

William Sharp and "Fiona Macleod"

A Life



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Chapter Nine

July–December 1892

On July 8, Sharp apologized to Julia Ward Howe's daughter, Maud Howe Elliott, for being unable to entertain her since he had no residence in London. His wife, moreover, was leaving in a few days for the Wagner festival in Bayreuth, and he was "going into Sussex to superintend the arrival of our furniture at a country place I have taken there." Elizabeth left for Germany on July 11, and the next day Sharp went down to Bucks Green, Sussex, where he stayed with Stanley Little until the furniture arrived. When Elizabeth returned from Bayreuth in the third week of July she joined her husband, and they settled into the old stone house that would be their home for two years.

On July 10 Sharp wrote a letter that includes his response to Little's request that he give the main address at an early August celebration Little was organizing to commemorate the centennial of Percy Bysshe Shelley's birth. The letter contains details about the state of his health and his opinions about several contemporary writers.

And now about the Shelley address. For several reasons it would be a pleasure as well as an honour — but the truth is that I dare not venture just now on anything of the kind, for physiological reasons. My doctor has just warned me of this vein-trouble that I have not yet satisfactorily got under. The least thing may bring it back — and this must not be, as it might easily become dangerous ("clotting"). One requisite is — not to stand. Walking does not now hurt me if in moderation: but even a short stand involves pain and discomfiture. And though I may be all right again by the end of the month I really must not risk the danger involved in the fatigue of standing to address.

In 1892, when he was thirty-seven, Sharp developed symptoms of diabetes; and his heart, weakened by rheumatic fever in 1884, was not

moving blood through his veins with sufficient strength. Standing without moving risked the possibility of serious blood clots in his legs. He told Little he could write an address for him or someone else to read, but it would be far better to have a prominent Shelleyan give the address. He thought the best choice would be Stopford Brooke, next Edward Dowden (two Irishmen), next Roden Noel, next John Nichol (two Scotsmen), next Sir George Douglas, or why not Little himself who was organizing the event. Richard Garnett, Sharp warned, was "not a good speaker and has not the right manner," and surely not H. Buxton Forman who was "a jellyfish" and "a Philistine of the Philistines in manner and address."

Shelley was born in Horsham, Sussex on August 4, 1792, and the commemorative event took place there on August 4, 1892. It was described in an article in the August 11 issue of the *West Sussex Gazette* which may have been written by Stanley Little. The venue was the stately home of Mr. Hurst of Horsham Park "with its beautiful gardens laughing in the sunlight of a lovely summer day" and affording "to visitors no untrue glimpse of the surroundings amid which Shelley as the son of an English squire was brought up." Many literary luminaries attended; and "The hall was crowded; all classes were represented, and Horsham, the county, and London, divided the audience fairly amongst them." Following Sharp's advice and with his help, Little engaged as the principal speaker Professor John Nichol with whom Sharp studied at Glasgow University. The September issue of *The Artist* reported "What Nichol said about Shelley, at Horsham, was the very thing that needs to be said." He "completely carried his audience." The organizers, principally Little, were "brilliantly successful in their arrangements." With Sharp as his adviser, Little gathered a committee and many illustrious sponsors to raise money for a Shelley Museum in Horsham, and their efforts survive today as a substantial collection of books, manuscripts, portraits, and sculptures in the Shelley Gallery of the Horsham Museum.

Sharp's July 10 letter to Little asked him to tell the Bucks Green postman the house formerly called the Laurels was now Phenice Croft. All mail addressed to the Sharps and all mail addressed to Mr. W. H. Brooks at Bucks Green, Rudgwick was to be placed in a post bag to be picked up by a boy in the forenoons. Sharp had settled on the *Pagan Review* as the name of the quarterly he would produce at Phenice Croft, and it would be edited by W. H. Brooks, a pseudonym for Sharp and



Fig. 21 Park House, Horsham, Sussex. Photograph by Whn64 (2013), Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Horsham_-_horsham_park.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0.

