

The Life and Letters of
William Sharp and
“Fiona Macleod”

Volume 3: 1900-1905



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Chapter Twenty-Three

Life: 1903

Sharp began a diary at that start of the New Year and, as was his habit, abandoned it a few days later. On New Year's Day, the Sharps had dinner with the novelist Robert Hichens at the beautiful Hotel Timeo just down the hill from the Greek Theater in Taormina. On January 3, they lunched there with Hichens, and, after walking around the theater, called on Maud Valerie White, a member of Taormina's British community admired for her musical settings of poems and ballads. Also, on the third, according to Sharp's diary, he finished the Fiona Macleod story about Flora Macdonald and sent it off to Edinburgh for Mary to type. The Fiona letter sending the story to George Halkett, Editor of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, is dated May 9, 1903. The delay suggests Sharp tried unsuccessfully to have the story accepted elsewhere before sending it to the *Pall Mall*. In any case, Halkett accepted the story, and it appeared in the May/June 1904 issue of the magazine. On January 4, Sharp began an account of the rugged land and the hardy people who occupied the vast Nelson estate which he called "Through Nelson's Duchy." He finished it four days later, and it was published as the work of William Sharp with photographs selected by Alexander Nelson Hood in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in October 1903.

The Sharps continued to enjoy the beautiful weather and active social life of Taormina, with Sharp working sporadically on his writing and correspondence, until about January 20 when he set off by himself on a trip to Greece to gather material for a book he planned to call *Greek Backgrounds*. After crossing from Messina to Reggio di Calabria, at the western point of the toe of Italy's boot, Sharp took a train to Crotona on the east side of the toe. There he boarded a ferry which took him

to the port city of Taranto on the west side of the boot's heel. A train called the Agamemnon took him from Taranto to Brindisi, a port city on the east of the heel, where he boarded a ship bound for Greece. Appropriately named the Poseidon, the ship crossed the Aegean, and as it approached the coast of Turkish Albania the shaft of its main screw broke. In a January 23 letter to his wife written aboard the stranded ship, he described the beauty of the mountainous shoreline and the joy he felt in being on his own amidst scenery that reminded him of his native Highlands. He was soon rescued by another steamer that took him to Kerkyra on Corfu where he boarded yet another ship which took him to Athens.

Once there, he was delighted by the ancient sites familiar from years of reading. "It is a marvellous home-coming feeling I have here," he wrote to Elizabeth on January 29, "and I know a strange stirring, a kind of spiritual rebirth." On February first, he wrote again:

Yesterday, a wonderful day at Eleusis. Towards sundown drove through the lovely hill-valley of Daphne, with its beautifully situated isolated ruin of the Temple of Aphrodite, a little to the north of the Sacred Way of the Dionysiac and other Processions from Aonai (Athenai) to the Great Fane of Eleusis. I have never anywhere seen such a marvellous splendour of living light as the sundown light, especially at the Temple of Aphrodite and later as we approached Athens and saw it lying between Lycabettos and the Acropolis, with Hymottos to the left and the sea to the far right and snowy Pentelicos behind. The most radiant wonder of light I have ever seen.

Not since 1892 when, in the company of Edith Rinder, he had reveled in the beauty of the Roman countryside and its ruins had Sharp experienced such joy in exploring a landscape and its monuments.

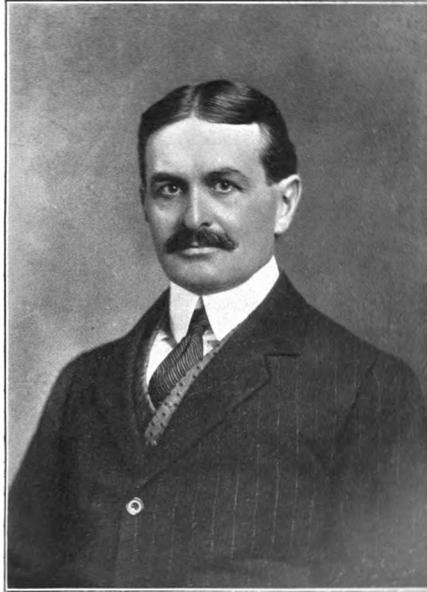
In early February, Sharp returned to Taormina where he found a letter Robert Hichens had written on his return from Taormina to England. Hichens was a young man of twenty-nine, some twenty years younger than Sharp, but he was a frequent visitor to Taormina and a friend and sometimes a guest of Alexander Nelson Hood. He was also an established writer, having published ten novels between 1886 and 1904. One of those novels, *The Green Carnation*, was published pseudonymously in 1894 and withdrawn from publication in 1895. Despite its disappearance, it was widely read, and many were aware Hichens was its author. By defining and satirizing the relationship



Fig. 16. View over the excavation site towards Eleusis. Eleusis was the site of the Eleusinian Mysteries, or the Mysteries of Demeter and Kore, which became popular in the Greek-speaking world as early as 600 BC and attracted initiates during the Roman Empire before declining mid-late 4th century AD. Photograph by Carole Raddato (2005), Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 2.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_view_of_sanctuary_of_Demeter_and_Kore_and_the_Telesterion_\(Initiation_Hall\),_center_for_the_Eleusinian_Mysteries,_Eleusis_\(8191841684\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_view_of_sanctuary_of_Demeter_and_Kore_and_the_Telesterion_(Initiation_Hall),_center_for_the_Eleusinian_Mysteries,_Eleusis_(8191841684).jpg)

between his friends, Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, Hichens contributed to Wilde's public humiliation and imprisonment. Following the Wilde debacle, Hichens, himself a recognized and unapologetic homosexual, spent most of his time away from England, in Switzerland, Egypt, Northern Africa, and Taormina where he found a group of men, including Alexander Nelson Hood, who shared his sexual preference. Sharp formed a bond with Hichens, as he had with Alex Hood and R. Murray Gilchrist, but their friendship was short-lived as Sharp would be dead in two years.

The letter awaiting him in Taormina concluded by urging Sharp to winter with him in Africa the following year. Hichens planned to return to Italy in early May and then go on to Africa in November. Staying at a fancy hotel in Biskra, Algeria, they would be very happy. Hichens continued:



ROBERT HICHENS

Fig. 17. Robert Smythe Hichens (1864–1950). Photograph taken by unknown photographer (1912), in Frederic Taber Cooper, *Some English Story Tellers* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1912). Wikimedia, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Hichens_001.jpg#/media/File:Robert_Hichens_001.jpg

We must often go out on donkey-back into the dunes and spend our day there far out in the desert. I know no physical pleasure, — apart from all the accompanying mental pleasure, — to be compared with that which comes from the sun and air of the Sahara and the enormous spaces. This year I was more enchanted than ever before. Even exquisite Taormina is humdrum in comparison. Do try to come then as November is a magnificent month (*Memoir*, p. 365).

Sharp must have shared with Hichens his newly formed fascination with Greece and his intention to spend the next winter there since Hichens closed his letter by writing, "I can't help being rather sorry that you won't go to Sicily again for a long while. I always feel as if we all had a sort of home there." After reproducing this letter in her *Memoir*, Elizabeth added that Hichens wrote to her: "I still think Taormina the most exquisite place in Europe. On a fine morning it is ineffably lovely." In the fall of 1905, according to Elizabeth, "it had been planned that

after the New Year Mr. Hood, Mr. Hichens, my husband and I should go together to Biskra. But as the autumn waned, we realized the unwisdom of making any such plans" (*Memoir*, pp. 365–66, 413).

On February 18, Sharp wrote to Catherine Janvier: "with this foreign life in a place like this, with so many people I know, it is almost impossible to get anything like adequate time for essential work — and still less for the imaginative leisure I need, and dreaming out my work — to say nothing of reading, etc." He described the strains of his double life:

As you know, too, I have continually to put into each day the life of two persons — each with his or her own interests, preoccupations, work, thoughts, and correspondence. I have really, in a word, quite apart from my own temperament, to live at exactly double the rate in each day of the most active and preoccupied persons. No wonder, then, that I find the continuous correspondence of "two persons" not only a growing weariness, but a terrible strain and indeed perilous handicap on time and energy for work.

A March 17 Fiona Macleod letter to Benjamin Burgess Moore, who was about to move to Paris, assured him the city had a "manifold fascination," though it lacked "the glow and colour of life in Italy and Spain and Greece." Fiona thanked him for his concern about her health and continued: "I am much better for being in the south, but it has not been a really good winter anywhere, and I feel that I would like a year of nothing but sunshine and serene life. One tires of everything except illusions and dreams: and longs often for nothing but warm sunshine and rest." Burgess must have written to Fiona in care of Sharp in Sicily for she concluded by bringing him up short: "Mr. Sharp is still in Sicily, but will be leaving any day: but apart from that please do not address to me again c/o him, as he does not like it, nor do I. My correspondence-address is Miss Macleod, | c/o Mrs. Wingate Rinder, | 21. Woronzow Road, | London. N. W." Fiona could be quite forceful whenever Sharp suspected one of her correspondents might be approaching the truth.

When and how the Sharps returned to London is unclear, but they were back in late April. On the 24th, Sharp composed a Fiona letter to Thomas Mosher describing, in addition to his plans for her writings, how he would keep her out of the way should Mosher decide to visit Scotland and England anytime soon.

There seems little doubt that I cannot expect to regain assured health unless I remain in the South from the early autumn till May for a year or two to come at any rate and, indeed, I am strongly advised to remain in the South (or, if not, in the Summer, on Scandinavian waters) all this year unbrokenly. Nothing is yet definitely decided: except that I shall not be staying in London or Edinburgh this season, and if in Scotland at all will only be for a flying visit to the West in September, or else much sooner instead. Later, I'll be better able to give you an idea of my whereabouts during the summer and autumn. By October, this year, at least, I hope and expect to get south again. It is extraordinary the difference in health it makes, though I fear it makes one lazy, and far more inclined to read and dream, than to write and revise and be continually exercised by the forces of the mind and the spirit.

The travel plans are an interesting amalgam. Sharp had been advised to go south each fall for his health and stay as long as possible. The Scandinavian waters were only a means of keeping Fiona hidden, but the Sharps did go south in October with Fiona trailing behind.

In the *Memoir*, Elizabeth said nothing about their activities after returning from Sicily, but the Fiona letters from mid-May to mid-June have her visiting the Lake District, going on to the Inner Hebrides (the Isles of Bute, Mull, and Iona), and then heading south again to the Lake District. Whether or not Sharp visited the Lake District, a June 6 Fiona letter to Yeats has him tracing "sculptured symbols of the Centaur and the Salmon" on "ancient Pagan stones" in the Hebrides. If Yeats will be in London until after mid-June, Sharp will show him some of the tracings after he returns to London on June 14. Among them will be a tracing Fiona has made of a "horse-headed salmon" which she supposes to be "unique

From these Fiona letters we also know Sharp was revising and writing prefatory material for three Fiona Macleod books Thomas Mosher would publish in the fall: *Deirdrê and the Sons of Usna*, *The Divine Adventure*, and *The House of Usna: A Drama*. The first of these received special attention in a June 3 Fiona letter to Mosher: "Herewith I send you the MS of my dedicatory foreword to *Deirdrê*. Please take great care in comparison of the text in proof with this MS." As described in Chapter 21, the dedicatory foreword of *Deirdrê* was addressed to Esther Mona, Edith Rinder's daughter. The June 3 Fiona letter asked Mosher to send three unbound proof sets of the book as soon as they are revised and

“materially before publication” for a “‘birthday’ use.” Esther’s second birthday would occur on June 26, 1903. Sharp must have sent a copy of the unbound proofs to Edith for her daughter’s birthday, but Esther Mona (Rinder) Harvey had never seen the proofs, the book, or the dedication when I showed it to her many years later.

