least. Till the publication of this historical romance (sometime in 1899) I intend to issue no volume, with the possible exception of a volume of poems and short old-world dramas, but even that not till next Spring, or, at earliest, the late Autumn of this year. On the other hand stories etc. by myself are to appear in serial magazines, British and American, throughout this year. In particular, I would care for you to look at (when they *do* appear) “The Wayfarer” in *Cosmopolis*⁴ and “The Wells of Peace” in *Good Words*.⁵ I have no other personal news to give you save that some of my tales are being translated into French.

Hoping that the exigent life oversea leaves you time sometimes to stroll quietly off through the Gates of Dream —

With kind regards, | Yours very truly, | Fiona Macleod

ALS Huntington

To Robert M. Gilchrist, [late-February, 1898⁶]

⁴ June, 1898, 614-26.

⁵ September, 1898, 595-8.

⁶ EAS said this letter was written from St. Margaret's Bay at the end of April. Its content suggests a date of mid February since Sharp speaks of recovering from influenza and its side effects. Also the publication of Fiona Macleod's *Dominion of Dreams* “this Spring” remained a possibility when the letter was written. By February 25, according to the following letters to Benjamin Burgess Moore, that volume had been postponed for a least a year. EAS lists St. Margaret's Bay is one of the places her husband went during his absences from London in

My Dear Friend:

I know you will have been sorry to hear that I have been ill — and had to leave work, and home. The immediate cause was a severe and sudden attack of influenza which went to membranes of the head and brain, and all but resulted in brain fever. This evil was averted — but it and the possible collapse of your friend Will were at one time, and on some days, an imminent probability. I have now been a fortnight in this quiet sea-haven, and am practically myself again. Part of my work is now too hopelessly in arrears ever to catch up. Fortunately, our friend Miss F.M. practically finished her book just before *she* got ill too — and there is a likelihood that *There is But one Love*⁷ will come out this Spring. A few days will decide. . . .

Your friend and Sunlover, (in the deep |sense you know I mean — for I have suffered much but am now again fronting life gravely and with laughing eyes),

Will

Memoir 293

To Mary Stuart, March 1, 1898
30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead, London | 1st March/98

My dear Miss Stuart,

It was a great pleasure to me on returning to London today (after a two months absence, recruiting from serious illness) to find that the American mail just in had brought me a letter from you. I said to myself “what a dear she is” — and envied Mr. Mielatz,⁸ for I can only hug you in imagination and with the Atlantic between us!

I thank you very much for your kind letter. But I am indeed distressed to hear how ill E.C.S. has been and I fear still is, tho’ I hope now along the upgrade. I am thankful you have returned to his aid — and glad that you are working with him in the Amer. Anthology.⁹ If I can possibly manage it I’ll send him a cheery letter by this mail. I am certain he needs to take very

January and February. If the “quiet sea haven” where he has been for a fortnight was, as EAS indicates, St. Margaret’s Bay, the letter was probably written toward the end of his stay there in February rather than May.

⁷ At this point, EAS inserted in brackets: “published in the following year under the title of *The Dominion of Dreams*.” That volume was published by Archibald, Constable in June 1899.

⁸ An etcher and art teacher, Charles Frederick William Mielatz (1860-1919) was born in Germany and immigrated at age six with his family to America. He married Mary Stuart McKinney on February 25, 1903 and resided thereafter in New York City.

⁹ *An American Anthology 1787-1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1900)

great care of himself — *and above all to be on guard against nervous weariness*. His real illness, alas, is a nostalgia for impossible things. We all (soon or late) suffer from it in some degree. I do not know any friend who can do more for him than you can — and again I say I am thankful you are with him. He is so naturally sweet and sunny, but his nervous life is forever on the rack — much of it unavoidably alas, but some of it amenable by sympathy, loving camaraderie, and alert cooperation.

I am interested in what you say about Mr. Mielatz's recent work. Well (except for E.C.S.) I hope you *will* get married soon — & have a happy time, as you deserve — and that you will both come over to London, for Mr. Mielatz not only to win wider repute & ampler cash but also to be introduced to one of the staunchest of your admirers and your sincere friend

William Sharp

My other news in my note to E.C.S.
ALS Columbia

To Edmund Clarence Stedman, March 1, 1898

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead | London NW | 1st March/98

Dear & well-loved Poet & Friend,

Today is the first day of Spring — and what better could I do than send a line to a friend whom I love right well, and who happens also to be a poet of Springtide and of romance and love & youth?

But first, Edmund of the Gypsy Eyes, bear in mind that you are just to read, & have a handshake across the Atlantic, & then *not to dream* of answering. Half the pleasure of hearing from a friend is gone — for one so wrought as yourself by many things, & so waylaid by Protean circumstance — if a letter has the ill-manners to kick at the conscience while smiling in the eyes! So know that I am simply writing you a brief greeting out of loving camaraderie. You have many friends over here, & doubtless some whose friendship you value more than mine — but there is none more loyal to you, in every way, and none who loves you more truly.

I know you will be sorry to hear that I have been seriously ill, & am just back from 2 months convalescence -- but, then, I am better now, & so there is no more to be said about it. Then, too, latterly I had alleviations. To be more exact, it shd be in the singular! You can guess the name, & perhaps remember something of a rare beauty, of life-lifting eyes.¹⁰ Anyway, I am well again: & youth, romance, beauty, the passion of keen life, hope, eager outlook, eager work, are all realities once again.

My latest news of you was that you were very “fagged” — nervously overwrought. I do hope you are now more rested, and better able to get to your work — I mean *the* work for which God & nature meant you. Your book of poetry — for it is not “a book of verse” — has made a very distinct impression here.¹¹ I have not seen many notices, but what I saw were respectful & appreciative — & from individuals & from letters I hear of nothing but high praise.

¹⁰ Edith Rinder had visited Sharp frequently during the past two months. This sentence implies Sharp had shown a photograph of her to Stedman (probably during his trip to New York in November 1896) as he had shown it to Yeats and Rhys and Le Gallienne in June 1897.

¹¹ *Poems Now First Collected* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1897).

Did Miss F.M. ever write to you? I know she intended to — & indeed I remember seeing the first page or two of a letter (for she wrote when we were together somewhere) — for she very sincerely admired your poems and was touched and gratified by your sending her a copy. A photograph of your handsome ‘phiz’ ornaments said copy of the Poems — not given, I must add, but forcibly & insistently stolen from me!

Although I have had so bad a time with a dangerous collapse (culminating in severe meningitis) I am now feeling better than I have done for at least two years past — and am quite determined not only to work hard but to get as much of the sunshine & joy & romance and dear delight of life as may be! And what’s more, I’ve had it! And what’s more, I have laid in a treasure of it quite recently! And what’s more — by my Queen’s full consent and approval — I’ve been a very bad boy with a very dear & delightful ‘friend’, now alas returned to her home in Brussels — & generally I’ve been “spoilt” & made much of, & have enjoyed it, and am thinking of reforming 20 years hence, but meanwhile cling to my Sunshine Creed — to live sunnily, to think blithely, to act on the square even in my ‘sinning’, & to try to give sunshine to others.¹² After all, it’s not such a bad creed — indeed, it’s a very good one, and it has my dear poet E.C.S. as Prophet!

As for work — a great change has taken place in me. Hence forth you will see work at once more controlled, more thorough, stronger, and with more of controlled imagination, of more scrupulous art — & this both in prose & verse, tho’ indeed of the latter I am writing little. My *immediate* long undertakings (& I have also many important magazine commissions to fulfill) are “a romance of the destinies of France,” and an ambitious play.

For ten years, too, I have been slowly preparing for a big series depictive of Contemporary Life — and the first (to be called either *Camaraderie* or *The Hunters of Wisdom*, may be out in book form next Spring).¹³

If all goes well, you can think of me (and my friend) in a lovely green retreat, on the Marne, near Paris, during the last fortnight of April. If you were there too I would drink to you in white wine, and she would give you a kiss — which, with the glory in her beautiful eyes,

¹² This sentence suggests Edith Rinder was living at this time in Brussels; she was certainly interested in contemporary Belgian writers and translating some of their work. In this letter Sharp conveys a cavalier attitude toward his relationship with Edith Rinder which he assumes Stedman will find compatible. The robust male camaraderie Sharp projected in his letters to Stedman reflected their in-person relationship. It is diametrically opposed to the manner in which Sharp was portraying his deep and overpowering love for Edith in the Fiona Macleod stories that made their way later into *The Dominion of Dreams* (1899), especially “The Distant Country.” Sharp’s assuring Stedman that his “Queen” approved of his being “a very bad boy with a very dear & delightful ‘friend’” supports Elizabeth’s statement in the *Memoir* that she welcomed Edith’s cooperation in the effort to restore Sharp’s mental and physical health.

¹³ Sharp described this ambitious, unrealized project in his October 4, 1897 letter to EAS from Tillyra Castle. There the first volume of *The Epic of Youth* was called “The Hunter of Wisdom.” None were completed.

would make you “wild with the waste of all unnumbered Springs”. You will be with us in Spirit, dear poet of youth & romance — and *I* will kiss her for you, & likewise drink the sweet wine of France!!