a nod to his maternal grandfather, William Brooks, the Swedish Vice-Counsel in Glasgow and the last person in all of Scotland to edit — or to read — a *Pagan Review*. Sharp would write the entire content of the first issue under various pseudonyms. He began working on the content when he and Elizabeth were staying in the Cairds' house in Northbrook, Micheldever in early June. His diary entry for June 2 begins: "In the early forenoon, after some pleasant dawdling, began to write the Italian story, 'The Rape of the Sabines,' which I shall print in the first instance in my projected White Review as by James Marazion." The color white had figured prominently in the poems of *Sospiri di Roma*, white marble statues, white flowers, white statues, and white human bodies, but as the content of the review evolved "pagan" supplemented "white" in the magazine's title. In an April 23 letter from Paris Sharp addressed the Janviers as "fellow Pagans." He was drawn to the "feverish Bohemianism of literary and artistic Paris," and it may have been in Paris that he settled on the term "Paganism" to define his encounter with the remnants of the Roman past in Italy and his desire to join the decadents in breaching the restraints of high Victorianism.

Dennis Denisoff and Loraine Kooistra in *Yellow Nineties Online* describe the "Foreword" to the *Pagan Review* as having "the urgency of

a manifesto [...] declaring on behalf of the 'younger generation' that the magazine's contributors challenged both the religion and the ideals of their forefathers."

The editor's apparent preference for authors with French names, the foreword's discussion of art for art's sake, and the publication's references to Charles Baudelaire, Theophile Gautier, Oscar Wilde [...] signal Sharp's wish to have his readers associate the magazine with aestheticism. By 1892, the Aesthetic Movement had already had a lengthy run of popularity and was shifting into its final, decadent phase [...] To this phase of the Aesthetic Movement, the *Pagan Review* offers a notable contribution.

"Its emphasis," they continue, is "on the dissident, mythic, and obscure. Its tendency toward overwrought descriptions and archaic dialogue are reminiscent of decadent authors and artists, [...] and its mystical depictions of alternative gods and spiritualities aligns it with paganism in a more earnest and disconcerting way than many other British contributions to the decadent movement."

Having announced in the preface to *Romantic Ballads* in 1888 the advent of a new Romanticism, Sharp added to that initiative in 1891 the sensuality and escape from rhyme in *Sospiri di Roma*. By the summer of 1892, he had settled on "New Paganism" as the name of the movement he was trying to launch and for which the *Pagan Review* served as a manifesto. Its "first number," dated August 15, 1892, contained:

A lengthy unsigned "Foreward."
 Two poems: "The Coming of Love" by W. S. Fanshaw
 "An Untold Story" by Lionel Wingrave
 Three stories: "The Pagans: A Memory" by Willand Dreeme
 "The Rape of the Sabines" by James Marazion
 "The Oread: A Fragment," by Charles Verlaine
 A Fragment of a Lyrical Drama: "Dionysos in India" by Wm. Windover
 A "dramatic interlude": "The Black Madonna" by W. S. Fanshaw
 A review by "S" of Stuart Merrill's *Pastels in Prose* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1890).

All that was followed by a series of comments by the editor (signed W. H. B.) on recently published works of literature by well-known writers, many Sharp's friends, including Swinburne, Hardy, Meredith, Hall Caine, and Stuart Merrill. And finally, an advertisement that the next

issue of the *Review* would include an article titled “The New Paganism” by H. P. Siwärmill, the anagram of William Sharp, he invented the previous fall in Germany for the author of the “Dramatic Interludes.” In the *Pagan Review* one such interlude, “The Black Madonna,” is attributed to W. S. Fanshawe. When the dramatic interludes were published in 1894 as *Vistas*, their author was William Sharp. The back cover of the *Pagan Review* contained an advertisement which combined the two titles: *Vistas: Dramatic Interludes* by W. S. Fanshawe which would soon be printed privately. Each of these items merits discussion for what they reveal about Sharp’s state of mind, what he hoped to accomplish as a writer, and his method of composition. Two stand out because they are directly traceable to his April/May experience in Paris.