When he returned to London, Sharp joined his wife in “temporary lodgings” at 9 St. Mary’s Terrace in Paddington near Elizabeth’s brother (and William’s cousin) Robert Farquharson Sharp, who lived nearby at 56 St. Mary’s Mansions. Elizabeth’s and Roberts’ mother, Agnes Farquharson Sharp, was quite ill and living with Robert and his wife. On June 22, Sharp made a day trip to Box Hill to see George Meredith who had been ill. He described the visit in a letter to someone Elizabeth named only as a friend. Both men, Sharp wrote, felt this would be their last meeting; Meredith’s death would mark “the passing of the last of the great Victorians.” Sharp wished Meredith had known “a certain secret: but it is better not, and now is in every way as undesirable as indeed impossible.” He wanted Meredith to know he was the author of the writings of Fiona Macleod, but since Meredith thought so highly of her work and since Sharp had taken Edith Rinder to Box Hill to impersonate Fiona, he was afraid Meredith would be upset if he were to be told the truth.

If there is in truth, as I believe, and as he believes, a life for us after this, he will know that his long-loving and admiring younger comrade has also striven towards the hard way that few can reach. What I did tell him before has absolutely passed from his mind: had, indeed, never taken root, and perhaps I had nurtured rather than denied what had taken root. If in some ways a little sad, I am glad otherwise. And I had one great reward, for at the end he spoke in a way he might not otherwise have done, and in words I shall never forget. I had risen and was about to lean forward and take his hands in farewell, to prevent his half-rising, when suddenly he exclaimed “Tell me something of her — of Fiona. I call her so always, and think of her so, to myself. Is she well? Is she at work? Is she true to her work and her ideal? No, that I know!”

Meredith had come to know Fiona so well through her writings that he could refer to her by only her first name. The extent of Meredith’s elaborate praise suggests he suspected his friend had some role in the production of her work:

It was then he said the following words, which two minutes later, in the garden, I jotted down in pencil at once lest I should forget even a single

word or a single change in the sequence of the words. "She is a woman of genius. That is rare so rare anywhere, anytime, in women or in men. Some few women 'have genius,' but she is more than that. Yes, she is a woman of genius: the genius too, that is rarest, that drives deep thoughts before it. Tell her I think often of her, and of the deep thought in all she has written of late. Tell her I hope great things of her yet. And now ... we'll go, since it must be so. Goodbye, my dear fellow, and God bless you." Outside, the great green slope of Box Hill rose against a cloudless sky, filled with a flowing south wind. The swifts and swallows were flying high. In the beech courts thrush and blackbird called continually, along the hedgerows the wild roses hung. But an infinite sadness was in it all. A prince among men had fallen into the lonely and dark way.

Though misdirected, Sharp relished Meredith's praise for his writing. As it happened, the way into which Meredith had fallen was less dark than that of Sharp. Elizabeth observed: "Goodbye it was in truth; but it was the older poet who recovered hold on life and outlived the younger by four years" (*Memoir*, p. 368).

In a July 5 letter, Sharp thanked Richard Garnett for a copy of a new and augmented edition of his *Twilight of the Gods* which Grant Richards recently published. He was looking forward to seeing Garnett and hopefully his wife the next day, Monday, July 3, at a "literary At Home" he and Elizabeth were hosting not at their St. Mary's Terrace lodgings, but at Sharp's club, the Grosvenor at the northeast corner of Dover Street and Piccadilly. Amidst their social obligations in London, the Sharps were dealing with the death of Elizabeth's mother — and William's Aunt — who had been ill for over a year. Although I lack the precise date, her death must have occurred after the July 6 "At Home" and before a July 13 letter from Sharp to Grant Richards and another to Watts-Dunton on July 14 as both are written on black-bordered mourning stationery.

In the July 13 letter to Richards, Sharp said he meant to speak to him the other night during their "At Home," but the opportunity vanished in the "rapid dispersal" of their company after the "speechifying." The July 14 letter to Theodore Watts-Dunton, Sharp said it was difficult "to snatch a moment at this season, when there seems a mysterious social conspiracy against every hour of day and night," but he could free himself on Thursday the 16th if Watts-Dunton could manage to have tea with him in the late afternoon at his club. A July 15 Fiona letter to

Mosher, typed by Edith Rinder and unsigned, apologized for a “hurried line” as she was just returning to Edinburgh from London where she had been “on a matter of sudden urgency and illness.” This letter expresses her disappointment that Mosher might not publish *The House of Usna, A Drama* in the fall as she had spent so much time preparing it and had taken such care over its lengthy introduction. It was, she thought, the thing she cared most for. Having received this appeal, Mosher published the volume, which Fiona dedicated to Mona Caird, in a beautiful edition of 500 copies, 450 on handmade Van Gelder paper and 50 on Japanese vellum, signed by the publisher and all with green printed Japan vellum wraps over boards.

A June 23 Fiona letter to Mosher conveyed plans for the summer so he would know where to send correspondence and payments. Any letters directed to Edith Rinder’s London address must reach her by the end of July since she and her family would be spending August and September in the Lake Tarbert area west and south of Glasgow. Sharp’s mother and sisters would be near the Rinders in Kilcreggan in August and return to their Edinburgh home where Mary would receive any Fiona correspondence. The Sharps would also go to Scotland in late July. After stopping near Falkirk to visit friends, they would join his family in Kilcreggan for August.



Fig. 18. The Firth of Clyde at Kilcreggan, with PS *Waverley* approaching across Loch Long. Photograph by Dave Souza (2018), Wikimedia, CC-BY-SA-4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=73771868>

During August Sharp continued to revise and write introductions for the three Macleod books Mosher had agreed to publish. Since the content of those books had already appeared in England, the revisions and introductions were a means of avoiding copyright difficulties. On August 4, he sent Bliss Perry, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, an article on the remoter regions of Sicily called "The Sicilian Highlands" which appeared in the April 1904 issue of the magazine. On August 25 Sharp described for his American friend Henry Alden, editor of *Harper's Magazine*, the literary geography essays he was writing for the *Pall Mall Magazine*. These ten essays described the places where nineteenth-century British writers lived and worked. After they appeared in the magazine, they were published by the Pall Mall Press in 1904 as book called *Literary Geography*. Beautifully assembled and lavishly illustrated, the book sold so well that a second edition was issued in 1907. Sharp also described and outlined for Alden his "projected Greek book, to comprise Magna Grecia as well, i.e. Hellenic Calabria and Sicily, etc." Unfortunately, he died before he was able to make much progress with this project.

When Sharp's mother and sister left their rented Kilcreggan house at the end of August, the Elizabeth and William went northeast to Perthshire to stay with Mrs. Glassford Bell, formerly Marion Sandeman, a childhood friend of Sharp's. While there, according to Elizabeth, her husband, having suffered through a wet spring and a still damper summer, "became so ill we went to Llandrindod Wells for him to be under special treatment." On September 13, the day after his forty-eighth birthday, Sharp wrote a letter to thank Isabella Gilchrist, his friend R. Murray Gilchrist's mother, for sending him birthday greetings. The letter is interesting as its tone projects Sharp coming to terms with his serious illness and the likelihood of his early death.

But as one grows older, one the more recognizes that "climate" and "country" belong to the geography of the soul rather than to that secondary physical geography of which we hear so much. The winds of heaven, the dreary blast of wilderness, the airs of hope and peace, the tragic storms and cold inclemencies these are not the property of our North or South or East, but are of the climes self-made or inherited or in some strange way become our "atmosphere".

Sharp recognized he, like Mrs. Gilchrist who was sixty-three years old, might soon need to forsake physical travel for what he calls the "geography of the soul." Whether this letter was written in Perthshire

or after he reached Llandrindod Wells, it was influenced by his illness. For Sharp, who could not stay long in one place, inability to travel raised thoughts of the afterlife: “the country we dream of, that we long for” which “is not yet reached by Cook nor even chartered by Baedeker.”

The journey from Perthshire to the spa town in the middle of Wales was a long and difficult one, but it had a desirable result. From Llandrindod Wells in late September, he described his condition to Ernest Rhys: “things have not gone well with me. All this summer I have been feeling vaguely unwell and, latterly, losing strength steadily.” After arriving in Llandrindod Wells, “the rigorous treatment, the potent Saline and Sulphur waters and baths, the not less potent and marvellously pure and regenerative Llandrindod air — and my own exceptional vitality and recuperative powers — have combined to work a wonderful change for the better.” It might prove to be no more than “a splendid rally,” and he must not be “too sanguine.” The end might be nearing, but he was not troubled: “I have lived, and am content, and it is only for what I don’t want to leave undone that the sound of ‘Farewell’ has anything deeply perturbing.”



Fig. 19. Llandrindod Wells, Wales, Great Britain, Junction of South Crescent with Temple Street. The Information Bureau is straight ahead, and the Oxford Chambers is on the left. Photograph by Penny Mayes (2009), Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Llandrindod_Wells-junction_of_South_Crescent_with_Temple_Street.jpg

In a September 29 birthday letter to E. C. Stedman, following his return to London, Sharp describes his illness as "a subtle malady" which had claimed him for a comrade. "His name is Diabetes, but he's no enemy, & refrains as much as he can, & even promises to disappear for a time, & be content with psychical Marconigrams [messages sent by radiotelegraphy]." A month previously, a specialist thought he had "got well into Chapter Last," but he surprised his friends and even himself by "an apparent complete recovery." It is only a "splendid rally," he continued, but "'I take it smiling,' as the lady said when she saw she 'couldn't help it,' when the amorous Brigand wooed her." Writing to Catherine Janvier on the 30th, he claimed to be "cheerful as a lark — let us say as a lark with a rheumatic wheeze in its little song-box, or gout in its little off-claw." He knew the combination of illnesses would soon claim him, but he was determined to "laugh and be glad and take life as I find it, till the end. The best prayer for me is that I may live vividly till 'Finis,' and work up to the last hour."

Shortly after writing and posting these letters, Sharp received a long letter from Stedman which raised his spirits. "It has been a true medicine," he wrote again to Stedman on October 2, "for, as I told you, I've been gravely ill. And it came just at the right moment and warmed my heart with its true affection." Sharp was also pleased by a recent visit to his doctor who had sanctioned his trip to Sicily and then to Greece for the winter. "When I'm once more in the land of Theocritus (and oh how entrancing it is)," he wrote to Stedman, "I'll be quite strong and well again... Indeed, I'm already 'a live miracle!'" Sharp then described in detail the itinerary he and Elizabeth intended to follow:

We sail by the Orient liner "Orizaba" on the 23rd [of October]; reach Naples (via Gibraltar and Marseilles) 9 to 10 days later; and leave by the local mail-boat same evening for Messina — arrive there about 8 on Monday morning — catch the Syracuse mail about 10, change at 12 at Giarre, and ascend Mt. Etna by the little circular line to Maletto about 3,000 ft. high, and thence drive to the wonderful old Castle of Maniace to stay with our dear friend there, the Duke of Bronte — our third or fourth visit now. We'll be there about a fortnight: then a week with friends at lovely and unique Taormina: and then sail once more, either from Messina or Naples direct to the Piraeus, for Athens, where we hope to spend the winter and spring.

Sharp was glad to know he will have a loving friend waiting if he and Elizabeth ever cross the Atlantic.