. . . hope, and I trust that her sunny smile and youthful heart often rejoice you. You will be a dear youth till the end, E.G.S., — & may the Gods reward you!¹⁴

If you, or Miss Mary Stuart (God bless her!) will (*not* write, but) send me a P/C to say that this has safely reached you — and it had better be entrusted to what old Sir T. Browne calls “the oblivious flame” — I will be glad.¹⁵

My dear wife sends you cordial greeting— & and tells me to say to you that she insists on your keeping well & young till she comes out to Bronxville to see for herself! Possibly she may take a run over sea next Spring! So she says, & I believe intends. (I hope *she'll* find the funds!)

My love to dear Mrs. Stedman — & if Miss Mary Stuart will accept it, it is hers too. As for you, dear friend, you know you have it.

Ever loyally & lovingly yours, | William Sharp

ALS Columbia

To John Macleay, [mid-March?, 1898]

Greencroft Gardens/So. Hampstead

My dear Mr. Macleay

I congratulate you on your appointment — and trust it may be a stepping stone to good fortune.¹⁶ I am sorry, otherwise, that you are leaving the Highland — & that the H/News loses one of its best contributors. There is sore need of more men like yourself, in the newspaper offices of the north. But probably you will continue to write occasionally for the H/N — and give a good but difficult, tho' I hope in the end triumphant cause, what lift you can.

If ever I can be of any help to you, let me know: & if I can I will.

You go to a good paper -- & Liverpool is one of the lucky schools of journalism.

May you reach your heart's desire!

Yrs very sincerely/William Sharp

ALS NLS

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, March 29, 1898¹⁷

¹⁴ The first half of this brief paragraph has been heavily crossed out and is illegible. The lines reproduced here have also been struck through but remains legible. Sharp was trying to raise Stedman's spirits by referring to his relationship with a young woman and expressing his hope the relationship is ongoing.

¹⁵ The references to his own and Stedman's extramarital love affairs led Sharp to ask Stedman to burn the letter.

¹⁶ Macleay had left the *Highland News* in Inverness and was working for a Liverpool paper.

¹⁷ After including portions of this letter in the *Memoir* (294-6), EAS destroyed the manuscript. The portions she printed in the *Memoir*, transcribed here, present important insights into the nature of their relationship with each other and their relationship with Edith Rinder. Elizabeth

. . . Yes, in essentials, we are all at one. We have both learned and unlearned so much, and we have come to see that we are wrought mysteriously by forces beyond ourselves, but in so seeing we know that there is a great and deep love that conquers even disillusion and disappointment. . . .

Not all the wishing, not all the dreaming, not all the will and hope and prayer we summon can alter that within us which is stronger than ourselves. This is a hard lesson to learn for all of us, and most for a woman. We are brought up within such an atmosphere of conventional untruth to life that most people never even perceive the hopeless futility in the arbitrary ideals which are imposed upon us — and the result for the deeper natures, endless tragic miscarriage of love, peace, and hope. But, fortunately, those of us who to our own suffering *do* see only too clearly, can still strike out a nobler ideal — one that does not shrink from the deepest responsibilities and yet can so widen and deepen heart and spirit with love that what else would be irremediable pain can be transmuted into hope, into peace, and even into joy.

People talk much of this and that frailty or this or that circumstance as being among the commonest disintegrants of happiness. But far more fatal for many of us is that supreme disintegrant, the Tyranny of Love — the love which is forever demanding *as its due* that which is wholly independent of bonds, which is as the wind which bloweth where it listeth or where it is impelled, by the Spirit. We are taught such hopeless lies. And so men and women start life with ideals which seem fair, but are radically consumptive: ideals that are not only bound to perish, but that could not survive. The man of fifty who could be the same as he was at twenty is simply a man whose mental and spiritual life stopped short while he was yet a youth. The woman of forty who could have the same outlook on life as the girl of 19 or 20 would never have been other than one ignominiously deceived or hopelessly self-sophisticated. This ought not to be — but it must be as long as young men and women are fed mentally and spiritually upon the foolish and cowardly lies of a false and corrupt conventionalism.

No wonder that so many fine natures, men and women, are wrought to lifelong suffering. They are started with impossible ideals: and while some can never learn that their unhappiness is the result, not of the falling short of others, but of the falsity of those ideals which they had so cherished — and while others learn first strength to endure the transmutations and then power to weld these to far nobler and finer uses and ends — for both there is suffering. Yet, even of that we make too much. We have all a tendency to nurse grief. The brooding spirit craves for the sunlight, but it will not leave the shadows. Often, *Sorrow* is our best ally.

The other night, tired, I fell asleep on my sofa. I dreamed that a beautiful spirit was standing beside me. He said: “My Brother, I have come to give you the supreme gift that will heal you and save you.” I answered eagerly: “Give it me — what is it?” And the fair radiant spirit smiled with beautiful solemn eyes, and blew a breath into the tangled garden of my heart — and when I looked there I saw the tall white Flower of Sorrow growing in the Sunlight.”

Memoir 294-6

To Robert Murray Gilchrist, [April 22, 1898]

I forgot to answer your question: Forgive me. E’s birthday is the 17 of May — & she will be at home.

said this letter “relates to views we held in common,” opinions about love and the harmful effects of conventional restrictions on love.

I am hard pressed with work just now, as this is my busiest time. Next Friday¹⁸ I go to Paris for a week or 10 days.

I hope all goes well with you and yours.

W.S.

ACS Sheffield City Archives

To Grant Richards, April 26, 1898

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead | 26/Apr/98

My dear Richards,

Thanks for your note. Glad you like the exiled ladies so well.¹⁹ I daresay I might improve the opening a bit. I can see about this.

My terms, as I stated, are £25 (not £20) down on day of publication on a/c of a 15% royalty: & to this I agree. (It is the miscarriage I explained to you that induces me to mention so modest a sum — but that is absolutely my minimum.)

When will you begin printing? I should strongly advise publication before the end of May *if possible* — so as to catch that large public which begins to move off towards mid-June — a public interested in such a yachting romance as this.

The copy I sent you was an unrevised one. I have a partially revised one somewhere — & this I could take with me to Paris & send to you for printing from, with revisions, & perhaps some improvement in first chap. Please let me have the other some time.

It is fairly possible I may be able to snatch a half hour tomorrow (Press day Royal Academy) & look in on you abt this & these d—d “Love Letters”²⁰ but I can’t tell yet.

Excuse a scribbled line in extreme haste, with a telegram from one big daily & a printer’s devil from *Literature* both “pawing the air” for me.

Yours sincerely | William Sharp

ALS Stanford University

To William Butler Yeats, April 30, 1898²¹

¹⁸ Sharp left London on Friday, April 29 for Paris, but made it only to Dover where he spent a fortnight at the St Margaret’s Bay Hotel. His intent had been that both he and Edith Rinder would go to Paris to meet Yeats and his friends, but that plan did not materialize, probably because Edith in the end refused to play the role of Fiona Macleod. Rather she seems to have joined Sharp at the St. Margaret’s Bay Hotel on April 30 and stayed for at least a week.

¹⁹ The reference is to *Wives in Exile*, a William Sharp novel Grant Richards published in July, 1898.

²⁰ Richard Vynne Harold’s *Love Letters: A Romance in Correspondence* (New York: Zimmerman’s, 1898), which Grant Richards was considering for publication in England.

²¹ This postcard is postmarked April 30, ’98 from Dover and addressed to Yeats at Chez M. Macgregor Mathers, 87 Rue Mozart, Paris. On April 25, 1898, Yeats had written to Lady Gregory: “I have been here in Paris for a couple of days. . . . I am buried in Celtic mythology and shall be for a couple of weeks or so. Miss Gonne has been ill with bronchitis. . . . She comes here to-morrow to see visions. Fiona Macleod (this is private as she is curiously secret

My dear Yeats

I was just about to write to you when your note came, to tell you that a sudden & serious collapse in health not only will prevent Miss M. from coming to Paris, but will probably end in her having to go to some remote Baths for 2 months for special treatment. This may prove unnecessary: I trust so. Meanwhile it has materially affected immediate plans. As for myself, partly for this and partly because of being myself (as you will understand) seriously indisposed in the same way, I am unable to go to Paris either, & have had to cancel my art-work etc.²² I shall now be at above address for a week or more to come.

No I do not recall the new *Revue Celtique* address — but think it is in the Rue Bonaparte. Parts cannot be had separately — as it is by yearly subsc. Your easiest plan wd. be to borrow the Moytura²³ part either from Jubainville²⁴ or from Douglas Hyde²⁵ who, I know, takes the R.C. or

about her movements) talks of coming here too, so we will have a great Celtic gathering.” In a postscript to this letter, Yeats added: “My host is a Celtic enthusiast who spends most of his day in highland costume to the wonder of the neighbours.” His host was Macgregor Mathers (*Collected Letter II*, 214-5).

²² This sentence reinforces the point that Sharp had by this time told Yeats that Fiona Macleod was a second self or a spiritual presence whose appearance was dependent on the presence of the woman he loved. In an article entitled “William Sharp and Fiona Macleod” published in *The Century Magazine* in May, 1907 (Vol. 74, 111-7), Ernest Rhys said Sharp arranged to meet him and Yeats sometime before May, 1900, to make a “confession” concerning the Fiona Macleod stories and romances. Rhys says that what Sharp told them on this occasion “entirely corroborated what he had told me casually at other times, and I see no reason to doubt that, while the account was colored, it represented a genuine mental experience, and was psychologically true. Its effect was this: that he, wishing to interpret nature and the supernatural, and all their occult human contingencies had never been able to attain what he called “vision,” until after an illness and some fever he found himself newly sensitized, and made the vehicle of a woman’s vision — one far exceeding his own. Then, and not till then, he became the instrument of that creative work which, actually written down by himself, was yet the positive result of a dual state of consciousness, new, he thought, to human experience.” I believe the “confession” meeting occurred in June 1897, about the time he took Edith to Box Hill to play Fiona Macleod for George Meredith.