First, the review of Stuart Merrill’s *Pastels in Prose* which contains Merrill’s translations of “prose poems” by contemporary French writers. The review associates the *Pagan Review* with the symbolist poets and the decadence infusing literature in Paris and London. It also reflects Sharp’s genuine interest in alternatives to rhymed and cadenced poetry. The prose poem differs, he wrote in the review, from a “quoted specimen of poetic prose.” It must be brief and complete in itself, the equivalent of a pastel in the art of painting. The pastel artist must be “what is somewhat too vaguely called an impressionist” whose aim is “suggestion, not imitation.” The prose poem is “a consciously-conceived and definitely-executed poetic form.” Sharp concluded the review by quoting from William Dean Howells’s description of the form in his introduction to Merrill’s book: “The very life of the form is its aerial delicacy: its soul is that perfume of thought, of emotion, which these masters here have never suffered to become an argument. They must be appreciated with sympathy by whoever would get all their lovely grace, their charm that comes and goes like the light in beautiful eyes.” Sharp experimented with this form in the writings of Fiona Macleod.

Second, “The Pagans: A Memory” by Willand Dreeme, which is identified as “Book One” and, at the end, “To be Continued.” As with the poems of *Sospiri di Roma*, the story recounts Sharp’s personal experience overlaid by dreams and imaginings. Unlike the *sospiri*, a pseudonym removes the possibility of identifying the true source of the experiences. The appendage to the title (“A Memory”) and the name of the author (Willand Dreeme) invite the reader to wonder if the content is Willand’s

memory or his dream. It is impossible to divorce the real author of the story, William Sharp, from its supposed author, Willand Dreeme, and equally impossible to separate its real author and supposed author from the story's narrator and main character, Wilfred Traquair, who is called Will. As might be expected, Sharp's relatives and close friends called him Will. The title signals the story as the most pagan of the contributions to the *Pagan Review*, and the three quotations of its preface — from George Eeckhoud's *Kermesses*, from "The Song of Solomon," and from Oscar Wilde — associate it with the Belgium/French/English decadence.

Sharp wrote the story on June 3 and 4, less than a month after returning from France. The story's narrator, Wilfred Traquair, recalls walking with Clair, his beloved, in a warm Italian landscape among the trees 'under the deep blue wind-swept sky' where they "first realized each had won from the other a lifetime of joy." His recollection is Sharp's recollection of his walks with Edith Rinder on the Roman Campagna fifteen months earlier.

The snow lay deep by the hedges, and we had to slip through many a drift before we reached the lonely woodland height whither we were bound. But was there ever snow so livingly white, so lit with golden glow? Was ever summer sky more gloriously blue? Was ever spring music sweeter than that exquisite midwinter hush, than that deep suspension of breath before the flood of our joy?

Eventually Clair returned to Paris and the narrator, Will Traquair, to the London he "hated so much, there to write things about which I cared not a straw, while my heart was full of you, and my eyes saw you everywhere, and my ears were haunted day and night by echoes of your voice." When he accumulated enough money to be independent of London, he went to Paris to meet Clair. Shifting effortlessly between directly addressing his beloved and third-person narration, he recalls his joy in finding "we loved each other more than ever":

Those hours at twilight, in the Luxembourg Gardens, when the thrush would sing as, we were sure, never nightingale sang in forest-glade, or Wood of Broceliande: those hours in the galleries, above all before our beloved Venus in the Louvre; ah, beautiful hours, gone forever, and yet immortal, because of the joy that they knew and whereby they live and are even now fresh and young and sweet with their exquisite romance.

They were even happier when they left Paris behind and went away together, “as light-hearted as the April birds, as free as the wind itself.”

Letters Sharp wrote from Paris in April to E. C. Stedman, Thomas Janvier, and J. Stanley Little, implied the woman he loved was with him in Paris for the last two weeks of April after which he intended to “reform.” Though details differ, this story about the two Pagans parallels the experiences of Sharp and Edith: their meeting in Rome in December 1890, their parting when she returned to London in early January, and Sharp’s recent escape from London to Paris where the April birds were singing. Sharp may have been recounting only what he imagined it would have been like to have Edith with him in Paris, but the innuendos are so telling, the parallels so obvious, and the writing so impassioned it is hard to avoid concluding she was there. As in the *Sospiri* poems after Edith left Rome, so in this story, Sharp’s intense feelings begged for release. The adolescent tinge to the writing suggests Sharp was recounting his first experience of falling passionately in love. William and Elizabeth were first cousins who became engaged as teenagers. Their relationship, while close, was from the start a meeting of minds and a matter of convenience. It developed over time into a deep friendship in which Elizabeth functioned as a protector, nurse, and enabler overseeing the well-being of her “poet.” It was only after Sharp’s experience with Edith in Rome that impassioned love affairs became a prominent theme of his writings.