As planned, the Sharps boarded the *Orizaba* on October 23, and the trip south was not a pleasant one. The weather was bad, the sea rough, and, according to a letter Sharp wrote to Catherine Janvier during the voyage, he suffered a heart attack soon after leaving Plymouth. After they passed Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean, they encountered a "wild gale" in the Gulf of Lyon, "one of the wildest we had ever known," according to Elizabeth. They planned to visit briefly with the Janviers when the ship docked in Marseilles, but the storm by then had become "almost a hurricane." After taking shelter in a cove, they sailed directly to Naples. Elizabeth reproduced in the *Memoir* a short unrhymed poem, called "Invocation," her husband wrote during the storm. "It was his way of mental escape from a physical condition which induced great nervous strain or fatigue, to create imaginatively a contrary condition and environment, and so to identify himself with it, that he could become oblivious to surrounding actualities" (*Memoir*, pp. 374–75).

A November 6 letter to Mosher in Mary Sharp's Fiona script, supposedly written near Gibraltar, thanked him for sending newly printed copies of *The House of Usna* to Edinburgh. One copy of the "beautiful little book" had been forwarded to her. In fact, Sharp received this book when he reached Hood's Castle Maniace in the first week of November, where he drafted the Fiona letter and sent it for Mary to copy and mail from Edinburgh. He was establishing the fiction that Fiona was a week or so behind him in her travels. After spending some time in Algeria, she would sail to Athens for a month or so with the Sharps. By shadowing his own travels with the imagined travels of Fiona, Sharp was able to describe the same people and places in both sides of the double correspondence. He could also keep Fiona on the move, carefully track her travels, and avoid the possibility of anyone asking to meet her. In the same vein, Fiona's various ailments shadowed his own with one important exception. He did not suffer the neurology in his writing hand that made it difficult for Fiona to write and thus explained the typed letters that were sometimes necessary.

In a November 11 letter to Mrs. Philpot from the Castle Maniace, Sharp described how the location did not appeal to him at that time of

year. It was "too high between 2,000 and 3,000 feet." And it was "too much under the domination of Etna, who swings vast electric current, and tosses thunder charged cloud-masses to and fro like a Titan acolyte swinging mighty censers at the feet of the Sun." Nonetheless, he looked forward to an excursion planned for the next day which he described in vivid detail:

Tomorrow if fine and radiant we start for that absolutely unsurpassable expedition to the great orange gardens a thousand feet lower at the S. W. end of the Duchy. We first drive some eight miles or so through wild mountain land till we come to the gorges of the Simeto and there we mount our horses and mules and with ample escort before and behind ride in single file for about an hour and a half. Suddenly we come upon one of the greatest orange groves in Europe — 26,000 trees in full fruit, an estimated crop of 3,000,000! stretching between the rushing Simeto and great cliffs. Then once more to the saddle and back a different way to barbaric Bronte and thence a ten-mile drive back along the ancient Greek highway from Naxos to sacred Enna.



Fig. 20. Valle del Simeto, Catania. Photograph by Davide Restivo (2007), Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valle_del_Simeto_3.jpg#/media/File:Valle_del_Simeto_3.jpg

Still he looked forward to the following Tuesday when they would go down to Taormina and its

divine beauty and not less divinely balmy and regenerative climate sitting as she does like the beautiful goddess Falcone worshipped there of old, perched on her orange and olive-clad plateau, hundreds of feet above the peacock-hued Ionian Sea, with one hand as it were reaching back to Italy (Calabria ever like opal or amethyst to the North-east), with the other embracing all the lands of Etna to Syracuse and the Hyblaean Mount, the lands of Empedocles and Theocritus, of Aeschylus and Pindar, of Stesichorus and Simonides, and so many other great names — and with her face ever turned across the Ionian Sea to that ancient Motherland of Hellas, where once your soul and mine surely sojourned.

This may be the most elaborate and geographically correct description among the many Taormina has received.

After stopping there for ten days or so, the Sharps left for Athens. When they arrived at the end of the month, the weather turned cold, and Sharp suffered a relapse. Near the end of December, he was able to tell Mrs. Philpot, in whom he had found a kindred spirit and confidant, "I've come out of my severe feverish attack with erect (if dragged) colors and hope to march 'cock-a-hoopishly' into 1904 and even further if the smiling enigmatical gods permit!" He described his pleasure in reading the works of the ancient Greek dramatists in the theatre where they were first performed. There he could imagine hearing "upon the wind the rise and fall of the ancient lives, serene thought-tranced in deathless music." He was trying to remain focused on material for the book he was planning: a close "study of the literature and philosophy and ethical concepts and ideals of ancient Hellas and of mythology in relation thereto." He also wanted to address many other aspects of the life and culture of ancient Greece, 'from sculpture to vase paintings, from Doric and Ionic architecture to the beauty and complex interest of the almost inexhaustible field of ancient Greek coins." Finally, he wanted to describe in his book, or in succeeding books, Graecia Magna, the remnants of the extensive Greek settlements in southern Italy and Sicily.

On December 29, he sent New Year's greetings to Richard Garnett and told him he and Elizabeth were comfortably settled in a "pleasant

large house' within walking distance of the Temple of Olympian Zeus and the banks of the river "Ilissos (alas, usually as void of original matter as an Essay by Sir John Lubbock or a poem by Sir Lewis Morris)," two British writers whose work he thought derivative rather than original. They had met members of the British community and several Greek friends, "(one of whom, named Embiricos, claims unbroken descent from a friend & a pupil of Plato!)." He ended his letter to Garnett by referencing two lines from Pindar's "Nemean Ode" which can be translated as: "Respite is sweet in every deed. Even honey may cloy, and the delightful flowers of Aphrodite." Echoing his time with Edith Rinder in Rome a decade earlier, Sharp had met a young woman in Athens whose love warmed the landscape and lifted temporarily the weight of his physical condition.

Letters: 1903

To Thomas Mosher, [January 1903]

Health, Happiness, and the achievement of Beauty, to you, in 1903, with all sincerity, and friendly hopes and greetings.

F. M.

P. S. And grateful thanks for the beautiful Pater volume which I have just learned has arrived for me.¹ How kind you are.

ACS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Karl Walter, January [?], 1903

Taormina, | Jan., 1903

My Dear Walter,

... In some respects your rendering of your sonnet is towards improvement. But it has one immediate and therefore fatal flaw. Since the days of Sophocles it has been recognized as a cardinal and

imperative law, that a great emotion (or incident, or idea, or collective act) must not be linked to an ineffective image, an incongruous metaphor. Perhaps the first and last word about passion (in a certain sense, only, of course, for to immortal things there is no mortal narrowing or limiting in expression) has been said more than two thousand years ago by Sappho and today by George Meredith. "The apple on the topmost bough" ... all that lovely fragment of delicate imperishable beauty remains unique. And I know nothing nobler than Meredith's "Passion is noble strength on fire." ... But turn to a poet you probably know well, and study the imagery in some of the Passion sonnets in "The House of Life" of Rossetti — of Passion

... "creature of poignant thirst
And exquisite hunger" ...

— the splendid sexual diapason in the sestet of the sonnet called "The Kiss" — or, again to "the flame-winged harp-player."

... thou art Passion of Love,
The mastering music walks the sunlit sea.

Perhaps I have said enough to illustrate my indication as to the opening metaphor in your sonnet. Apart from the incongruity of the image, it has no logical congruity with the collateral idea of Fear. The sonnet itself turns on a fine emotion in your mind: let that emotion shape a worthy raiment of metaphor and haunting cadence of music, *not* as the metricist desires but as the poet au fond compels. Yes, both in sonnet-writing and in your terza-rima narrative (cultivate elision here, also fluent terminals, or you will find the English prosody jib at the foreign reins) you will find G. useful. But the secret law of rhythm in a moving or falling wave, in the cadence of wind, in the suspiration of a distant song, in running water, in the murmur of leaves, in chord confluent upon chord, will teach you more if you will listen long enough and know what you listen to.

I hope I have not discouraged you. I mean the reverse of that.

Your friend, | William Sharp

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, January 23, 1903

23d Jan., 1903

... Where of all unlikely places do you think this is written from?² Neither Corfu nor Samothrace nor Ithaca nor Zante, nor any Greek isle betwixt this and the Peloponnesus, but in Turkey! ... i.e., in Turkish Albania, surrounded by turbaned Turks, fezzed Albanians, and picturesque kilted Epeirotes, amid some of the loveliest scenery in the world.

You will have had my several cards en route and last from Taranto. The first of a series of four extraordinary pieces of almost uncanny good fortune befell me *en route*, but it would take too long now to write in detail. Meanwhile I may say I met the first of three people to whom I already owe much and who helped me thro' every bother at Brindisi. (He is a foreign Consul in Greece.)

(By the way, the engine from Taranto to Brindisi was called the *Agamemnon* and the steamer to Greece the *Poseidon* significant names, eh?)

I had a delightful night's rest in my comfortable cabin, and woke at dawn to find the *Poseidon* close to the Albanian shore, and under the superb snow-crowned Acrokerannian Mountains. The scenery superb — with Samothrace, and the Isle of Ulysses, etc., etc., seaward, and the beautiful mountainous shores of Corfu (here called *Kepkuga* (Kêrkyra) on the S. W. and S. There was a special Consul-Deputation on board, to land two, and also to take off a number of Turks, Albanians, and Epeirotes for Constantinople. We put in after breakfast at Eavri Kagavri — a Greco-Albanian township of Turkey. The scattered oriental "town" of the Forty Saints crowns a long ridge at a considerable height — the harbour-town is a cluster of Turkish houses beside an extraordinary absolutely deserted set of gaunt ruins. Hundreds of Albanians and Epeirotes, Moslem priests and two Greek *papas* (or popes) were on the shore-roads, with several caravans each of from 20 to 50 mules and horses. Costumes extraordinarily picturesque, especially the white-kilted or skirted Albanian mountaineers, and the Larissa Turks. We were 3 hours — and I the only "privileged" person to get thro' with the consul. We took many aboard — a wonderful crew, from a wonderful place, the fairyland of my Greek resident from Paris — who is on his way to spend a month with his mother in Athens, and has asked me to visit him at his house there... .

Well, the *Poseidon* swung slowly out of the bay, — a lovely, exciting, strange, unforgettable morning — and down the lovely Albanian coast — now less wild, and wooded and craggy, something like the West Highlands at Loch Fynne, etc., but higher and wilder. When off a place on the Turkish Albanian coast called Pothlakov (Rothroukon) the shaft of the screw suddenly broke! The engineer told the captain it would be five hours at least before it could be mended — adding, a little later, that the harm could probably not be rectified here, and that we should have to ride at sea till a relief boat came from Corfu or Greece to take off the passengers, etc.

As no one has a Turkish passport, no one can get ashore except lucky me, with my influential friend, in a Turkish steam-pinnacle! (It is so beautiful, so warm, and so comfortable on the *Poseidon*, that, in a sense, I'm indifferent — and would rather *not* be relieved in a hurry.)

(Later.) Late afternoon on board — still no sign of getting off. No Corfu to-day, now, though about only an hour's sail from here! *Perhaps* tonight — or a relief steamer may come. I'll leave this now, as I want to see all I can in the sundown light. It is all marvelously strange and lovely. *What* a heavenly break-down! *What* luck!

Just had a talk with another passenger stamping with impatience. I didn't soothe him by remarking I hoped we should drift ashore and be taken prisoners by the Turks. He says he wants to get on. Absurd. "There's more beauty here than one cans take-in for days to come" I said — "Damn it, sir, what have I got to do with beauty," — he asked indignantly. "Not much, certainly," I answered drily, looking him over. An Italian *maestro* is on board on his way to Athens — now playing delightfully in the salon. A Greek guitarist is going to play and sing at moonrise. No hills in the world more beautiful in shape and hue and endless contours — with gorgeous colours. Albania is lost Eden, I think. Just heard that a steamer is to come for us in a few hours, or less, from Corfu, and tow us into Kerkira (the town) — and that another Austro-Lloyd from Trieste or Brindisi will take us on to-morrow sometime from Corfu to Athens... . The only perfectly happy person on board.