²³ The Plain of Moytura, located in County Mayo, was the site of two great battles in Irish mythical history, the first between the Danaans and the Firbolgs and the second between the Danaans and the Fomorians. Here Sharp refers to a modern abridged translation by Whitley Stokes from a 15th century manuscript in the British Museum describing “The Second Battle of Moytura,” *Revue Celtique*, 12 (1891), 52-130, with corrections and notes 306-8.

²⁴ Marie Henri d’Arbois de Jubainville (1827-1910) was a Celtic scholar, the first to head the Department of Celtic Language and Literature at the College de France. The *Revue Celtique*

you could easily copy what you want at the Bibliotheque Nationale. Send me a p/c to say you have recd this.

ACS Yale, printed in *Letters to Yeats*, 35-6

To Grant Richards, May 2, 1898

St. Margaret's Bay Hotel | Lanzardle | near Dover | 2/May/98

My dear Richards

Herewith the contracts. I return mine to be initialled or cross-signed by you opposite Clause I.

(1) As I explained to you at the time I called on you about *Wives in Exile*, the American sale covers the U.S.A. and Canada, and the condition on which publication is now feasible in this country is that of non-interference with the Transatlantic sale.

(2) I make it an invariable rule (a wise condition voluntarily adopted also with all their books, by John Lane and at least 3 other Publishers) to sign away no copyright for more than seven years. It goes without saying that self-interest as well as courtesy & square dealing make this stipulation a merely precautionary one.

In this instance I need make no objection to Clause 7 — as the printing will be from revised printed pages, and so there will naturally be very few Author's corrections: but as a rule I refuse to sign any such stipulation, unless indeed in some special instance where expense would run high.

Again, in Clause XI, I prefer the more expeditious & more business-like procedure of Constable & Co., Lane, etc. who remit within a calendar month after June 30th & Dec. 31.

*Love Letters*²⁶

I regret that continuous pressure of work since I came here has prevented my reading through the long installment of these letters. From the hurried glimpse I have been able to take of them, I feel as I already told you that the vocative-beginnings should be omitted, or used very rarely, as they are monotonous and (except doubtless to the two concerned!) ultimately wearisome. My own (perhaps far too swiftly and inadequately gained) impression is, that the man is sexually distraught and that the woman is neither his holy saint nor even a *virgo intacta*!

(1870-1934), a periodical important to the French development of Celtic studies, was founded by H. Gaidoz. Jubainville assumed direction of the publication in 1885. His most important work, among several books of Celtic studies, was *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Mythology* translated into English in 1903. Yeats knew him, or of him, as early as 1890, and he is cited by Virginia Moore as being the "best equipped and most esteemed Celtic scholar" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries [*The Unicorn: W. B. Yeats Search for Reality* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), 50].

²⁵A prominent figure in the Irish Literary Revival and the Irish Nationalist movement, Hyde (1860-1949) championed the revival of the Irish language and served from 1938-1945 as the first President of Ireland.

²⁶ Richard Vynne Harold's *Love Letter*.

However, I send on the signed copy for you to judge: it is quite possible that there might be a big sale for a book of this kind. Pour moi, le dis que le propre titre, c'est "Le monde ou l'on s'ennuie".

Tomorrow I hope to be able to go through *Wives in Exile*. So I can see my way to improving the opening by making clearer the point to which you allude I will do so. In any case I will revise for press as soon as I can — for certainly I think it important that this book should come out as early as practicable.

In haste | Yours sincerely | William Sharp

ALS State University of New York at Buffalo

To John Macleay, [May 3?, 1898]

Lanzardle / near Dover

Dear Mr. Macleay,

Your note has reached me at a little seaside place near Dover where I came a few days ago after a specially hard spell of literary and art-journalistic work: tho,' now, I may leave tomorrow.²⁷

I am glad to hear from you, and that things go fairly well with you: and glad also that you are finding leisure for that literary pen-work for which you care so much and in which you have shown so much genuine promise. It is of the very greatest advantage that Liverpool suits you, and that you have so fortunate a domestic environment. You ought now to set yourself (always keeping a scrupulous hold over your nervous health) to write imaginatively, that is to re-create observation and impression and give forth in a new because individual way. I shall look for any Highland work from your pen with genuine interest. Almost certainly, I should fancy, you will do better away from Inverness than in it — I mean about Inverness & Highland life.

I have never seen the *Highland News* since you left, so don't know if you are still (as I hope) contributing to it. I believe Miss Macleod had a long letter in it, in response to a request from the Editor, but I have not seen it.

She is in better health now, you will be interested to hear: but I'm not sure what she is doing just now -- probably working slowly at her historical Jacobite romance. There is a long short-story of hers in the just pubd. new number of that marvelous shillings worth, the little quarterly *The Dome*: and, I hear, one of the Summer issues of *Cosmopolis* is to have one of her most ambitious short stories. As to Mrs. Wingate Rinder's new Breton translation — yes, it has been well received already, tho' just published, *The Scotsman* of May 2nd which I have just found here, on file, has a very good notice. I have read the book with much interest, though I do not hold the high opinion of Le Goffic that many French critics have. I think Mrs. W. R.'s translation excellent *as* a translation, and wonderfully literal while deft and idiomatic — but I wd. far rather see her translating and better still paraphrasing the Breton legendary tales of which she

²⁷ The letter's approximate date is "a few days" after Sharp arrived in Lanzardle on April 29. It is likely that Edith joined him there on April 30 and quite possible that she had become ill since Fiona Sharp described Fiona as ill on the April 30 and again on May 5. He may well have thought he might be leaving the next day, but it appears that Edith left on the weekend (May 7) and Sharp stayed for another week.

gave so fine an installment in “The Shadow of Arvor.” However, when last I heard from her, she alluded to her intention to do another such volume -- & would have the advice & help of the great Breton Specialist, Anatole Le Braz.

As for myself I have been very busy, but largely with writing for the weeklies, and upon a new book, and upon as yet unpublished magazine articles. At the end of this month, or beginning of June, Grant Richards will publish a story, a “Comedy in Romance” of mine, entitled *Wives in Exile*.

I’ll postpone Neil Munro’s story till it appears in book-form. It seems to me very good indeed, but its Gaelicism to be far too self-conscious and in any case overdone. Another Glasgow man (Benjamin Swift) has, in my judgment, produced a very disappointing book in *The Tormentor*, tho’ I had hoped big things from him. He may do well yet. The book, all the same, is very clever, very able. *Spanish John* I liked, and was the more interested in as I know the author, a Scoto-Canadian who lives in Montreal. But he does not know the real Gaelic nature, I fancy. I have read nothing so imaginatively good for a long time as F. Mathews *The Spanish Wine*. That is romance.

With cordial regards and good wishes, / Yours sincerely / William Sharp

ALS NLS

To Benjamin Burgess Moore, May 3, 1898

Letter-address | c/o Miss Rea | The Columbia City Agency | 9 Mill Street | Conduit St. |
London | 3rd May 98

Dear Mr. Moore

Very many thanks for your friendly letter and its accompanying most sympathetic and appreciative review of “Peterkin”.

I wish there could be an American edition of that book, for I find now I have a greater number of readers than I knew. If chance should take you to Boston I wish you would ask Mr. Lamson (Lamson Wolffe & Co.) or Copeland & Day or Houghton Mifflin & Co. if they would care to issue an American edition of it²⁸ — either as it stands or without the Peterkin prologue and interludes — and in the latter case (which for some reasons I should prefer) under the title “The Three Sorrows of Old”, or “Heroic Tales of the Celt”, or “The Story of Deirdre the Beautiful”. In the circumstances I should expect no payment beyond a 15% royalty, and say 25 copies free. Would it be possible for you to see to this for me? You could add that the *Spectator*,²⁹ *Literature*, and indeed all the important English literary papers have spoken most highly of the book, — and perhaps you could emphasise this point by sending your own admirable “Yale Review” notice.

On the other hand do not hesitate to let me know if this is inconvenient for you. (If it had not been for the failure of Stone & Kimball of New York, who published my two previous books “*The Sin Eater*” and “*The Washer of the Ford*,” *Peterkin* would probably have been out in U.S.A. before this.)

²⁸ *The Laughter of Peterkin* (1897) was not published in America.

²⁹ Vol. 79 (November 27, 1897), 774.

I have directed the publisher to send you a copy of that delightful quarterly magazine, *The Dome*,³⁰ which is published today I believe. It contains a story of mine which you may care for (*Good Words* for April had a brief episodic narrative, “The Four Winds of Desire”).³¹ One of the Summer issues of *Cosmopolis* will contain “The Wayfarer”³² of which I wrote to you, and *Good Words* “The Wells of Peace”.³³)

I am writing this to send it with other notes to be posted in Edinburgh, (as am postless here in a remote little haven by the sea.³⁴ What peace and wonder and mystery lie in the ceaseless noise of a lonely sea. I send you a sea-breath of this old-world you love so well.