The body of “The Pagans: A Memory” contains a long and detailed description of the beautiful Clair. She is a painter living with her brother, also a painter, who is hyper-concerned about his reputation and status. Clair’s skin was “pale as ivory, but “touched with a delicious brown, the kiss of sunshine and fresh air.” It was “in keeping with the rich dark of her hair and sweeping eyebrows and long lashes.” The description mirrors a portrait of Edith Rinder known as the “Lady Green Sleeves,” reflecting the green velvet dress she wore for the sitting and referencing both the sixteenth century English folk song “A Newe Northen Dittye of ye Ladye Greene Sleves” and Daniel Gabriel Rossetti’s painting of that mythical woman of great beauty.

Clair’s brother disapproves of her relationship with Wilfred and threatens to take away her inheritance, as is his right, if she persists, but persist she does. She leaves her brother and goes off with Will, flouting



Fig. 22 Photograph of Edith Wingate Rinder known as "My Lady Greensleeves" reflecting the green velvet dress she wore for the sitting (c. 1894). The pose mirrors many of the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, especially those of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Fig the Rinder family.

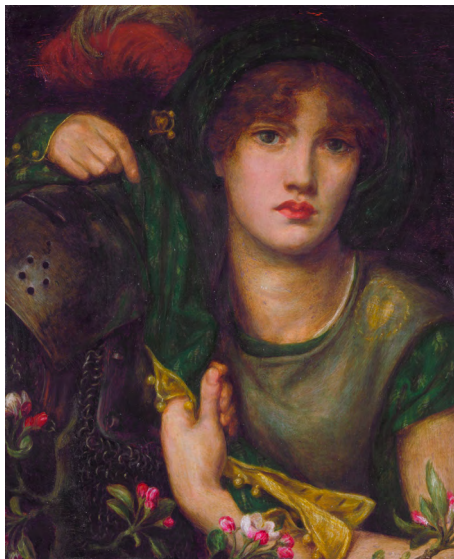


Fig. 23 Daniel Gabriel Rossetti, *My Lady Greensleeves* (1872). Oil on panel, 33 x 27.3 cm. Harvard Art Museums, Fogg Museum. Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dante_Gabriel_Rossetti_-_My_Lady_Greensleeves_-_1943.203_-_Fogg_Museum.jpg, Public Domain.

her brother's standards of acceptable behavior and his beliefs about the subservience of women to men. As they leave, the brother gives Wilfred a letter addressed to a "Vagrant, of God-knows where" which reads:

That my sister has chosen to unite herself with a **beggarly Scot** [emphasis added] is her pitiable misfortune: that she has done so without the decent veil of marriage is her enormity and my disgrace. [...] neither you nor the young woman need ever expect the slightest tolerance, much less practical countenance from me. You are both at liberty to hold, and carry out, the atrocious opinions (for I will not flatter you by calling them convictions) upon marriage which you entertain or profess to entertain. I, equally, am at liberty to abstain from contagion of such unpleasant company, and to insist henceforth upon an unsurmountable barrier between it and myself.

It is pleasantly ironic that Sharp's extensive and bitter expression of the conservative of marriage he opposed is directed against a "beggarly Scot" named Will. The story ends: "Outcasts we were, but two more joyous pagans never laughed in the sunlight, two happier waifs never more fearlessly and blithely went forth into the green world." Though the story was "To be continued" it was not, but it would be told over and over again with different characters in the stories Sharp would tell as Fiona Macleod. The beginning sentences of "The Pagans" speaks of Clair Auriol in the past tense. The wonderful relationship has ended with no reason given. A true romantic, Sharp focused on the beginnings of passionate relationships not their inevitably sad endings. This story is the first of many renditions of the impossibility of permanence in his relationship with Edith since neither could sever their marital ties, she to Frank Rinder and he to Elizabeth Sharp.