Yours, | Will

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, January 29, [1903]

Athens, | 29th Jan.

... This lovely place is wonderful. How I wish you were here to enjoy it too. I take you with me mentally wherever I go. It is a marvelous *home-coming* feeling I have here. And I know a strange stirring, a kind of spiritual rebirth.

[William Sharp]

Memoir, p. 365

To Elizabeth A. Sharp, February 1, [1903]

Athens, | Feb. 1st. 1903

... Yesterday, a wonderful day at Eleusis. Towards sundown drove through the lovely hill-valley of Daphne, with its beautifully situated isolated ruin of the Temple of Aphrodîtê, a little to the north of the Sacred Way of the Dionysiac and other Processions from Aonai (Athenai) to the Great Fane of Eleusis. I have never anywhere seen such a marvellous splendour of living light as the sundown light, especially at the Temple of Aphrodite and later as we approached Athens and saw it lying between Lycabettos and the Acropolis, with Hymottos to the left and the sea to the far right and snowy Pentelicos behind. The most radiant wonder of light I have ever seen... .

[William Sharp]

Memoir, p. 365

To Catherine Ann Janvier, February 18, 1903

Taormina, | 18th Feb., 1903

... In fact, letters are now my worst evil to contend against for, with this foreign life in a place like this, with so many people I know, it is almost impossible to get anything like adequate time for essential work and still less for the imaginative leisure I need [for] dreaming out my work — to say nothing of reading, etc. As you know, too, I have continually to put into each day the life of two persons — each with his or her own interests, preoccupations, work, thoughts, and correspondence. I have really, in a word, quite apart from my own temperament, to live at exactly double the rate in each day of the most active and preoccupied persons. No wonder, then, that I find the continuous correspondence of “two persons” not only a growing weariness, but a terrible strain and indeed perilous handicap on time and energy for work... .

[William Sharp]

Memoir, p. 362

To Benjamin Burgess Moore, March 17, 1903

March 17th, 1903

My dear Mr. Moore

I am sorry for the long delay in response to your letter, but I had instructed that letters were not to be forwarded to me for some time past and it is only now on my temporary return (by sea) that I am able to catch up with some of my delayed correspondence.

You will be glad to be in Paris, I daresay, for it is at least nearer to what you care for, and has much of a manifold fascination: but it has not the glow and colour of life in Italy and Spain and Greece.

Owing to M. Davray's³ ill-health the French volume of representative translation has been delayed: but I understand that it is really to appear this year. The translator is M. Henry Davray of the *Mercure de France*.

A Mr. Gottfried Pavlik⁴ is also to bring out a German translation, and (at a later date) a Signor Cervesato⁵ an Italian one, after preliminary magazine appearance. The Tauchnitz representative vol. (which I put together myself, at the request of Baron Tauchnitz, and revised much of the contents) was published some time ago, with a preface, under the title *Wind and Wave* and can no doubt easily be procured in Paris if you wish to see it.⁶

Yes, thanks, I am much better for being in the south, but it has not been a really good winter anywhere, and I feel that I would like a year of nothing but sunshine and serene life. One tires of everything except illusions and dreams: and longs often for nothing but warm sunshine and rest. As to my recent magazine work, there was an essay on "The Magic Kingdoms" in the "*Monthly Review*" for (I think) January: and one in the "Fortnightly" for February on "The Four Winds of Eirinn": and probably the *Contemporary* for April (or May) will have a series of four collectively entitled "The Sunset of Old Tales".⁷ I hope to publish a volume of essays and "spiritual studies" this early summer.

Mr. Sharp is still in Sicily, but will be leaving any day: but apart from that please do not address to me again c/o him, as he does not like it, nor do I. My correspondence-address is Miss Macleod, | c/o Mrs. Wingate Rinder, | 21. Woronzow Road, | London. N. W.

I hope you will have both prosperity and happiness in your new life.

Believe me, | Sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod.

ALS Huntington Library

To Thomas Mosher, April 24, [1903]

Edinburgh | 24th April

Dear Mr. Mosher,

As you have surmised, my postponement of response is not due to heedlessness on my part, but to other causes. In the first place, there was long delay in the arrival of your letter, which followed me by many circuitous ways along the Mediterranean coasts between Athens

and Naples, Naples and Gibraltar, etc. Then, when it came, I was ill and unable to attend to it or any other letters. Later, all plans were cancelled by the serious illness and subsequent death of one near and dear to me, — necessitating my return home for a time. And now, my personal plans still remain very uncertain. There seems little doubt that I cannot expect to regain assured health unless I remain in the South from the early autumn till May for a year or two to come at any rate — and, indeed, I am strongly advised to remain in the South (or, if not, in the Summer, on Scandinavian waters) all this year unbrokenly. Nothing is yet definitely decided: except that I shall not be staying in London or Edinburgh this season, and if in Scotland at all will only be for a flying visit to the West in September, or else much sooner instead. Later, I'll be better able to give you an idea of my whereabouts during the summer and autumn. By October, this year, at latest, I hope and expect to get south again. It is extraordinary the difference in health it makes, though I fear it makes one lazy, and far more inclined to read and dream, than to write and revise and be continually exercised by the forces of the mind and the spirit. And now about your letter of proposals, for which I thank you.⁸

(*Old World Series*)

(I) Although personally I prefer the idea of "In This Kingdom By The Sea," there is no reason this should not stand over till, say, next Spring, if you care for it then.

So, since you wish it, let "The Divine Adventure" appear in your Old World Series. There is not much to revise, except a little deletion and dovetailing near the end. But I'll go over it again carefully, and hope to see my way to add somewhat. And I shall write some prefatory matter. This I shall see to as soon as practicable.

(*Brocade Series*)

(II) I should prefer "Deirdrê" to the "Tale of the Four Swans" — but if you specially wish the latter, so be it. In either instance, I'll write an Introduction.

(III) For the third vol. in the Brocade Series (and I quite see the advantage you indicate of having a set of three in this series) I would suggest either

the poetic drama of "The Immortal Hour" (which I see the American author of an article on my writings considers the best thing I have done) — considerably revised, with entirely rewritten opening pages, since its appearance in the *Fortnightly Review* for Nov. 1900.

or else

The shorter prose drama of "The House of Usna" (performed in London at the Strand Theater, under auspices of the Stage Society) revised from its stage-version and also (I intend) from that in the *National Review* for (I forget when, probably Spring or Summer of 1901) — with a preface dealing with Tragic Drama, and the Theater as I think of it in one of its potential forces, and its possible development.

As to the new vol. of Poems, I can say nothing yet. All my arrangements and projects have been seriously interfered with, much to their and my detriment. I shall not now be able to achieve or even work towards this volume till the early autumn at earliest I expect.

And my projected volume of Essays and Spiritual Studies, which I had hoped to see out this April or May, is also perforce postponed. (Some of it has appeared in the *Contemporary*, *Fortnightly*, etc. — and it is likely that the June "Fortnightly" (or July) will contain another section called "The Sunset of Old Tales")

I shall have to set aside much in order to revise and add to those "Old World" and "Brocade" books. For the three ["The Divine Adventure," "The Four Swans" or "Deirdrê," and "The House of Usna" or "The Immortal Hour"] I do not think I am asking more than right if I ask if you can pay me Fifty Pounds (£50) not later than Midsummer. Frankly, I doubt if I dare undertake them for less — and even thus I am (though only financially) the loser.

Perhaps the best way will be for you to cable after receipt of this letter — when I shall at once proceed with the work involved. If physically and mentally able, I shall meanwhile, as soon as practicable, take up "The Divine Adventure." In cabling please say if "Swans" or "Deirdrê", if "Usna" or "Immortal" — and it will suffice if you cable direct to Mrs. Rinder in London (thus, as an example, if you agree, Rinder, 21 Woronzow Road, London Agree Terms Adventure Swans Usna, Mosher).

I hope you are well, and that all goes well with you. (I hope some of my friends to whom I have given your volumes have ordered others — the

Duchess of Sutherland, for one, told me that she wanted several things from you, and was going to write to you for your catalogue. If she has not done so, you could address one to her, The Duchess of Sutherland, Dunrobin Castle, Scotland.) I do not feel very well, or eager for work, or for anything but sun, warmth, and rest — but soon, I hope, I may feel differently. All friendliest greetings, dear Mr. Mosher, from

Yours most sincerely | Fiona Macleod

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To Benjamin B. Moore, April 25, [1903]

Miss Macleod | c/o Mrs. Wingate Rinder |
21 Woronzow Road | London N.W. |
25th April [1903]

My dear Mr. Moore

You must have thought me very discourteous, or at any rate very heedless, to leave your letter so long unanswered. But by an extraordinary series of postal delays, it always reached some “forwarded-to” address just after I had left, and seems to have stopped almost everywhere between Naples and Algiers! Then, when at last I did get it, I was on my hurried way to Scotland (whence I write to you), and on account of illness and death of a near relative have since been unable to attend to my terrible accumulation of correspondence — some of it, alas, (including an urgent “publishing” letter from Mr. Mosher, of January-date!!) only just come to hand. I was very glad to hear that you had settled in Paris. It is not the South: it is not the place for work or dream, in a certain order of work or for a certain order of “dream.” But it has its charm and fascination and many interests: if for me, only at early midsummer, i.e. from mid-May till end of June — and then I would prefer it only to London, and far rather be in any of a thousand other places, for I weary more and more of towns, save for the swift transient interest of novelty.

M. Henri Davray fell ill, and had to go to Italy for a year or more, and so all his literary undertakings were indefinitely postponed. But when I last heard from him (about January I think) he wrote of being at work finishing the remainder of his volume of Selected Tales, and that it would be out in 1903, at least he hoped so. Herr Gottfried Pavlik's translation has also been delayed. There is, later, I believe, to be an Italian one. But the "Tauchnitz" selected edition came out last November, under the title *Wind and Wave* — selected by myself, at Baron Tauchnitz's request, and here and there a good deal revised, with a Preface.

Forgive so bare a note (I have I see forgotten to thank you for speaking of my work to Eleanora Duse⁹ — to have her among appreciative readers would indeed be a pleasure to me) but I am sadly pressed. (I have sent on your address to W. S. who, I know, wished to write to you.)

Sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod

ALS Huntington Library

To George Halkett, May 9, 1903¹⁰

Saturday, 9th May.

Dear Sir,

I have written a story somewhat distinct in kind from the work associated with my name, and think it is one that should appeal to a far larger public than most of my writings do: for it deals in a new way with a subject of unpassing interest, the personality of Flora Macdonald. "The King's Ring," however, is not concerned with the hackneyed Prince Charlie episode.¹¹ It is, in a word, so far as I know, the only narrative presentment of the remarkable but almost unknown late life experiences of Flora Macdonald: for few know that, long after her marriage, she went with her husband and some of her family and settled in South Carolina, just before the outbreak of the War of Independence: how her husband was captured and imprisoned, how two of her sons in the Navy were lost tragically at sea: and how she herself with one daughter with difficulty evaded interference, and set

sail from a southern port for Scotland again, & on that voyage was wounded in an encounter with a French frigate. True, all these things are only indicated in "The King's Ring," for fundamentally the story is a love-story, that of Flora M.'s beautiful eldest daughter Anne and Major Macleod, with the tragical rivalry of Alasdair Stuart, bearer of the King's Ring.

Practically the facts of the story are authentic: save the central episode of Alasdair Stuart, which is of my own invention.