Sincerely Yours, | Fiona Macleod

ALS Huntington

To William Butler Yeats, May 5, 1998

St. Margaret’s Bay Hotel | Nr. Dover | 5th May 1898

My dear Yeats

In strict privacy, my friend Miss Macleod is here just now. She was on her way to Paris, but as I told you she was suddenly taken too unwell. She was sleeping when your letter came, but I left the enclosure for her at her bedside — & if she wakes before the post goes she will doubtless give you a message through me, unless she feels up to writing herself. If well enough, she leaves here on Saturday morning — but to go north again.³⁵

You ask me if I were in any unusual state on either May 1st or 2nd. I do not remember anything on Sunday 1st beyond a singular depression, and a curious sense of unreality for a time, as though I were really elsewhere. But on Monday 2nd, late, I suffered in a way I can’t explain, owing to what seemed to me an unaccountable preoccupation of Miss M.

All this is very private — but I trust you.

Her father was tall, fine-looking, with a rather singular concentrated expression. The Macleod tartan is dark (dark green & dark blue almost black). I don’t quite understand why you ask. I forgot to add that F.M. herself at times sees a startling likeness between me & her father, though I am taller & bigger & fairer than he was. There are, however, many similarities in nature, etc., and also in the accident of baptismal name.

³⁰ “Children of the Dark Star, May, 1898, 39-58

³¹ April, 1898, 245-6.

³² June, 1898, 614-26.

³³ September, 1898, 595-8

³⁴ Sharp probably composed this letter shortly after arriving in St. Margaret’s Bay and sent it to his sister in Edinburgh for transcription.

³⁵ This strange letter responds to two letters from Yeats -- one to Sharp and a second to Fiona -- asking about visions he and Macgregor Mathers had in Paris involving Sharp and Fiona. I have described the background of the letter in some detail in the Introduction to this Section. This sentence implies that Edith Rinder left St. Margaret’s Bay after a week, though Sharp stayed on till mid-month.

In case you do not get it, I ordered to be sent to you in Paris (at her & my simultaneous suggestion) a copy of *The Dome*.³⁶ Perhaps you will care for the story there. Your own poems there are very lovely.

I am afraid I must now go and post this: but
P.S. Have just time to say that Miss M has awaked, & is feeling much better. She cannot write at the moment however — but asks me to say that she has read your letter. In reply, she asks me to write as follows: —

“I *have* been going through an intense emotional crisis. One less poignant period was on the evening or night of the 1st, but far more so, & more poignantly on the 2nd. But of this, being private, I cannot speak further. I was, on both occasions (though differently & for different reasons) undergoing tragic feeling. I am at present at a perilous physical & spiritual crisis. I can say no more. The one who shares my life & self is here. It is as crucial for him. I will talk over your letter to us — for to us it is, though you send it to me. Are you sure it was not Will whom you felt or saw? If I, then I must only³⁷

P.S. Hurriedly adding this at the PO to say that my friend’s neuralgia was too severe to talk any more. The subject too was exciting her. She will show me your letter when I get back.

Note *this* time today. About 3 p.m. today Thursday she went through (& I too) a wave of intense tragic emotion — and last night, between 10 and 12 or later, we nearly lost each other in a very strange way. Something I did by the will was too potent, & for a time severed some unconscious links (we were apart at the time: I thought she was sleeping) — & we both suffered in consequence. But I think the extreme crisis of tragic psychic emotion is over.³⁸

God grant it

ALS Yale, printed in *LWBY* 36-7.

To Grant Richards, May 9, 1898

St Margaret’s Bay Hotel | near Dover | Monday 9th May: 98

My dear Richards,

My delay in sending you the first pages of *Wives in Exile* for press has been mainly due to my consideration of the point you addressed. After some hesitation I wrote a supplementary chapter — Then I read the book right through critically, and today reread the opening and this new chapter. The result is that I have destroyed this interpolated new chapter, and am convinced that my own shaping instinct was in the main right. I may add that no single review in America

³⁶ The May 1898 issue of *The Dome* contained besides Fiona Macleod’s “Children of the Dark Star” (39-58) Yeats’s “Aedh to Doctora: Three Songs” (37-8). The three songs were: “Aedh hears the cry of the Sedge,” “Aedh Laments the Loss of Love,” and “Aedh thinks of those who have spoken Evil of his Beloved.”

³⁷ After “only” there is a space in the MS letter where one or two lines have been erased. Sharp must have had second thought about what he had written. In the next postscript he attributes the mid-sentence break to Fiona’s neuralgia.

³⁸ Yeats’ response to this letter, both in a May 7 letter to Sharp and many years later in writing his autobiography, is discussed in the Introduction to this section of letters.

indicated any hesitancy as to the point you alluded to, nor any one over there who wrote to me about the book. My own strong feeling is that I could not now touch the book, by *interpolation*, except to spoil it. It must stand as it is, in this respect. In a story of this kind, so much depends on spontaneity and rapid continuity: I can do nothing to it, I realise, that would not militate against these qualities. From the first, I may add, my instinct was dead against your suggestion — but in courtesy, and also because I believe in the frequent value of outside suggestions, I was willing to put the matter to the test. I have done so. — And so, *Finis*.

I find, however, that I have forgotten to say I think I have very materially improved the opening of the book (& incidentally practically met your point abt making Harry Adair & his true, merely incidental relationship, obvious at once)— by making it now begin with P16 and then heading on to present beginning, minus first sentence. (The story now starts, too, on absolutely the rights ‘prognostic note.’)

Herewith I send you the opening forty six pp., revised and ready for press. (There are 329 pp. of text.) The remainder I shall send you with all possible expedition, for I am as anxious as you can be that there should now be no avoidable delay.

I trust you will not bring out the book in the same small size as the American edition. Here, I am convinced for my part, the public will not purchase small books. The book will have far more chances as an ordinary sized 6/ volume — & I would suggest that it might be printed page for page as here, but bigger type & wider spaced — so as still to be about 330 pp. in length.

I expect to be here till the week-end, but if I make an abrupt move shall let you know.

Yours sincerely, | William Sharp

ALS, UWM Library

To Dr. John Goodchild,³⁹ [mid-May, 1898]

The Outlook Tower, | Edinburgh,

Dear Sir,

I have to thank you very cordially for your book and the long and interesting letter which accompanied it. It must be to you also that I am indebted for an unrevised proof-copy of *The Light of the West*.⁴⁰

³⁹ John Arthur Goodchild (1851-1914) was a medical doctor who cared for British patients in Italy for the six darker months of the year and in England for the remainder. He was also a serious student of the early civilizations of Ireland, England, and Scotland and had a special affection for the Celts and early converts to Christianity. Goodchild was much taken by the writings of Fiona Macleod and William Sharp’s knowledge of stories from the Celtic past. The book Fiona thanks him for was a collection of his poetry called *The Book of Telphi* (1897). His best known publication was *The Light of the West* (April 1898), and Fiona also thanks him for a proof copy of that work. Fiona Macleod’s *The Winged Destiny* (Chapman and Hall, 1904) contained a “Dedicatory Introduction to J. A. G.” See the introduction to this section of letters for more about Goodchild.

⁴⁰ The mid-May date of this letter is based on the assumption that Fiona received the proof copy of *The Light of the West* shortly after its publication.

Everything connected with the study of the Celtic past has an especial and deep interest for me, and there are few if any periods more significant than that of the era of St. Columba. His personality has charmed me, in the old and right sense of the word ‘charm’: but I have come to it, or it to me, not through books (though of course largely through Adamnan) so much as through a knowledge gained partly by reading, partly by legendary lore and hearsay, and mainly by much brooding on these, and on every known saying and record of Colum, in Iona itself. When I wrote certain of my writings (e.g. “Muime Chriosd” and “The Three Marvels of Iona”) I felt, rightly or wrongly, as though I had in some measure become interpretative of the spirit of “Colum the White.”

Again, I have long had a conviction — partly an emotion of the imagination, and partly a belief insensibly deduced through a hundred avenues of knowledge and surmise — that out of Iona is again to come a Divine Word, that Iona, the little northern isle, will be as it were the tongue in the mouth of the South.

Believe me, sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod.

Memoir 316-7

*To Robert M. Gilchrist, (mid-May?, 1898)*⁴¹

Rutland House

My Dear Robert,

. . . After months of sickness, at one time at the gates of death, I am whirled back from the Iron Gates and am in the maelstrom again — fighting with mind and soul and body for that inevitable losing game which we call victory. Well, the hour waits: and for good or ill I put forth that which is in me. The Utmost for the Highest. There is that motto for all faithful failures. . . .

I am busy of course. And so, too, our friend F.M. — with an elixir of too potent life. The flame is best: and the keener, the less obscured of smoke. So I believe: upon this I build. *Cosmopolis* will ere long have “The Wayfarer” of hers — *Good Words* “The Wells of Peace” — *Harper’s* something⁴² — *Literature* a spiritual ballad⁴³ — and so forth. But her life thought is in another and stranger thing than she has done yet.⁴⁴ . . . Your friend W.S. is busy too, with new

⁴¹Mrs. Sharp states in the *Memoir* (293) that this letter to Gilchrist was written after Sharp returned to London from St. Margaret’s Bay. He returned at the start of the third week of May, or about May 15, and on Wednesday May 18, after spending May 17, her birthday, with his wife, he left with Thomas Janvier for four days in Holland.