Sharp sent copies of his *Pagan Review* to friends and editors of periodicals where it might warrant notice. He sought subscribers at twelve shillings a year, and he welcomed contributions of short stories and poems that conformed to the purposes described in the first number's Foreword. On August 13 Sharp wrote to E. C. Stedman from Selsey Bill on the Sussex Coast, where he and Elizabeth had gone to escape the "extreme heat" of Bucks Green. He was sending a copy of the *Pagan Review*, and he confessed he was responsible for all its contents. It was to be the voice of "Neo-Paganism," a "new movement in letters [...] unlike any that has taken place in England before, in the Victorian Age

at any rate: though indeed it is a movement that is at hand rather than really forward." Sharp was initiating yet another "movement."

Stedman subscribed, but must have expressed reservations since Sharp's letter to him on September 28 contained the following passage:

I thank you for your lovely & friendly letter. I feel there is a good leaven of truth, to say the least, in what you say about the "Pagan Review." But set your mind at rest: the poor thing is dead. There is a possible resurrection for it next year as a quarterly, but this is still in nubibus. It has, however, so far accomplished its aim of stimulus among the younger people, and that is good. I return herewith your subscription, with sincerest thanks. Have mislaid it. No time to hunt for it now. Hope to send it by next post. By the way, keep your P/R. It is already being sought by collectors. I can send you another if you wish.

Elizabeth said the *Pagan Review* was born of Sharp's "mental attitude at that moment, ... a sheer reveling in the beauty of objective life and nature, while he rode the crest of the wave of health and exuberant spirits that had come to him in Italy after his prolonged illness and convalescence" (*Memoir*, 204–207). He soon realized he could not continue the *Review* as it would be hard to repeat the tour de force, and he had other projects in mind. Elizabeth agreed the one number had served its purpose "for by means of it he had exhausted a transition phase that had passed to give way to the expression of his more permanent self." In other words, the *Review* was a step toward the writings of Fiona Macleod.

Sharp returned all the subscriptions and submissions with the following memorial card:

On the 15th of September, still-born *The Pagan Review*.

Regretted by none, save the affectionate parents and a few forlorn friends, *The Pagan Review* has returned to the void whence it came. The progenitors, more hopeful than reasonable, look for an unglorious but robust resurrection at some more fortunate date. "For of such is the Kingdom of Paganism."

In a "solemn ceremony," with Sharp's sister Mary and Stanley Little as "mourners," they buried the *Review* in a corner of the garden at Phenice Croft and marked the spot with a framed inscription.

Robert Murray Gilchrist, a writer Sharp corresponded with when he edited the "Literary Chair" of *Young Folk's Papers*, submitted a story

for the *Pagan Review* called “The Noble Courtesan,” which Sharp read with interest. Writing first as W. H. Brooks in early October, Sharp said he thought it would be much improved “by less — or more hidden — emphasis on the mysterious aspect of the woman’s nature. She is too much the ‘principle of Evil,’ the ‘modern Lilith.’” Then on October 22, he wrote again, this time as William Sharp, to thank Gilchrist for his “friendly and cordial article” about the *Pagan Review* in *The Library*. When the *Review* is revived next year as a quarterly, Sharp wrote, he would look to Gilchrist “as one of the younger men of notable talent to give a helping hand.” Born in Sheffield in 1867, Gilchrist was apprenticed to a manufacturer of cutlery after attending grammar school. In 1888 he decided to become a writer, left the apprenticeship, and moved to Highcliffe Farm, near the village of Eyam several miles southwest of Sheffield in Derbyshire. He was soon joined there by George Alfred Garfitt, who was also born and educated in Sheffield. Five years older than Gilchrist, Garfitt may have been a fellow apprentice. In any case, he became a manufacturer of cutlery, an amateur historian, and Gilchrist’s life-long partner. Sharp concluded his letter to Gilchrist by asking him to visit Phenice Croft when he next came south. “I can offer you a lovely country fare, a bed, and a cordial welcome.” As it happened, Gilchrist and Garfitt did not visit Phenice Croft until 1894, but Sharp visited them in Eyam in September 1893. At this first meeting, the three men formed a close friendship that lasted many years and impacted the course of Sharp’s publications.