I think the story would appeal to many not only in Scotland and England but in America. Whether it may suit the "Pall Mall Magazine," or meet your requirements, is another matter, for you to decide.

I send you a typed copy, and perhaps you could let me hear at your early convenience, as I have an application from a Syndicate, of which however I know nothing. And, if you care to have "The King's Ring" will you kindly inform me what terms of payment you can offer (i.e. for British and American serial use).

Believe me | Yours very truly, | Fiona Macleod

ALS National Library of Scotland

To Thomas Mosher, May 14, 1903

Thursday evening. 14th May, 1903

Thanks for your letter. Shall write by next mail, with "D. A."¹² I sent word to Mrs. W. R.¹³ today with several directions — among them, to cable you "Proceed Adventure." The alterations will be towards end only.

F. M.

P.S. Yes, "Usna" not "Immortal" (& Deirdrê not Darthool)

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To Thomas Mosher, May 26, 1903

(Island of Bute) | 26th May. 1903

Dear Mr. Mosher

I hope you have duly received the revised "for press" copy of "The Divine Adventure" I sent to you by last mail, from Bowness on Lake Windermere — where I was on a brief "passing" visit to friends.

I now send you MS of the brief dedicatory introduction for this reprint.

As soon as I can, by next Wednesday's mail I hope, I shall send you the "for press" copy of "Deirdrê" with its several pages of "forward": and either with it, or a week later, "The House of Usna" with Introduction. I am very glad about the reissue of "Usna." Among my imaginative work it stands foremost in my own liking, I think: and though short, carries, I hope, much of old dream and emotion made new and near.

I am still not feeling well, and am suffering from severe nervous headaches, so excuse a brief note meanwhile.

Most sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod

P.S. I hope that you will be able to reprint *Usna* in the early rather than the late autumn. (Part of my new book is to appear, under title "The Sunset of Old Tales," in the June *Fortnightly* I believe.) All three reprints are to come out in the autumn, I understand.¹⁴

P.S. I have intentionally kept the preliminary part of "The Divine Adventure" as brief as practicable — so that the volume as it stands should not exceed the desired length for the particular format. "Usna" will have a longish introduction, and "Deirdrê" also has a fairly long dedicatory introduction.¹⁵

(I forgot to add that as I have not my typewriter with me or anyone here to whom I can dictate at the moment I have written out the "D. A." foreword in MS. but I think so clearly that with ordinary care in setting-up and proof-revision there can hardly be any room for mistakes.)

Please send word acknowledging safe receipt.

ALS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Miss Moore, May 27, 1903

The Royal Route | David MacBrayne | R.M.S. Iona | May 27, 1903¹⁶

My dear Miss Moore.

I have received your letter while I am en route for the Hebrides — so, obviously, I cannot give myself the pleasure of seeing you. I recall with gratification your very kindly and sympathetic writings on my work, and am now glad cordially to thank the writer in person. I shall be away all summer and autumn, in the north and in Norway possibly, and then go to the south of Europe; so, you see, I shall not be in London this year.

Thanking you for your kind letter.

Believe me | Yours most truly | Fiona Macleod

ALS Private

To Thomas Mosher, June 3, 1903

The Royal Route | David MacBrayne | R. M. S. |
Wednesday | 3rd June 1903

Dear Mr. Mosher

Herewith I send you the MS if my dedicatory forward to Deidrê. Please take great care in comparison of the text in proof with this MS. Also, under separate cover, registered, I send the revised 'copy' of the text, to be carefully followed. (I have everywhere altered "Darthool" into "Deirdrê.")

Except where obviously called for in the text, I have removed the few footnotes to the appendical Notes. [Kindly send me 3. unbound proof-sets of the book (after revision) as soon as ready — i.e., if materially before publication for a "birthday" use.]¹⁷

I am working with these "reprints" just now against difficulties of health and pressing exigencies so excuse a letter so baldly to the purpose.

By next Wednesday's mail if possible (I shall then probably be with my friends at Windermere again, but not certain — and if I miss Wednesday's mail then I hope to catch Saturday's) I expect to send you "The House of Usna" with Introduction.

When you write next, perhaps you could kindly let me know when you can conveniently let me have the £50 agreed upon as health and heavy travelling expenses and restricted work have told seriously against income by the pen.

In great haste for the post

Believe me | Dear Mr. Mosher | Most sincerely yours |
Fiona Macleod

ALS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Thomas Mosher, June 6, 1903

6th June 1903

Dear Mr. Mosher

With this I send to you the text of "The House of Usna." The Introduction I must send to you by a later mail — a week hence I expect.

The number of the "National Review" which contained this drama (after its production at the Strand Theater in London, by the Stage Society, in July 1900) is out of circulation, and so I have to send it in a single part, instead of (as I had wished) with the two parts so arranged that the printer would have one side only to follow. However, with careful attention there should be no room for any mistake. You will see that I have everywhere looped the name of the Person speaking, so that it should come above the words uttered. This is the only way tolerable to the reader — and in the magazine-form the names were prefixed to the utterances solely for editorial exigencies.

These names should be in Roman, not Italic type.

And please direct the printer to delete all the "periods" following the names etc.

Certain interlusive words or phrases, and certain chanted words or refrains — as indicated — should be italicized. I am, however, not quite sure about the emphasized Roman of the final chorus-refrain in the "Macha" poem.

As the first page is so "cut-up" I have also written out the explanatory note to the drama which in any case the printers had better follow.

You, of course, know best as to what format to print "The House of Usna" in. For myself, I am sorry if it cannot be in either the same or some such format as "The Silence of Amor" or else "The Hills of Dream" (in which, I understand, the "Divine Adventure" is to be?) — as dramatic literature naturally looks best with a long page and ample spacing. However, it is as you will.

Both "Deirdr " and "The House of Usna" will now reach you at the same time — so you can judge at once as to lengths, etc.

If it were only a question of a companion volume to "By Sundown Shores" that, doubtless, would be better obtained from one or other part of my new book (new in the sense of regatherings — for the most part) "For The Beauty of an Idea" — which, if too late to publish this summer, as almost certainly it now is, will appear I hope in the autumn.

From two sections in particular two small volumes could be drawn: imaginative narrative, from that called "The Sunset of Old Tales" [the main portion of which is published in the June number of the *Fortnightly Review*, a copy of which I suppose you can easily see in Portland] — and more explicative or critical, as in that called "Carmina Gadelica" (consisting of an essay on "The Gael and His Heritage" reprinted from the "Nineteenth Century": "The Four Winds of Eirinn" from the "Fortnightly": "The Later Poetic and Dramatic work of Mr. Yeats": and "A Triad.")

Ill health, much "broken-upness" in sudden and inevitable as well as in sought change, and other more or less regrettable distractions, have not only thrown me back this year but will prevent my publishing my volume of verse till next Spring I fear — at any rate not this autumn.

Much to my annoyance I find that the temporary improvement in my neuritic or writer's-cramp affliction has not been maintained, and I am again threatened with an absolute prohibition against any writing

whatsoever except a needed signature, and even that to be avoided when feasible!

(At the moment, however, it is not convenient to dictate, and I have not my small typewriter with me)

With all friendly regards

Believe me, dear Mr. Mosher, | Sincerely Yours, | Fiona Macleod

ALS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To William Butler Yeats, June 6, 1903¹⁸

June 6th, 1903

Letter Address | Miss Macleod | C/o 22 Ormidale Terrace |
Murrayfield | Midlothian

Dear Mr. Yeats,

I hear that you want to know from me any hint or clue to a Gaelic "Centaur" from the notes on the subject you were told I had.

In a sense I cannot say that I do know anything of a Gaelic Centaur — for though I have twice at first hand come upon as it were the fragmentary crest or tail of an all but vanished legend, I have no reason to believe the latter to be authentically Gaelic. For example, one day last summer an old man of the island of Skye told me a story he said was "an old ancient *seal* of the Gael, older than the grey brow of Ben More yonder that the minister's brother The Professor was for telling us was once no more than a *machar* (i.e. a sandy plain) by the sea or maybe was a ledge below the sea itself, though I misdoubt me where he got that wisdom — too many books, too many books... they get sore confused they who read owre many books."

Well, to give it as briefly as I can, his story was of a woman named Alb — "because she was white, or because all her long hair was white, tho' for sure I don't see the why o' that for I've never heard *alb* put upon any whiteness at all at all" — who came to the West out of the East, and had two sons born there and that near a great river. And she died there. And the heap of the cairn that was afterwards made upon her was like

a cairn of mountains so big and high and great was it: and it could be seen from the three oceans and the two seas. But the two sons would have died, had not a grey wolf come to them, and suckled them, (and then certain strange phrases and allusions with which I needn't trouble you): and when they were grown they were called Alpein and Crumein, "and they made the biggest Dun in the world and a great city and that no other than Dunedin (Edinburgh)." And nations came of them like to the tribe of the saran in the sea or the salmon in the river. And they called the land after their mother."

Now this sounds Gaelic, but it is only familiar history gone through the sieve of men's minds in days when there were no books, and since then handed on with Gaelic names and Gaelic colour and the ingenuity or mythopoeic fancy of the Gaelic teller. For it is just the tale of Rome and of Romulus and Remus. Alba or Albyn is the old gaelic (and Gaulish or European-Celtic) name for Scotland, the land of high hills or white (i.e. snow-capped) mountains — preserved in the familiar Alp — and the cairn of great rocky heights in Scotland itself, seen from the three oceans (on the east, on the north, and on the West) and from the two seas (the Moyle or Mull of Cantyre, or Irish Sea, and the Solway Firth dividing Scotland from England). As for the names, they are the two most ancient in gaelic Scotland — for no clan-names go back so far as MacAlpine and MacCrimmon (and the latter, curiously enough, is also in old Gaelic readable as Son of the Wolf ... the house-name *Crimthann*, the Wolf, too, you will remember, was given to St. Columba in boyhood).

And so, too, one may find the Tale of Troy with Gaelic names and colour, though it is not Gaelic but only like many other tales sucked along on the ebb from old history. So inevitable is this tendency that I would undertake (if among peasant Gaels unable to speak English) that a story told let me say of Charlemagne or the Cid would be retold among them a year or two thence with a gaelic colour, and say in seven years thence would be "an old ancient seal of the Gael" that had been told "to my mother's mother by her that was old then and had all the old tales and poems."

Well, this long preamble is to explain why I do not believe there is any authentic "Centaur" legend.

I have, however, gone into the matter in one of the sections ["The Sunset of Old Tales ... of which a part appears in the *Fortnightly* of this

month] in my forthcoming book of essays and studies in Gaelic literature and legend, which has been delayed for a year past by illness and other causes.

My essay in question is on the sculptured symbols of the Centaur and the Salmon, as found on a few of the most ancient Pagan stories [stones?] in Scotland. The "Centaur" is so rare as to be practically unknown except to a few specialists. I have drawings and all particulars of the only three that exist: and of these one is remarkable — tho' the concurrent secondary symbolism is difficult to determine. (W. S. has made a tracing — and could show you in London if you are to be there till after mid-June: he is getting there about the 14th.)¹⁹

The puzzling thing is that most of the sculptured symbols of which these are two are practically found only in Gaelic Scotland — which would seem to tell against their being solely derivative from Roman sources. But the whole thing was [has?] to be gone into very carefully. (I have also, I may add, a very curious tracing of an ancient symbol on a stone in the north of Scotland — of a horse-headed salmon, unique I suppose.)

However, W. S. will I am sure show you all the tracings and memda he has made, when you see him in London. (It is likely I may reproduce the remarkable forest-branch bearing Centaur to which I allude above.)