⁴² “The White Heron,” *Harper’s* (December, 1898), 71-8.

⁴³ “Enya of the Dark Eyes,” *Literature*, No. 47, (September, 1898).

⁴⁴ This reference, according to Mrs. Sharp, is to *The Divine Adventure: Iona: By Sundown Shores: Studies in Spiritual History* (Chapman and Hall, 1900).

and deeper and stronger work. The fugitive powers impel. I look eagerly to new works of yours: above all to what you colour with yourself. I care little for anything that is not quick with that volatile part of one which is the effluence of the spirit within. Write to me soon: by return best of all. You can help me — as I, I hope, can help *you*.⁴⁵

It is only the fullest and richest lives that know what the *heart* of loneliness is.

You are my comrade, and have my love, | Will

Memoir 293-4

*To Robert Murray Gilchrist, May 17, 1898*⁴⁶

Rutland House | May 17th '98

Dear Mr. Gilchrist

My birthday has been gladdened by your most friendly letter, and made fragrant by the beautiful flowers you sent me. As I write I am conscious of the sweet wild wood scent of the lilies-of-the-valley — my favourite flower. It is indeed good of you to remember me, and it is one of my urgent wishes that before long the opportunity may come for me to know you well, for already I count you among my valued friends. Your photograph stands near one of Will, who asks me to send you his love.

Your word of the moorlands made me long for uplands and wide spaces. There are only indications of spring here, and no real spring — a veil of smoke hangs between us and clear bright sunshine, and makes a sadness of what should be a glorious day. Your mother, Mrs. Murray Gilchrist very kindly has asked me to stay some day with her. We go North to Scotland about the latter end of July, and I think it would be so very nice if we might stay for a day or so with her on our way. This is of course only a suggestion, and wholly depends upon whether or not it would be convenient to Mrs. Gilchrist.

Will has not been very well; tomorrow he goes to Holland for four days. I hope the newness of the surroundings there will send him home well & ready for work.

Are you working I wonder? Are you gathering more of those vivid strong tales to put together in another book? I hope so very much.

With cordial thanks for your friendliness

Very sincerely yours | Elizabeth A. Sharp

ALS Sheffield City Archive

To Editors, Harper's Magazine, May 19, 1898

C/o Miss Rea. | The Columbia Literary Agency | 9. Mill St. Conduit St. | London — W. |
19:May:1898

Dear Sirs,

⁴⁵ Although Sharp claims at the start of the letter to have regained his health, the letter suggest his mental state remained precarious.

⁴⁶ This letter from EAS to Gilchrist is included for its demonstration of her patience, good will, and genuine concern for the state of her husband's physical and mental health, despite the fact that he had been separated from her from most of the previous five months while she was working in London to earn money to support them.

Thanks for the Draft from Editor of *Harper's Magazine* for £20. (Twenty Pounds) for the Serial rights of my story "*The White Heron*":

Yours very truly | Fiona Macleod | 19/5/98

ACS University of Texas at Austin

To Elizabeth A. Sharp [late May, 1898]

. . . We are now in the south Zuyder Zee, with marvelous sky effects, and low lines of land in the distance. Looking back at Eiland Marken⁴⁷ one sees six clusters of houses, at wide intervals, dropped casually into the sea.

We had a delightful time in that quaintest of old world places, where the women are grotesque, the men grotesquer, and the children grotesquest — as for the tubby, capped, gorgeous-garbed, blue-eyed, yellow haired, imperturbable babies, they alone are worth coming to see

Memoir 298

To Grant Richards, [late June, 1898]

30 Greencroft Gardens | So. Hampstead

My dear Grant Richards

I meant to send you some notices of "Wives in Exile" — but I can't "lay my memory to one o'them" as they say in Ireland.⁴⁸ All be somewhere in a package. But by a chance I came across this in one of Lamson's letters, & send it to you. It was quoted from, among others, a good deal in U.S.A.

Very glad of your good news.⁴⁹ In a double sense you can now say the lovely Italian words of the Romagna folksong: — "O dolce primavera pien' di olezzo e amor!"⁵⁰

In haste | Sincerely Yours | William Sharp

ALS Stanford University

To Grant Richards (late June, 1898)

Dear Mr. Richards

In reply to your note, I send enclosed. I suppose it is the kind of thing you want.

Certainly the two U.S.A. quotations ought to prove stimulant both to the public and the critic — no small consideration.

Please let me know the date when it is intended to publish the book.⁵¹ There ought not to be a day's unnecessary delay now — especially as the yachting season begins at once.

⁴⁷ Marken Island of the coast of Holland.

⁴⁸ Richards had asked Sharp for some favorable notices of the American publication of *Wives in Exile* he could use to promote the book which was scheduled for publication in July.

⁴⁹ The good news seems to have been that Grant Richards and his wife were planning a second honeymoon in Cornwall.

⁵⁰ "O sweet Spring filled with olezzo and love."

By the way, your traveler shd. try and make a special sale with it in Glasgow (Maclehose, Forester, Hadden, etc.,) and Edinburgh (Andrew Elliot, etc., etc.,) as a Yachting Romance of the Clyde.

In haste, | Yours sincerely, | William Sharp

ALS Pierpont Morgan

To William Butler Yeats, June 28, 1898

Temporary 9 Upper Coltbridge Terrace | Murrayfield. | Midlothian. | Scotland

My dear Mr. Yeats

I am very glad to get the letter duly forwarded to me, and to hear from you again. As you know, there is no living writer with whom I find myself so absolutely in rapport as with you. I am eagerly hoping for more beautiful work from you again in prose and verse, soon. How often I have meant to write to you about your lovely opening pages of “The Shadowy Waters”, which I do hope you will complete soon, and about the alas still unpublished lyrics “The Wind in the Reeds”.⁵² I was deeply interested in your Folklore articles — but it is new imaginative work that I most long to see.⁵³ I dread for you a too great preoccupation in other interests — and the consequent inevitable dispersal of energy, and the insatiable avarice of the hours and days of our brief time. I was glad to hear that you liked “Children of the Dark Star” and “The Wayfarer”.⁵⁴

I have been told that long ago one of the subtlest and strangest minds of his time — a man of Celtic ancestry on one side and of Norse on the other — was so profoundly influenced by the kindred nature and spirit of a woman whom he loved, a Celt of Celts, that, having in a sense

⁵¹ Sharp had found a few favorable notices of *Wives in Exile* for Richards to use promoting the English edition which he published in early June.

⁵² Yeats had given Sharp typescripts of some of the poems that would appear in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (Elkin Mathews, April 1899) with the hope he would carry through on his promise to mention the book as forthcoming. A review of *Wind Among the Reeds* appeared over the signature of Fiona Macleod in the Dublin *Daily Express* on April 22, 1899, shortly after the volume appeared. *The Shadowy Waters* and *The Wind Among the Reeds* are discussed in “The Later Work of Mr. Yeats,” also by Fiona Macleod, in *The North American Review* of September, 1902.

⁵³ Sharp as Fiona Macleod was referring to Yeats’ recent critical work in prose: “Le Mouvement Celtique” (which focuses on Fiona Macleod) in *L’Irlande Libre* (April 1898), “Irish Fairy Land” in *The Outlook* (April 1898), “The Broken Gates of Death” in the *Fortnightly Review* (April 1898), and “The Celtic Element in Literature” in *Cosmopolis* (June 1898) which also contained “The Wayfarer” by Fiona Macleod.

⁵⁴ At this point, thirteen lines have been blotted out, probably by Yeats or perhaps by Mrs. Sharp if Yeats loaned the letter to her when she was writing the *Memoir*. The lines are not decipherable.

accidentally discovered⁵⁵ the mystery of absolute mental and spiritual union of two impassioned and kindred natures the flame of anguish that had been his in a far back day was in him, so that besides a strange and far reaching ancestral memory, he remembered anew and acutely every last clue and significance of his boyhood and early life, spent mostly among the shepherds and fishers of the Hebrides and Gaelic Highlands. His was the genius, the ancestral memory, the creative power — she was the flame — she, too, being also a visionary, and with unusual and all but lost old wisdom of the Gael. Without her, he would have been lost to the Beauty which was his impassioned quest: with her, as a flame to his slumbering flame, he became what he was. The outer life of each was singular, beyond that of any man or woman I have heard of how much stranger that of their spiritual union. A profound and resolute silence lay upon the man, save when he knew the flame of the woman “through whom he saw Beauty,” and his soul quickened. She gave him⁵⁶ all she could, and without her he could not be what he was, and he needed her vision to help his own, and her dream, and her thought, and her life, till hers and his ceased to be hers and his and merged into one, and became a spirit of shaping power born of them both.⁵⁷

How does that strike you as a subject for a tale, a book? It be a strange one. Does it seem to you impossible? It does not seem so to me.

Your friend and comrade | Fiona Macleod⁵⁸

ALS Yeats Papers, printed in *LWBY I*, 38-9

To Richard Watson Gilder, July 5, 1898

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead | 5/July/98

My dear Mr. Gilder,

Herewith I send a couple of short poems: perhaps one or both may appeal to you.

Like our common friends (and near neighbours) the Janviers, I had hoped to see Mrs. Gilder and yourself in London this season: but perhaps next Spring may see you again in a town you both love well. The Janviers, too, are become Londoners!

⁵⁵ From this point through “early life,” lines have been blotted out but are decipherable.

⁵⁶ From this point through “one,” the lines have been blotted out but are decipherable.

⁵⁷ The ellipsis is in the MS letter.

⁵⁸ There is an eight-line postscript to the letter which has been crossed through line-by-line and is not decipherable. It probably asks Yeats to destroy the letter because of its very personal nature. FM wrote a brief note to Yeats on July 6th asking if he received her letter of June 28th and saying she was anxious about it. One sees why because here Sharp describes metaphorically, but accurately, how his relationship with Edith Rinder enabled him to write as Fiona Macleod. Speaking as the woman, he distances himself only slightly by the “long ago,” from the man who — half Celt and half Norse as was Sharp — possessed “one of the subtlest and strangest minds of his time.” He portrays himself as he sees himself and as Edith Rinder saw him, and then proceeds to describe the result of his love for her which is their ability, working together through him, to produce the stories and poems the world knew as the writings of Fiona Macleod.

Recently, Janvier accompanied me in a little trip through Holland, a country with which I am familiar but which was new to him. He enjoyed it greatly.

Later (I have another volume of short stories coming out first) I wish to publish a series of short stories with North-Holland scenery or old Dutch towns as background. Would it be any use my sending you one of these? I am now writing them. The first is already accepted: the others, available soon, are, (this will be the titular story), (2) "The Merchant of Dreams" (with Amsterdam as background) (3) "The Flower of Oblivion" (Flemish-Dutch, not 'Hollandisch' proper, as it is an effort to convey the mysterious charm and fascination of Bruges.) (4) "The Ivory Sculptor" (Delft) (5) "The House in the Wood," (North Holland) (6) "The Scarlet Peacock" (North Holland).⁵⁹

What are you doing yourself just now, apart from your editorial work? I hope you are going to publish a volume of poetry soon. You may not have as many but you have as sincere admirers here as oversea. My cordial regards to Mrs. Gilder.

Yours sincerely, | William Sharp

Just finished today a difficult task — that of writing an article on Burne-Jones for two magazines for (I understand) the same month. But that for the "Atlantic" is personal, while that for the "Fortnightly" is critical, an appreciation.⁶⁰

ALS Huntington

To William Butler Yeats, July 6, 1898

6th July/98

Dear Mr. Yeats

I hope you duly received the private letter I sent you on the 28th of June. I am a little anxious about it.⁶¹

Yours most sincerely | Fiona Macleod

ACS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Grant Richards, July 11, 1898

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead | 11 July/98

⁵⁹ Among these projected titles, the only story to appear was "The Merchant of Dreams," which may be found in Volume V of *The Selected Writings of William Sharp* (London: William Heinemann, 1912).

⁶⁰ "Sir Edward Burne-Jones," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 82 (September, 1898), 375-83. "Edward Burne-Jones," *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 70 (August, 1898), 289-306.

⁶¹ The anxiety is due to the fact that the Fiona Macleod letter of June 28th (see above) describes as material for a story the relationship between William Sharp and Edith Rinder that produced the Fiona Macleod writings. This relationship and its effects were known to only a few, and their general discovery would have had disastrous effects on Sharp's personal and creative life. Thus his concern about what may have happened to the June 28 Fiona Macleod letter to Yeats.

My dear Grant Richards

What day will you send out review copies of *Wives in Exile*? If you have copies in hand could you let me have two of mine by *Friday*, as wanted for birthdays!

I think it would be advisable if you would send (*as review copies*, though not to be so indicated: simply a slip *with the author's compliments*) copies to

(1) H. D. *Traill* Esq | Editor *Literature* | Printing House Square | E.C. (this not to interfere with the copy to *Literature* itself, which Mr. T. will give out. If he has a copy himself he may be able to do something for it in two other quarters.)

For same reason to W. L. *Courtney* Esq⁶² | C/o Messrs. Chapman & Hall

(3) James *Knowles* Esq | Queen Anne's Lodge | St. James Park | SW

(4) *Richard Whiteing* Esq | 45 Mecklenburgh Square | W.C.

(5) *Charles Russell* Esq | 12 Buckingham Terrace | Hillhead | Glasgow

(6) The Rev. Donald Macleod D.D.⁶³ | 1 Woodlands Terrace | Glasgow

(7) Clement K. Shorter Esq⁶⁴ | *Sketch Office* etc.

Each of these, I have reason to know, will prove a 'well-placed' copy — sent in this way. I would add Coulson Kernahan, but I think he said you had promised him a copy.

Please let me know if you are sending above as indicated.

I think I have already suggested your traveller making a special push of the book in Glasgow & Edinburgh — particularly where a Clyde yachting romance ought to 'take'.

For my own use, in addition to the Six Authors Copies agreed upon (two by Friday if possible) — please send me (I presume at trade-price, as is usual?) six other copies.

And will you please oblige me by letting me have *by this week-end* the £25 advance, owing to an unexpected sudden emergency — a courtesy for which I will venture to thank you in advance. Will you & Mrs. Richards come & have tea with Mrs. Sharp & myself some afternoon

⁶²William Leonard Courtney (1850-1928) was a philosopher, journalist, and editor for the *Daily Telegraph* where he was the chief dramatic critic and literary editor from the mid-nineties until 1925. He became the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1894, remaining in that post until 1928. He was also editor of *Murray's Magazine* in 1891. His books include *The Metaphysics of John Stuart Mill* (1879), *The Development of Maeterlinck* (1904), and *The Soul of a Suffragette* (1913).

⁶³ The Reverend Donald Macleod (d. 1911) was Chaplain in Ordinary to the King in Scotland, editor of *Good Words* from 1872-1905, and Emeritus Minister of the Parish of the Park in Glasgow. His publications include *Christ and Society* and *Memoir of Norma Macleod*.

⁶⁴ Clement King Shorter (1857-1926) was a journalist and author who, after working as editor on various London news and periodical publications, founded *The Sphere* in 1900 which he edited until his death. He also founded *The Tatler* in 1901 and, much earlier, he had helped establish the Omar Khayyám Club, of which Sharp was a member. His publications include *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle* (1896), *Napoleon's Fellow Travelers* (1909), and *George Borrow and his Circle* (1913).

either at her club or at mine?⁶⁵ (From the 19th till 25th I expect to be with Murray Gilchrist, & then here for 2 or 3 days again)

Yours Sincerely | William Sharp

ALS Fales Library, New York University

To Grant Richards, [July 15, 1898]

Friday

My dear Richards

Thanks for the copies of our Exiled Dames to hand. The book is very well got up, & I am delighted with the cover, which is at once simple & charming, & the colour effective. I hope the combined efforts of author & publisher will allure the stray '4s/6 cash' from many pockets — notwithstanding a war-spent season and this being "sae waefu"⁶⁶ far on i' the year".

Of course the book is heavily handicapped by coming so late in the season — but even now I hope the big booksellers out of town, at Brighton, Cromer etc. etc. may be able to catch some of the holiday public who might care for a book such as this.

If some good reviews appear (I expect "a mixed lot" as the auctioneers say!) the book may take a sudden life — & in any case will I hope have a fresh lease in the Autumn.

Thanks, too, for the cheque for advance £25.

Sorry we are not likely to meet this summer. We shall be away from the 19th till the 25th or 26th — & then back till the 31st, on which day we leave for Scotland.

I presume it is *this* Saty that you go to Cornwall. If not, could you both come here Monday? (Don't bother to answer if it *is* this Saty you go.)⁶⁷

Hoping you will have a happy second honeymoon—

Very sincerely yours, | William Sharp

ALS State University of New York at Buffalo

To Grant Richards, [July 19, 1898]

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead | NW

My dear Richards,

I sent the "Provence Maritime"⁶⁸ to your Chelsea address, & have just heard that *Fumeurs d'Opium* was duly sent on to you this morning at Henrietta St., at my request, from my friend Mrs. Wingate Rinder, to whom I had lent it. I gave it to her some time ago with the strong recommendation to translate it (you know her admirable translative work, I expect) — and she has begun to do so. It will, I believe, make a very striking book in English. The tales are

⁶⁵ EAS was a member of the Sesame Club and WS of the Grosvenor Club.

⁶⁶ So woefully or unhappily on in the year.

⁶⁷ Grant Richards and his wife must have left for their second honeymoon in Cornwall on Saturday July 23, since it appears they did visit the Sharps on Monday, July 18.

⁶⁸ Grant Richards may have been contemplating a visit to the French and Italian Rivas. That would explain Sharp loaning him a book about Provence. Years later Richards wrote *The Coast of Pleasure: An Unconventional Guide to the French Rivera*.

powerful. If it strikes you as desirable, I hope you may see your way to commissioning Mrs. Rinder to translate it for you.⁶⁹ (Her recent “The Dark Way of Love”, a translation of C. Le Goffic’s “Le Crucifié de Kéralies”, was a success in both senses).

When you have done with the book will you please let me have it again. Mrs. Rinder is anxious to get on with the translation.

The other book will do when you return. I hope you & your wife (what a charming as well as a pretty woman, you unduly lucky devil!) will have a memorably happy & fortunate time. My cordial greetings to you both. Bon voyage!