It may interest you to hear that Mr. Mosher of Portland, Maine, is to reissue this autumn a revised edition of my version of "The Tale of Deirdrê and the Sons of Usna" (from the "Old Tales Retold" volume) and also of the drama of the close of the Deirdrê-cycle, "The House of Usna."²⁰ I much wish the latter could be performed by the Irish Literary Theatre.

I have read your new book with deep interest, apart from its charm and beauty.²¹

Sincerely yours | Fiona Macleod

Transcribed from ALS Private

To _____, June 22, 1903²²

Monday, June 22 1903

I am so glad I went down to see George Meredith to-day. It was goodbye,²³ I fear, though the end may not be for some time yet: not immediate, for he has recovered from his recent severe illness and painful accident, though still very weak, but able to be up, and to move about a little.

At first I was told he could see no one, but when he heard who the caller was I was bidden enter, he gave me a sweet cordial welcome, but was frail and weak and fallen into the blind alleys that so often await the most strenuous and vivid lives. But, in himself, in his mind, there is no change. I felt it was goodbye, and when I went, I think he felt it so also. When he goes it will be the passing of the last of the great Victorians. I could have (selfishly) wished that he had known a certain secret: but it is better not, and now is in every way as undesirable as indeed impossible. If there is in truth, as I believe, and as he believes, a life for us after this, he will know that his long-loving and admiring younger comrade has also striven towards the hard way that few can reach. What I *did* tell him before has absolutely passed from his mind: had, indeed, never taken root, and perhaps I had nurtured rather than denied what *had* taken root. If in some ways a little sad, I am glad otherwise. And I had one great reward, for at the end he spoke in a way he might not otherwise have done, and in words I shall never forget. I had risen, and was about to lean forward and take his hands in farewell, to prevent his half-rising, when suddenly he exclaimed "Tell me something of *her* — of Fiona. I call her so always, and think of her so, to myself. Is she well? Is she at work? Is she true to her work and her ideal? No, *that* I know!"

It was then he said the following words, which two minutes later, in the garden, I jotted down in pencil at once lest I should forget even a single word, or a single change in the sequence of the words. "She is a woman of genius. That is rare ... so rare anywhere, anytime, in women or in men. Some few women "have genius," but she is more than that. Yes, she is a woman of genius: the genius too, that is rarest, that drives deep thoughts before it. Tell her I think often of her, and of the deep thought in all she has written of late. Tell her I hope great things of her yet. And now ... we'll go, since it must be so. Goodbye, my dear fellow, and God bless you."

Outside, the great green slope of Box Hill rose against a cloudless sky, filled with a flowing south wind. The swifts and swallows were flying high. In the beech courts thrush and blackbird called continually, along, the hedgerows the wild-roses hung. But an infinite sadness was in it all. A prince among men had fallen into the lonely and dark way.

[William Sharp]

Memoir, pp. 367–68

To James Carleton Young,²⁴ June 23, 1903

Murrayfield, Midlothian | Scotland | 23/June/03

Dear Mr. Carleton Young

You will pardon any seeming discourtesy in delayed response when you learn that your letter was forwarded to me abroad, thence returned to my London address, thence followed me to Scotland, and only a day or two ago found its way to me here in London again.

It will give me pleasure to inscribe the volumes you allude to, as it is already a pleasure to know that one so truly a book-lover cares to include, in what must be not only a most interesting and valuable but also unique collection anything of

Yours very cordially, | William Sharp

P. S. I find I have forgotten to add that, if the same to you, it will be much more convenient for me, if you will postpone dispatch of the vols till say about 21st, or between 20th and 30th September, *for my receipt in London early in October*, at | c/o | R. Farquharson Sharp Esq. | 56 St. Mary's Mansions | Paddington | London W. If for any reason expressly wished earlier, they could be sent in the first week of August (marked "Not to be forwarded"), for my receipt any time after August 15th till 25th, to | c/o Mrs. Glassford Bell | Kinloch-Meigle | Scotland. But, even thus, there is risk of delay & miscarriage.

ALS Pierpont Morgan Library

To Thomas Mosher, June 23, 1903

C/o 22 Ormidale Terrace | Murrayfield | Midlothian | June 23, 1903

Dear Mr. Mosher,

On arriving in Edinburgh today for a flying visit I found your note forwarded from Mrs. Rinder, with the Cheque for £25 for which she signed receipt.²⁵ Many thanks for thus sending in advance half of the sum agreed upon for the three autumn-books.²⁶

When again remitting, please *if feasible* do not have the envelope stamped "Personal Receipt to be obtained" as in this instance. In the first place Mrs. Rinder was away from home the day the postman called and, later, he wanted "the personal receipt of Miss Fiona Macleod" and not of Mrs. Rinder — and delivered only on remonstrance. Does ordinary postal registration in America involve this "personal receipt demanded" stamp?

During August and September Mrs. Rinder will be away from London and house closed — so if posting after or about 20th July please, until end of September (from U. S. A.) post to me as follows,

- (1) for my receipt up till end of August | Miss Macleod | Springhill | Kilcreggan | Argyll. Scotland
- (2) Till end of September to | Miss Macleod | C/o 22 Ormidale Terrace | Murrayfield. | Midlothian

In great haste, | Most sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod²⁷

P.S. My long introduction to "The House of Usna" is now being typed, and shall be posted I hope by either the first or second ensuing mail. (I hope you received the Deirdrê material, etc., all right.)

TLS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Richard Garnett, [July 5?, 1903]

Sunday Evg²⁸

My dear Garnett

It is most good of you to give me your book.²⁹ [I have been worrying my library to get it, since I saw it announced.] I am always deeply interested in all you write — for two things I know that always will be there, the expression of a fine critical & sympathetic mind, & distinction in that expression. What I have already read of the book interests me greatly: to reread all, and later to reread, will be a pleasure.

Altho' late, I still hope (& believe) I may be able to say what I think of it, in print. I am glad we are to see you, & Mrs. Garnett I hope, at our literary "At Home" at the Grosvenor Club tomorrow.

Ever cordially yours William Sharp

ALS University of Texas, Austin

To Grant Richards, July 13, 1903

(Temporary) | 9 St. Mary's Terrace | Paddington | W. | 13/July/03

My dear Grant Richards

It was on my mind to speak to you on a matter of "Shop" the other night, after the speechifying, but the occasion vanished in the rapid dispersal of our company. I am sending to you for your consideration a striking novel by Arthur Tomson. He sent it to me recently for my advice, & asking if I would send it to Macmillan's with a line of introduction (as they are the publishers of Hardy's novels, & as this book is of the Purbeck Hills & Wareham Flats, & chiefly as Hardy much likes Tomson's work & admires this story) — but I do not know any of Macmillan's now, except Mr. Craik who is only a "business" partner. So, on my own responsibility, I am now first sending "Many Waters" to you.³⁰

If, as I hope & believe, you will like it, & prefer to negotiate direct with Arthur Tomson his address is Yew Tree House | Wareham | Dorset
Otherwise please see that the MS be sent back to *me*.

Kind regards | Yours faithfully | William Sharp

ALS State University of New York at Buffalo

To Theodore Watts-Dunton, [July 14?, 1903]

9 St. Mary's Terrace | Paddington | W.

My Dear Watts-Dunton

I was most sorry to miss you yesterday as it is so long since we had a chat.³¹

You know how difficult it is to snatch a moment at this season, when there seems a mysterious social conspiracy against every hour of day and night.

But by postponing an engagement of a less exigent kind I find I can manage Thursday afternoon, if that will suit you. Failing Thursday I might be able to meet at my club on Saty about 4, as over: but it is uncertain.³²

Were it at all feasible I w^d gladly go out to Putney, but that I simply cannot manage in the present pressure, along with arduous pressure of exigent literary work.

So could you manage, do you think, to come and have tea with me on Thursday at the | Grosvenor Club | Dover St. | East corner of Dover St. and Piccadilly) | at, say, 4:30.

The club, removed to new premises, is at present in the hands of the decorators — & there is but one small room available. Still, we can have tea there, & a chat.

Saw Rhys today.³³ His wife is very unwell, I fear.

Please let me know soon as you can if this arrangement is feasible for you.

Yours sincerely | William Sharp

Read with interest the recent "Great Thoughts" article. How wide & deep Alwin has reached.³⁴

ALS University of Leeds, Brotherton Library

To Thomas Mosher, July 15, 1903³⁵

C/o Mrs. Wingate Rinder | 21 Woronzow Road | London N.W.

Dear Mr. Mosher,

Excuse a hurried dictated line, just as I am returning from London, where I have been on a matter of sudden urgency and illness.

It will be a disappointment to me if you do not use "The House of Usna," apart from the trouble I took in preparing it for you and the Introduction over which I spent much time and care. It is, I think, the thing I care most for, of mine.³⁶

If however, you are unable to use it this autumn or before Christmas will you kindly do two things at once: first, telegraph "Rinder, 21 Woronzow Road, London." ... "Returning Usna": and, second, repost the copy and prefatory matter to me.

If you wish to use the Swan story, you are certainly welcome to do so. It is, unfortunately, now quite impracticable for me to send you at this late date any other matter from what will be my next volume to be published here.

If you do use the Swan story, it need have no introduction from me, as you say it is already long enough. Instead, will you print a dedicatory page as follows,³⁷

I suppose of course you will publish "Deirdrê" this autumn as well as "The Divine Adventure."

You will already have received my preceding note, about addresses etc., and also with particular request as to not sending by registered "personal receipt" post. There was again a good deal of delay as well as trouble involved for Mrs. Rinder (as well as indirectly for myself, for seeing a specially registered letter Mrs. Rinder naturally thought it contained a remittance, and telegraphed to me as to what was to be done with the cheque ... not noticing till later that there was none enclosed.)

Anything up to 27th or 30th July (if leaving New York by that date, that is) can be sent to her care, now: after that as advised.

I am very glad indeed to learn that you are the better for your holiday. You must now be on your guard against letting the fall put its spell of languor on you.

[Fiona Macleod]

TL New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Richard Garnett, July 28, 1903

South Bantaskine | by Falkirk | 28/July/03³⁸

My Dear Garnett,

A word of thanks for so kindly sending this delightful new book — for it is that rather than a new edition.³⁹ I had just given a copy of it to a friend as a birthday present, who writes to me “I am more than delighted with Richard Garnett’s book. It fulfills all you said of it — and I find in it, besides, a quality very different from almost any other modern English book I know. But that, however, I remember you did tell me before. And I am sure you are right in what you say of its unique quality of style.”

Tonight, if, as I anticipate, opportunity occurs, I intend to introduce it (probably by reading something) to our present hosts, a delightful family keenly interested in literature. Later, when I have read all the new & reread all the old contents I’ll drop you another line on the subject: meanwhile I am delighted with the four new I have read, with recollection of having enjoyed one of them two or three years ago in some magazine or periodical.

Ever cordially yours | William Sharp

P.S. It goes almost without saying that if even at this late date I can (as I hope) write anything about it publicly I will do so.

ALS University of Texas, Austin

To Thomas Mosher, August 3, 1903

Springhill | Kilcreggan, Scotland | August 3, 1903

Dear Mr. Mosher,

Many thanks for so kindly sending the second cheque for Twenty-Five Pounds (£25), so promptly. I received it last night when the yacht on which I am spending this month lay off Kilcreggan for the week-end.

I am glad that you like the "Usna" introduction so well, as I gave much time and thought to it: and glad that you are going to issue it in a suitable format, though I hope that the extra outlay involved will soon or late be recovered.