William Sharp

ALS State University of New York at Buffalo

To Ernest Rhys, July 23, 1898

23rd July, 1898

My Dear Mr. Rhys,⁷⁰

On my coming to Edinburgh for a few days I find the book you have so kindly sent to me.⁷¹ It is none the less welcome because it comes as no new acquaintance: for on its

⁶⁹ Jules Bossière (1863-97), poet, traveler, Chinese scholar, and opium addict, was a disciple of Mallarmé and the Symbolists. He wrote only seven books in his short life, the two on opium usage his finest. *Fumeurs d’Opium*, a collection of stories first published in 1896, saw four editions; the autobiographical *Propos d’un Intoxiqué* first appeared in 1911. He was one of the first French writers to study the action of opium on the intelligence and sensibilities (Liedekerke, *La Belle Epoque de l’Opium*, p.197). The suggestion that Edith Rinder translate *Fumeurs d’Opium* for publication by Grant Richards did not materialize. Edith Rinder’s translation of *Le Crucifié de Keralies* by Charles Henri Le Goffic was published in 1898 under the title, *The Dark Way of Love*.

⁷⁰Mrs. Sharp printed (*Memoir* 299-300) Rhys’ reply to this letter:
Dear “Fiona Macleod,”

I believe I never wrote to thank you for your story in the *Dome*, which I read eventually in an old Welsh tower. It was the right place to read such a fantasy of the dark and bright blindness of the Celt: and I found it, if not of your very best, yet full of imaginative stimulus.

Not many weeks ago, in very different surroundings, Mr. Sharp read me a poem — two poems — of yours. So I feel that I have the sense, at least, of your continued journeys thro’ the divine and earthly regions of the Gael, and how life looks to you, and what colours it wears. What should we do were it not for that sense of the little group of simple and faithful souls, who love the clay of earth because heaven is wrapt in it, and stand by and support their lonely fellows in the struggle against them? I trust at some time it may be my great good fortune to see you and talk of these things, and hear more of your doings. Ernest Rhys

⁷¹Rhys’s *Welsh Ballads and Other Poems* (London: David Nutt, 1898).

appearance a friend we have in common sent it to me. Alas, that copy lies among the sea-weed in a remote Highland loch; for the book, while still reading in part, slipped overboard the small yacht in which I was sailing, and with it the MS. of a short story of mine appropriately named “Beneath the Shadow of the Wave”! The two may have comforted each other in that solitude: or the tides may have carried them southward, and tossed them now to the Pembroke Stacks, now to the cliffs of Howth. Perhaps a Welsh crab may now be squeaking (they do say that crabs make a whistling squeak!) with a Gaelic accent or the deep-sea congers be reciting Welsh ballads to the young-lady-eels of The Hebrides. Believe me, your book has given me singular pleasure. I find in it the indescribable: and to me that is one of the tests, perhaps the supreme test (for it involves so much) of imaginative literature. A nimble air of the hills is there; the rustle of remote woods; the morning cry, that is so ancient, and that still so thrills us.

I most eagerly hope that you will recreate in beauty the all but lost beauty of the old Cymric singers. There is a true originality in this, as in anything else. The green leaf, the grey wave, the mountain wind — after all, are they not murmurings in the old Celtic poets, whether Alban or Irish or Welsh: and to translate, and recreate anew, from these, is but to bring back into the world again a lost wandering beauty of hill-wind or green leaf or grey wave. There is, I take it, no one living who could interpret Davyth ap Gwilym⁷² and other old Welsh singers as you could do. I long to have the Green Book of ‘the Poet of the Leaves’ in English verse, and in English verse such as that into which you could transform it. . . .

F.M.

Memoir 298-9

To William Butler Yeats, [c. July 20, 1898]

This letter, which is in private hands, responded to a letter from Yeats in which he reported that the legal difficulties encountered by the Celtic Theatre were settled and asked F.M. what plays she would have ready for the fall. In this reply F.M. said she was “very glad indeed to hear about the Celtic Theatre and that she hoped to have “Fand and Cuchulain” finished this autumn and possibly the shorter “The Hour of Beauty.” She said she had also “virtually completed ‘The King of Ys’ and ‘Dahut the Red.’

To Benjamin Burgess Moore, July 31, 1898

Address during August | Seaview West | Kilcreggan, Dumbartonshire | Scotland | 31:July:98
Dear Mr. Moore

Many thanks for your letter, and all the trouble you have taken. It will be pleasant if Mr. Lamson would take “Peterkin”: I have not heard from him. If you are writing to him again you might add that I have a volume of short stories (from the Collective 3-Vol. Edn., and magazine sources) not published in America (Stone & Kimball published *The Sin-Eater* and the *Washer of the Ford*, and Messrs. Harper *Green Fire*) which I would be pleased to issue through him, if he is agreeable to my terms — royalty of 12½% (instead of 15% — as usual), with an advance on publication of £20 (\$100), and a dozen copies free on publication — terms which I imagine will commend themselves as moderate, only, I should like to hear soon.

⁷² A fourteenth-century Welsh poet.

No, it is not quite true that Mr. Yeats and I are collaborating on a drama: but we are each writing a drama, which we hope to see brought out in the new Celtic theater in Dublin next year. Yes — ‘Ulick Deane’ in Mr. Moore’s *Evelyn Innes* is an exact (indeed an extraordinarily exact) portraiture of Mr. Yeats.⁷³ It is a remarkable book, with all its faults — and interested me profoundly. It has not been at all adequately treated, I think.

My recent stories in the *Dome* and *Cosmopolis* were very well received. Among others that might interest you are “The Wells of Peace” coming out soon I believe in *Good Words*: “Enya of the Dark Eyes”, coming out in one of the autumn issues of *Literature*: and “The White Heron”, with illustrations, in the Christmas number of *Harper’s*. (By the way you might mention this latter fact to Mr. Lamson when you write — as I understand that the appearance of a story in the Christmas number is held of great account in U.S.A. as an advertisement — you will be thinking I am becoming very commercial!)

I hope that “Paul Smith’s, Franklin County” means that you are to be in some beautiful place for a holiday.

You can think of me in August among the lochs of Eastern Argyll, and in September among the Isles.

As soon as I have finished my new book⁷⁴ I shall get on with the two [for three] short plays, “The Hour of Beauty” and “The King of Ys” and “Dahut the Red.”⁷⁵

I send you a little spray of Highland heather,

Yours most sincerely | Fiona Macleod

ALS Huntington

To Edward Martyn, [early August, 1898]⁷⁶

Scalasaig | Isle of Colonsay | (Inner Hebrides)

My dear Martyn

Very many thanks — but it must be some other time: not this summer or autumn now, I fear. I shall be in the isles till September any way.

⁷³ George Moore’s *Evelyn Innes* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1898).

⁷⁴ *The Dominion of Dreams* (1899)

⁷⁵ “The Hour of Beauty” became “The Immortal Hour” and was published in the *Fortnightly Review* in November 1900. “The King of Ys” and “Dahut the Red” were intended by Sharp to form part of a series of plays to be published collectively as *The Theatre of the Soul* or *The Psychic Drama*. Neither the plays nor the series materialized. See “Bibliographical Note” in *Poems and Dramas*, Vol. VII of *The Works of Fiona Macleod*, Unified Edition arranged by Mrs. William Sharp (London: William Heinemann, 1910), 448.

⁷⁶ The Isle of Colonsay in Argyll is not far off-shore from Kilcreggan where Sharp seem to have spent most of his time for the first three weeks of August. In a July 4 letter, Yeats told Sharp that Martyn was too upset by his mother’s death (on May 12) to invite anyone to Tillyra, but might change his mind. He also promised to speak to Martyn about inviting Sharp if the occasion arose. Apparently Martyn did invite Sharp, but the formality and cool tone of Sharp’s response suggest Martyn’s invitation was less cordial and welcoming than it might have been.

But sometime I hope very much to see you again, in Ireland.

Ever sincerely yours | William Sharp

ALS Princeton

To John Macleay, August 8, 1898

Argyll House / Kilcreggan / Scotland

Dear Mr. Macleay,

Your letter found me in the North we both love so well. Yes, I know & love Glenmoriston[?] & Loch Duich & Glengnoich[?]: it is a lovely region, a haunted land.

The Loch Duich neighborhood will, I understand, figure largely in Miss Macleod's historical romance – though I believe she has changed the original plan as I heard it a year or two ago. I expect to see her in September – either in Skye or the Hebrides -- unless, as is possible, I may have to go abroad at the beginning of Sept., tho' I hope not. I fear that this romance of hers has been lagging – partly because of her preoccupation with work more after her own heart and (as I believe) more suitable for her. However, the result will be the only proof, one way or the other. Have you seen her recent published stories in the *Dome* and *Cosmopolis*? She tells me that in a few weeks (i.e. either in August or September) there is to be a short story by her in *Literature*, & that Mr. Sterner (?)⁷⁷

ALS NLS

To (Manager for) Messrs. Herbert S. Stone & Co., [August 16, 1898]⁷⁸

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead | London | NW

Thanks for your Royalty statement of *Vistas* to hand. Please send me one, or two, copies in lieu of the small sum due. Please note not to address Miss Macleod's statements or letters to my care as I very often do not know her address. Her business address is c/o Miss Rea | The Columbia Literary Agency | 9 Mill St. | Conduit St. | London.

I have just had a letter from her to this effect, also . . . book as I have done above covering mine.⁷⁹

Yrs very truly | William Sharp

ACS The Newberry Library

To Coulson Kernahan, August 24, 1898⁸⁰

⁷⁷ The remaining page or pages of this letter are missing.

⁷⁸ Date from postmark; postcard addressed to Eldridge Court | Chicago.

⁷⁹ The concluding sentence was written vertically on the left side of the postcard and the writing is difficult to make out. The sense seems to be that Fiona Macleod would also like copies of the books she published with Stone and Kimball (*Pharais*, 1895; *The Sin-Eater*, 1896; and *The Washer of the Ford*, 1896) in lieu of royalty payments.

⁸⁰ The card is postmarked Glasgow, Aug 24, '98. Since Sharp says he is "en route," he must have been returning to London from Kilcreggan, Argyll.

Kilcreggan | Argyll

My dear Kernahan

Pray excuse a Postal Card in lieu of note paper — but I am “en route”, & have nothing at hand.

Thanks for your kind words my dear fellow. Your notice will, I am sure, help the book⁸¹; & in any case I thank you for it. For myself, I do not agree with you abt the ‘personal element’ — & that part in your notice I do not like. The “Tirebuck” was an impossible & absurd slip of some stupid compiler, long ago corrected & forgotten: and the Fiona Macleod matter is also one no longer mixt up with my name, Miss M’s work standing so unmistakably by itself & she herself now being known to a few at least. The A. Hope matter is persiflage of course. But I am certainly thankful the article was *not* headed “The Mystery of W.S.”, as I wd. have had published a protest. [Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863-1933), a novelist and playwright who used the pseudonym Anthony Hope, must have speculated in print that Fiona was Sharp.] Well, dear old man, I am frank you see. But you know that for your good will & good deed I am grateful. The book was a mere jiu d’esprit — & has been both over-praised & unduly disparaged.

Our joint love to you both, dear friends. | W.S.

ACS Princeton

To Benjamin Burgess Moore, September 17, 1898

c/o Miss Rea | The Columbia Literary Agency |
9 Mill Street | Conduit St. | London | 17: Sept: 98

My dear Mr. Moore

⁸¹ *Wives in Exile* (1898).

Prolonged absence must be my excuse for not writing to you sooner to send you my grateful thanks for all the trouble you have so kindly taken on my behalf. I will write to you again as soon as I hear from Mr. Lamson, to whom I wrote at once. I send you a copy of last week's *Literature*, containing a short story of mine. If you can't get *Good Words* in America (September number) let me know, and I will get a copy and send to you. It contains "The Wells of Peace." The new issue of the *Dome* (Oct.) will also have two short poems by me.⁸²

Meanwhile in great haste, | Believe me | Most cordially yours, | Fiona Macleod

ALS Huntington

To Edmund Clarence Stedman [September 28, 1898]

30 Greencroft Gardens | South Hampstead, | London

For the birthday! I have written it to reach you on morning of the 8th!

My everdear Poet & Friend

Illness — followed by heavy work, & latterly a big exigent writing commission in Holland, for "Cosmopolis" etc. — are responsible for much, including a necessarily more brief note now, for I have hours & hours of work to do yet — But however busy I have never yet & I hope never will let the time go past without sending you my deep & true affection, my comradely greetings, & my homage too, to you on the occasion of your birthday. Dear Edmund of the Bays, may your new year be one of better health & more peace & rest than you have had of late — & may in all ways all things go well with you. If the love & loyal devotion of one of your truest friends on this side the Atlantic — & indeed, on my part, I will yield to no one! — can count for anything. Then at least one good influence goes to the making of a happy new year.

I had a very wonderful & happy time this summer with the dear friend of whom you know, & whose writings you admire so much — & I look to another week at least about mid-October. My love to my dear friend Mrs. Stedman. I often think of you both longingly — & "Casa Laura."⁸³ And Miss Mary Stuart? I wrote her a long letter (and you too!) but neither was ever acknowledged or answered! I hope she is well. She is a dear girl. She was to be married this autumn perhaps: Has it come off! If so, please send me her address. She is a friend of whom I do not wish to lose sight. In another letter I must tell you of my many literary doings — more ambitious now. (In magazine way, see *Fortnightly* for August, etc. etc. Also *Cosmopolis* in Nov. — am now writing for *all* the big mags here and U.S.A.).

Lovingly your friend, | Will | (to others, | William Sharp)

ALS Columbia

To Theodore Watts-Dunton [? Early October, 1898]

EAS printed (*Memoir*, 302-3) a letter from Theodore Watts-Dunton to "My Dear Sharp" dated October 19, 1898 which is a response to letter he had recently received from Sharp. That letter has not surfaced, but Watts-Dunton writes at some length about *Aylwin*, a novel which had been completed for several years and was finally about to be published late in 1898 (Hurst and Blackett,

⁸² "Enya of the Dark Eyes" appeared in *Literature*. "The Last Night of Artan the Culdee" and "The Monody of Isle the Singer" appeared in *The Dome*, 1 [New Series] (October, 1898), 75-6.

⁸³ The Stedman's house was named for the Stedmans's daughter, Laura.

London and, in 1899, Dodd, Mead and Company, New York). Of that novel, which chronicles the passionate and ultimately spiritualistic love of two Romany (Gypsy) men for the girls of their dreams, Watts-Dunton wrote to Sharp: “Although it is of course primarily a love-story, and, as such, will be read by the majority of readers, it is intended to be the pronouncement of something like a new gospel – the gospel of love as the great power which stands up and confronts a materialistic cosmogony.” Watts-Dunton sent Sharp with this letter a copy of a book of poems, *The Coming of Love*, which had recently been published by John Lane (London). The title poem of that volume, Watts Dunton told Sharp, was a sequel to *Aylwin*, though it preceded the publication of the novel, and it more fully expressed his “gospel of love.” This idea, deriving from Blake, Shelley, and other romantic poets of the early nineteenth century, was a central theme of the Fiona Macleod writings.

To Ernest James Oldmeadow [December, 1898]⁸⁴

c/o Miss Rea

Dear Mr. Oldmeadow⁸⁵

If you can use the enclosed in your January number, I will not only be glad that it would appear in *The Dome* but will in this instance waive the question of payment.⁸⁶ *The Dome* is the only periodical where I would care to see this poem, which of necessity must appeal only to the few. It will appear in a book which I hope to issue early in the Spring.

With cordial regards, | Sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod

ALS National Library of Scotland

To [Dora Sigerson Shorter,⁸⁷ December, 1898]

For you, high hopes — and for you and yours *Bliadha mhath ur!*

Fiona Macleod

P.S. In an article in the forthcoming (Jan 7) number of *The Fortnightly*⁸⁸ on what I take to be the true significance of the so-called Celtic movement, and on certain representative writers, I have

⁸⁴This letter is written in William Sharp’s hand for copying by Mary Sharp into the Fiona Macleod hand.

⁸⁵Ernest James Oldmeadow (1867-1949) was the editor of *The Dome* (1897-1900), music critic of *The Outlook* (1900-1904), editor of the *Tablet* (1923-1936), and the author of *Chopin* (1905), *Aunt Maud* (1908), *A Babe Unborn* (1911), and *Miss Watts, an Old Fashioned Romance* (1923).

⁸⁶“The Secrets of the Night” appeared in *The Dome* in January 1899, 68-9.

⁸⁷The addressee is probably Dora (Sigerson) Shorter (d.1918), a novelist and poet from Ireland who married Clement Shorter in 1896. Her works include *Ballads and Poems* (1899), *The Woman Who Went to Hell* (1902), and *Love of Ireland: Poems and Ballads* (1916). See postscript to letter to Clement Shorter dated January 2, 1899.

had great pleasure in saying how much I enjoy your work, tho' unavoidably (when proofs come) with less detail and quotation than what was in my overlong original.

Fiona Macleod

ACS University of Texas at Austin

To Catherine Ann Janvier, December 20, 1898

The House of Dreams⁸⁹ | 20th Dec., 1898

. . . It has been a memorable time here. I have written some of my best work — including two or three of the new things for *The Dominion of Dreams* — viz. “The Rose of Flame”, “Honey of the Wild Bees”, and “The Secrets of the Night.”⁹⁰

What a glorious day it has been. The most beautiful I have ever seen at Pettycur I think. Cloudless blue sky, clear exquisite air tho' cold, with a marvelous golden light in the afternoon. Arthur's Seat, the Craggs and the Castle and the 14 ranges of the Pentlands all clear-cut as steel, and the city itself visible in fluent golden light. The whole coast-line purple blue, down to Berwick law and the Bass Rock, and the Isle of May 16 miles out in the north sea.

And now I listen to the gathering of the tidal waters under the stars. There is an infinite solemnity — a hush, something sacred and wonderful. A benediction lies upon the world. Far off I hear the roaming wind. Thoughts and memories crowd in on me. Here I have lived and suffered — here I have touched the heights — here I have done my best. And now, here, I am going through a new birth.

‘Sic itur ad astral!’⁹¹

Memoir 300-301

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⁸⁸ “A Group of Celtic Writers,” *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1899, 34-53, wherein Fiona Macleod said “The most notable new addition to this group of young writers is Miss Dora Sigerson (Mrs. Clement Shorter).”

⁸⁹ The Pettycur Inn, Kinghorn, Fife (*Memoir*, 300).

⁹⁰ Of these three titles, only one, “Honey of the Wild Bees,” appeared in *The Dominion of Dreams*.

⁹¹ “Thus onward to the stars!”

⁹² He wrote *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and *The Great Miss Driver* (1908), among other works.