Let me say at once that in view of this extra outlay, and your having already paid me what I asked for revised reissue of the three volumes, and for the presentation copies which I hope you will send me (say 10 of "*Divine Adventure*", and 12 of "*Deirdré*", and 12 of "*Usna*"). ... in view of this, I propose that you hold over the "Four Swans" (with dedication-Ms. sent to you) and another volume to be selected from my forthcoming volume of essays (or otherwise as may be arranged), for issue in the Brocade series, without further honorarium. (I can send a brief foreword and a few textual amendments for the latter for copyright purposes.)

As to the title of the "Usna" volume, I prefer simply "*THE HOUSE OF USNA*."

I am sure the correct lection of the Proofs with typed MS. may safely be left to your care, since you kindly undertake to see to the final revision yourself. (Please tell the printer to adhere scrupulously to my spelling and punctuation: he and the proof reader will need to keep a careful eye on the Greek names, as I have not given these in the pseudo-Latin form commonly adopted but in their correct transliteration.)

From 20th August, and till I write to the contrary, please address letters and all else to me c/o 22 Ormidale Terrace, Murrayfield (Midlothian).

I should much like if you would kindly let me have a copy of the June "Bibelot" (I mean that with Yeats's little play)⁴⁰ which, if sent, did not reach me.

I am now feeling better than I have done this past inclement spring and delayed summer, except for the recurrent neuritic trouble in my

arm, which may again necessitate the disuse of all penmanship for a time, I fear (the doctor even threatens “from now till next summer”!). You, I hope, are well and happy both in work and leisure. And so, dear Mr. Mosher, believe me, with all kind regards and good wishes,

Yours most sincerely, | Fiona Macleod

P.S. The quotation about myself which I enclose is from a book by someone unknown to me, a Mr. George Eyre-Todd — “Byways of Scottish Literature,”⁴¹ first published three or four years ago, but only now seen by me in a new cheap edition just issued — I thought you might care to see it

TLS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

*To Bliss Perry, August 4, 1903*⁴²

Murrayfield | Midlothian | (Scotland)

My Dear Sir,

It is now a long time since our last communications, and many things have interfered with the fulfillment of the project in part arranged by Mr. Scudder, and later broached again by Mr. Page.

For the last three winters & springs I have had to leave London for health's sake to go abroad, to the South. It was from Taormina in Sicily this spring that I wrote to you with enclosed — but, as I now find by its return, by some strange mischance, addressed to Australia instead of to U.S.A.

During these last three years I have become familiar not only with the visited regions of Sicily but also the all but unvisited remote and uncivilized interior and the wild Sicilian Highlands — starting generally from the inland Castle of Maniace, the residence of the Duke of Bronte (Nelson's descendent & representative, by the female side).

An editorial friend, for whom I was writing, kindly “set-up” the article for me — in its voyage to and from Australia instead of U.S.A. the back page of it got damaged, & so I have had the final 2 pp. typed.⁴³

I hope it is an article you will care to have for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Certainly every writer now sees hundreds more, year by year, of American & British visitors to Sicily, & though all of these hear much of the interior few penetrate it, or see much even of the relatively more accessible southern Highlands. So far as I know this is the first article on the subject which has appeared, topographical or archeological: nor have I heard of any who has visited remote Polizzi or the Petralias.

Believe me, Dear Sir, | Yours faithfully | William Sharp

The Editor | "The Atlantic Monthly" | Boston: Mass.

ALS Harvard University, Houghton Library

To Henry Mills Alden, August 25th, 1903

... in the *Pall Mall Magazine* you may have noticed a series of topographical papers (with as much or more of anecdotal and reminiscent and critical) contributed, under the title of "Literary Geography," by myself. The first three were commissioned by the editor to see how they "took." They were so widely liked, and those that followed, that this summer he commissioned me to write a fresh series, one each month till next March. Of these none has been more appreciated than the double article on the Literary Geography of the Lake of Geneva. Forthcoming issues are The English Lake Country, Meredith, Thackeray, The Thames, etc. In the current issue I deal with Stevenson.

... About my projected Greek book, to comprise Magna Grecia as well, i.e. Hellenic Calabria and Sicily, etc. ... I want to make a book out of the material gathered, old and new, and to go freshly all over the ground. ... I intend to call it *Greek Backgrounds* and to deal with the ancient (recreated) and modern backgrounds of some of the greatest of the Greeks — as they were and are as, for example, of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Empedocles, Theocritus, etc. — and of famous ancient cities, Sybaris, Corinth, etc.; and deal with the home or chief habitat or famous association. For instance:

(1) Calabria (Crotan and Metapontum) with Pythagoras.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| (2) Eleusis in Greece,
Syracuse and Gela in Sicily | with life and death of Aeschylus. |
| (3) Colonos | Sophocles |
| (4) Athens etc. | with Euripides. |
| (5) Syracuse and Acragas (Girgente) | with Pindar etc etc. |

[William Sharp]

Memoir, pp. 369–70

To Thomas Mosher, September 10, 1903

c/o 22 Ormidale Terrace | Murrayfield |
Midlothian | 10: Sep^r: 1903

Dear Mr. Mosher

The copies of “The Divine Adventure” safely reached me, and the little book looks very well in its new raiment: a charming format in all ways. I have noticed no printer’s error save the use of kin with a capital K in the second page of prefatory dedication — in part my own fault, as I find I write words beginning with k with too large a letter.⁴⁴ This, and a slip of “logically” for “logical” in the Note at end. I suppose that, before long, copies of *Deirdrê* will be coming. I am very curious to see *The House of Usna*, and am sure it will be beautiful in its format.

I am afraid that several causes, chiefly broken health and the disintegrating effect of many interruptions this summer, will prevent my bringing out my announced volume this autumn-winter.⁴⁵ There is still a chance, but no more: and, if not, it will not be out till February. I have again to go abroad for the winter and early spring, but am not yet certain where it will be. I want much to join friends in Greece, but if that does not suit for me I may go to south of Spain or to Algiers. But I hope to get to Greece.

No more just now

Believe me, dear Mr. Mosher, | Sincerely yours, | Fiona Macleod

ALS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Isabella (Murray) Gilchrist, ⁴⁶ September 13, 1903

Dear Mrs. Gilchrist,

It is at all times a great pleasure to hear from you, and that pleasure is enhanced by hearing from you on my birthday and by your kind remembrance of the occasion... .

We look forward to Athens greatly, though it is not (as in Elizabeth's case) my first visit to that land of entrancing associations and still ever-present beauty. But as one grows older, one the more recognizes that "climate" and "country" belong to the geography of the soul rather than to that secondary physical geography of which we hear so much. The winds of heaven, the dreary blast of wilderness, the airs of hope and peace, the tragic storms and cold inclemencies these are not the property of our North or South or East, but are of the climes self-made or inherited or in some strange way become our "atmosphere". And the country we dream of, that we long for, is not yet reached by Cook nor even chartered by Baedeker. You and yours are often in our thought. In true friendship, distance means no more than that the sweet low music is far off: but it is there.

Your friend, | William Sharp

Memoir, p. 372

To Ernest Rhys, Late September, 1903

Llandrindod Wells, | Sept, 1903

My Dear Ernest,

... I know that you will be sorry to learn that things have not gone well with me. All this summer I have been feeling vaguely unwell and, latterly, losing strength steadily... . However, the rigorous treatment, the potent Saline and Sulphur waters and baths, the not less potent and marvelously pure and regenerative Llandrindod air — and my own exceptional vitality and recuperative powers — have combined to work a wonderful change for the better; which may prove to be more "than

a splendid rally," tho' I know I must not be too sanguine. Fortunately, the eventuality does not much trouble me, either way: I have lived, and am content, and it is only for what I don't want to leave undone that the sound of "Farewell" has anything deeply perturbing.

W. S.

Memoir, pp. 368–69

To Edmund Clarence Stedman, September 29, [1903]

The Grosvenor Club | Piccadilly | London W. | 29th Sept for 8th Oct.

My ever dear Poet and Friend,

I hope this will reach you either (as I calculate it shd.) on your birthday morning or on the eve of that important event. And in any case, whenever it reach you, it will carry to you the affectionate & loyal greetings of one who ever bears you in loving remembrance & holds you in rare esteem. I had hoped the Fates would have haled me once more across the dividing seas ere this, or that you would have carried your youthful heart to this old land. But we can meet often in print, & in dear memories.

We may or may not meet again — I dare not now be over-sanguine: for a subtle malady has claimed me for a comrade. His name is Diabetes, but he's no enemy, & refrains as much as he can, & even promises to disappear for a time, & be content with psychical Marconigrams. At any rate, tho' a month ago a specialist thought I'd got well into Chapter Last, I have surprised him & all my friends (& even myself) by an apparent complete recovery. I know of course it is only a splendid rally — but then it is a rally that may last years. Any way, it's all in the order of the day, and "I take it smiling," as the lady said when she saw she "couldn't help it," when the amorous Brigand wooed her.

And I've work to do, & shall live to do it I believe. But to you, dear E. C. S., long long years, & green bays, & the love of men & women among whom none is more leal than your friend

William Sharp

All affectionate remembrances to your dear wife — & to other friends. (The Janviers are now here I'm glad to say. In 3 weeks or so my wife & I leave for Athens & Greece for the winter & spring.

ALS Private

To Catherine Ann Janvier, September 30, 1903

London, | Sept. 30, 1903.

... Thanks for your loving note. But you are not to worry yourself about me. I'm all right, and as cheerful as a lark — let us say as a lark with a rheumatic wheeze in its little song-box, or gout in its little off-claw... . Anyway, I'll laugh and be glad and take life as I find it, till the end. The best prayer for me is that I may live vividly till "Finis," and work up to the last hour... .

My love to you both, and know me ever your irrepressible,

Billy

Memoir, p. 369

To Edmund Clarence Stedman, October 2, 1903

The Grosvenor Club, | Oct. 2, 1903.

My Dear E. C. S.,

Two days ago, on Wednesday's mail, I posted a letter to reach you, I hope, on the morning of your birthday — and today, to my very real joy, I safely received your long and delightful letter. It has been a true medicine — for, as I told you, I've been gravely ill. And it came just at the right moment, and warmed my heart with its true affection.

... I know you'll be truly glad to hear that the tidings about myself can be more and more modified by good news from my physician, a man in whom I have the utmost confidence and who knows every

weakness as well as every resource and reserve of strength in me, and understands my temperament and nature as few doctors do understand complex personalities.

He said to me today "You look as if you were well contented with the world." I answered "Yes, of course I am. In the first place I'm every day feeling stronger, and in the next, and for this particular day, I've just had a letter of eight written pages from a friend whom I have ever dearly loved and whom I admire not less than I love." He knew you as a poet as well as the subtlest and finest interpreter of modern poetry — and indeed (tho' I had forgotten) I had given him a favourite volume and also lent your Baltimore addresses.

When I'm once more in the land of Theocritus (and oh how entrancing it is) I'll be quite strong and well again, he says. Indeed I'm already "a live miracle"! We sail by the Orient liner "Orizaba" on the 23rd; reach Naples (via Gibraltar and Marseilles) 9 to 10 days later; and leave by the local mail-boat same evening for Messina — arrive there about 8 on Monday morning — catch the Syracuse mail about 10, change at 12 at Giarre, and ascend Mt. Etna by the little circular line to Maletto about 3,000 ft. high, and thence drive to the wonderful old Castle of Maniace to stay with our dear friend there, the Duke of Bronte — our third or fourth visit now. We'll be there about a fortnight: then a week with friends at lovely and unique Taormina: and then sail once more, either from Messina or Naples direct to the Piraeus, for Athens, where we hope to spend the winter and spring.

How I wish you were to companion us. In Sicily, I often thought of you, far off Brother of Theocritus. You would so delight in it all, the Present that mirrors the magical Past; the Past that penetrates like stars the purple veils of the Present.

Yes, I know well how sincere is all you say as to the loving friend awaiting me — awaiting *us* — if ever we cross the Atlantic: but it is gladsome to hear it all the same.

All affectionate greetings to dear Mrs. Stedman, a true and dear friend,

Ever, dear Stedman, | Your loving friend, | William Sharp

To Grant Richards, October 6, 1903

Letter address | Miss Macleod | C/o. 22 Ormidale Terrace |
 Murrayfield | Midlothian |
 6th Octr. 1893.

My dear Sir

I have just written to my typist and secretary at Murrayfield with this letter to copy, which she will then at once forward to you.

I had no wish *myself* to relinquish "The Hour of Beauty" anthology: on the contrary.⁴⁷ But owing to the long delays, my uncertain health, and the difficulties involved in the slow and gradual achievement of the book along the lines thought out, made me think it fairer to you to suggest relinquishment of undertaking for whose fulfillment you have already been patient in disappointment. I shall, therefore, make a point of taking the work up again as soon as I am able to resume fresh literary work (a rest of some months at least I *must* have, save for some proof-correcting). Anything more definite than this I must not allow myself to consider just now. But, I can honestly hope that, at latest, I may be able to take up the anthology from where it now stands, at latest in May or June next (and earlier if practicable) and with intent to finish it as soon thereafter as at all possible. In this way, I do sincerely hope, both for your sake and my own, that I shall be able to place it in your hands for Autumn publication. My plans are very uncertain. My doctors want me to take a voyage (India or Japan or Australia) but there are almost insuperable difficulties in the way.

My Kinsman Mr. William Sharp and his wife are going to Greece for the winter, and it is a great temptation to me to join them there later: but if that falls through, as climatic and other reasons may determine, then I may go to either Algiers or Madeira, preferably the former.

I trust this letter will, in the circumstances, be quite satisfactory to you (which, by the way, I ought not to be writing, as I'm told either to dictate or to use a typewriter for some months yet!)

Believe me | Yours very truly, | Fiona Macleod

To James Carleton Young, October 23, 1903

(Orient SS. Orizaba) | 23rd Oct

Dear Mr. Carleton Young

Just a line as leaving for Greece (first for 2 or 3 weeks in Sicily with friends, en route) to thank you most cordially for your very kind letter & friendly letter of introduction to your Athenian friend.

In greatest haste | Most sincerely yours | William Sharp

I shall write to you from Athens & thank you again for your most friendly courtesy & to "report."

ALS Private

To Catherine Ann Janvier, October 31, 1903

R.M.S. Orizaba | Oct. 31, 1903

It seems strange to write to you on the Festival of Samhain — the Celtic Summer-end, our Scottish Hallowe'en — here on these stormy waters between Sardinia and Italy. It is so strong a gale, and the air is so inclement and damp that it is a little difficult to realise we are approaching the shores of Italy. But wild as the night is I want to send you a line on it, on this end of the old year, this night of powers and thoughts and spiritual dominion.

It was a disappointment not to get ashore at Marseilles — but the fierce gale (a wild mistral) made it impossible. Indeed the steamer couldn't approach: we lay-to for 3 or 4 hours behind a great headland some 4 or 5 miles to S.W. of the city, and passengers and mails had to be driven along the shore and embarked from a small quarry pier... . We had a very stormy and disagreeable passage all the way from Plymouth and through the Bay... . The first part of the voyage I was very unwell, partly from an annoying heart attack. You may be sure I am better again, or I could not have withstood the wild gale which met us far south in the Gulf of Lyons and became almost a hurricane near

Marseilles. But I gloried in the superb magnificence of the lashed and tossed sport of the mistral, as we went before it like an arrow before a gigantic bow.

It is now near sunset and I am writing under the shelter of a windsail on the upper deck, blowing "great guns" though I don't think we are in for more than a passing gale. But for every reason I shall be glad to get ashore, not that I want to be in Naples, which I like least of any place in Italy, but to get on to Maniace ... where I so much love to be, and where I can work and dream so well... .

[William Sharp]

Memoir, pp. 372–73

*To Thomas Mosher, November 6, 1903*⁴⁸

(Gibraltar) | 6th November, 1903

My dear Mr. Mosher

Just a brief note (for, as you know, I am not supposed to be using my hand in penmanship at present, for that annoying neuritic trouble has again made enforced rest from writing inevitable) to thank you cordially for the copies of "Usna" safely delivered at Murrayfield. A copy has just reached me here *en passant*. It is a beautiful little book in format, and I think the red-ink lettering of the verses very effective. So far as I've seen, there are no misprints — and I thank you for all your careful supervision over what must have been a very difficult "copy" to set up correctly, with so many Greek names in Greek spelling and unfamiliar Gaelic names and words. What a delight *all* your publications afford: and naturally I am deeply pleased with this beautiful version of "Usna."

My plans are still uncertain. I shall probably remain near here (at Algeciras, on the Spanish gulf, opposite Gibraltar) for a week or so: then perhaps we sail to Algiers: then, possibly, may for a month or so join Mr. and Mrs. William Sharp, now in Athens. But health, weather, and other considerations must take precedence over inclination, so I

cannot say yet. I'll write to you privately on this etc. later. Will you make me a present I should much like to have? ... viz.: your edn of *Pompilia*, with A. Symons' introduction. I take you at your generous word, you see!

Ever most sincerely yours | Fiona Macleod

ALS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Mrs. J. H. Philpot, November 11, 1903

11 November, 1903

... At this season of the year, beautiful and unique in its appeal and singular wild fascination as it is, this place does not suit me climactically, being for one thing too high between 2,000 and 3,000 ft. and also too much under the domination of Etna, who swings vast electric current, and tosses thunder charged cloud-masses to and fro like a Titan acolyte swinging mighty censers at the feet of the Sun.⁴⁹ We drive to Taormina on Tuesday and the divine beauty and not less divinely balmy and regenerative climate — sitting as she does like the beautiful goddess Falcone worshipped there of old, perched on her orange and olive-clad plateau, hundreds of feet above the peacock-hued Ionian Sea, with one hand as it were reaching back to Italy (Calabria ever like opal or amethyst to the North-east), with the other embracing all the lands of Etna to Syracuse and the Hyblaeon Mount, the lands of Empedocles and Theocritus, of Aeschylus and Pindar, of Stesichorus and Simonides, and so many other great names — and with her face ever turned across the Ionian Sea to that ancient Motherland of Hellas, where once your soul and mine surely sojourned.

We shall have a delightful “going” and one you would enjoy to the full... . Tomorrow if fine and radiant we start for that absolutely unsurpassable expedition to the great orange gardens a thousand feet lower at the S. W. end of the Duchy. We first drive some eight miles or so through wild mountain land till we come to the gorges of the Simeto and there we mount our horses and mules and with ample escort before

and behind ride in single file for about an hour and a half. Suddenly we come upon one of the greatest orange groves in Europe — 26,000 trees in full fruit, an estimated crop of 3,000,000! stretching between the rushing Simeto and great cliffs.⁵⁰ Then once more to the saddle and back a different way to barbaric Bronte and thence a ten mile drive back along the ancient Greek highway from Naxos to sacred Enna. And so, for the moment, à revedèr!a!

[William Sharp]

Memoir, pp. 374–75

To Thomas Mosher, December 6, [1903]

6th December.

Dear Mr. Mosher

I have just received (I write from the Ionian isles, off Greece) a copy of a short article that appeared in *Country Life* — (socially & otherwise) influential weekly periodical to which I occasionally contribute, and where by a special arrangement [including some such special indication of the source whence they come, as is afforded by the article now enclosed] the editor agreed to print, *after* your publication in U.S.A., my Dedicatory “Deirdré” paper and the Dramatic prelude to “The House of Usna.” So, as you are not likely to see it, I send this copy to you. [If I cannot find it — it has mysteriously disappeared — I shall send this to Edinburgh or London to be posted and to await a copy to be got and enclosed.]⁵¹

I hope to send to you later that which you asked me for — if not quite what you asked, at any rate the best I can do, in the circumstances of which I wrote.

All my literary undertakings and hopes have been sadly interfered with this year, and particularly this past autumn. I am hopeful, however, that with the New Year may come not only more assured health but also better conditions for the sole life and the sole aims to which I wish to give all my thought and all my energies.

I hope you are in fortunate health, and happy in your work, and that all things go well with you.

Most sincerely yours and with all most earnest good wishes for Christmastide,

Fiona Macleod

P.S. As a Christmas-card I am sending you a Christmastide number of "*Country Life*" with a long poem of mine called "The Cross of the Dumb," and a shorter poem.

ALS New York Public Library, Berg Collection

To Mrs. J. H. Philpot, [late December, 1903]⁵²

Maison Merlin, | Athens

Dear Friend,

This is mainly to tell you that I've come out of my severe feverish attack with erect (if draggled) colours and hope to march "cock-a-hoopishly" into 1904 and even further if the smiling enigmatical gods permit! ... Today I heard a sound as of Pan piping, among the glens on Hymettos, whereon my eyes rest so often and often so long dream. Tomorrow I'll take Gilbert Murray's fine new version of Hippolytus or Bacchae as my pocket companion to the Theatre of Dionysus on the hither side of the Acropolis; possibly my favourite Oedipus at Kolonos and read sitting on Kolonos itself and imagine I hear on the wind the rise and fall of the lonely ancient lives, serene thought-tranced in deathless music. And in the going of the old and the coming of the new year, a friend's thoughts shall fare to you from far away Athens... . As far as practicable I am keeping myself to the closer study of the literature and philosophy and ethical concepts and ideals of ancient Hellas and of mythology in relation thereto, but you know how fascinating and perturbing much else is, from sculpture to vase paintings, from Doric and Ionic architecture to the beauty and complex interest of the almost inexhaustible field of ancient Greek coins, and those of Graecia Magna, — And then (both Eheu and

Evoe!) I have so much else to do — besides "Life" the supreme and most exciting of the arts!

[William Sharp]

Memoir, pp. 375–76

To Richard Garnett, December 29, 1903

Maison Merlin | Athens | 29th/Dec/03

Σπιτα Μερλιν | Οδος Σεκερη | Αθηναί⁵³

My dear Garnett

May this bring you all cordial New Year Greetings and good wishes for 1904 for you and yours tho' it reach you just after the New Year has become a *fait accompli*.

We are very comfortably settled here in a pleasant large house — a kind of Hotel Garni, on an agreeable "suspension" plan: on the S.E. slope of Lycabellus, and about 5 minutes walk down the ... to the beautiful columns of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, and to the banks of the Ilissos (alas, usually as void of original matter as an Essay by Sir John Lubbock or a poem by Sir Lewis Morris⁵⁴). We hope to see something of the rest of Attica, of the nearer Isles, and of the Peloponnesus, in the Spring. Meanwhile Athens & its vicinage suffices. On fine days Kolonus is but a short walk, and Hymettos is close at hand, with its many deep-cloven valleys: or the high woodlands of Tafoi: or the vale of Daphnī & the Sacred Way: or the Bay of Salamis or the Shore with its lovely perspectives along by old Phaleron. We see much of Mr. & Mrs. Bosanquet at the British School — charming people. Among several Greek friends (one of whom, named Embiricos, claims unbroken descent from a friend & a pupil of Plato!) there is one whose name you will know, Demetrios Bikélas, in all ways a most interesting man. I wish I cd. do nothing but "idle" yet ... as ... λλ γ ρ νάπαυσις ν παντ γλυκε α etc down to κα μέλι etc and νθ Ἀφροδίσα, as Pindar saith!⁵⁵

My wife joins with me in cordial messages, and I am ever, dear Poet,
sincerely yours

William Sharp

ACS University of Texas, Austin