It is a matter of some interest that when John Lauritsen established his Pagan Press in 1982 to publish “books of interest to the intelligent gay man” the first book he published was Edward Carpenter’s *Iolaus, An Anthology of Friendship* which had been out of print for many years. In 1891, when Carpenter was teaching in Sheffield, he met and formed a relationship with George Merrill, a working-class man twenty-two years his junior. In 1898 they began living together in rural Millthorpe, Derbyshire only a few miles from Holmesfield, Derbyshire where Gilchrist and Garfitt had moved into the family’s large manor house they shared with Gilchrist’s mother and sisters. The two couples became close friends. Both chose, quite sensibly, to live quiet lives miles away from the uproar caused by the Oscar Wilde trial in London. Paganism, a fascination with pre-Christian Roman and Greek civilizations, has

a long history preceding and following Sharp's "New Paganism." By necessity if not by choice, Sharp's paganism was heterosexual, but he had many homosexual friends, and he was comfortable with love and desire no matter its form. He would be amused by the coincidental linkage a century later of his "New Paganism" with the first product of Lauritsen's Pagan Press by a writer, Edward Carpenter, who, with his same-sex partner, was a near neighbor and close friend of Sharp's close friend, Robert Murray Gilchrist, and his same-sex partner, in remote Derbyshire.

In Sharp's August 13 letter to Stedman, he objected to Stedman classifying him as "an Australian poet" in the latest edition of his study of Victorian poets and asked him to remedy that error in the volume's next edition. After describing the *Pagan Review* and asking Stedman what he thought of it, Sharp continued:

By the time you get this — no, a week later — I shall be in Scotland, I hope. My wife cannot go north this year. If all goes well — this ought to be one of the happiest experiences of a happy life. I cannot be more explicit: but perhaps you will understand. But even to be in the Western Highlands alone is a joy. Then I am going to reform and work hard all winter. I rather doubt if we'll get away to Greece after all: funds are villainously low for such exploits.

He implies he and Edith Rinder would be together in the Western Highlands where the Rinders usually rented a house for the month of September. The implication is strengthened by a passage in a letter to Bliss Carman, also in August: "Think of me early in September (from August 30th) in the loveliest of the West Highlands — & in one of the happiest experiences of my life. I can't be more explicit — but you will understand! Thereafter I am going to reform — definitely."

When Alfred, Lord Tennyson died in early October, some began to question the need to appoint a successor Poet Laureate. Sharp considered joining those who opposed the appointment of another laureate, but on October 9 he told Stanley Little he had decided not to take any initiative in the "abolishment scheme." After attending Tennyson's funeral in Westminster Abbey on the twelfth, Sharp sent a letter to the poet Alfred Austin saying he was pleased to have seen him at the funeral. After describing his removal to "a small house in a remote part of Sussex" where the rent was cheaper than in London, he

turned to the Laureateship. “If you, as many think, are to be the heritor, the laurel will go to one who will sustain the high honor with dignity and beauty.” Austin did inherit the title, and he may have recalled this letter in 1902 when Sharp was desperately in need of money. A Civil List Pension was out of the question because Sharp refused to reveal to members of Parliament his authorship of Fiona Macleod’s popular writings. His friend Alexander Nelson Hood, who was the Duke of Bronte, and Alfred Austin, the Poet Laureate, were the principals in the effort to obtain the pension. They were supported by George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and Theodore Watts-Dunton. Finally, Sharp agreed to Austin and Hood telling Arthur Balfour, the recently elected Prime Minister, in strict confidence Sharp was the author of the writings of Fiona Macleod, whereupon Balfour found the money for a grant that provided needed relief.

Concluding his August 13 letter to Stedman, Sharp doubted he and Elizabeth would be able to go to Greece during the winter as funds were “villainously low for such exploits.” He hoped to continue with his creative work in the fall, but Elizabeth’s health intervened. She had not fully recovered from the malaria she contracted in Italy in the spring of 1891. In her words (*Memoir*, 208), “The prolonged rains in the hot autumn, the dampness of the clay soil on which lay the hamlet of Bucks Green, made me very ill again with intermittent low fever.” It was imperative, her doctor said, for her to spend at least part of the winter in a dry climate. Since they lacked the funds for traveling south, Sharp put aside his “dream work” and wrote between October and December two boys’ adventure stories. “The Red Rider: A Romance of the Garibaldian Campaign in the Two Sicilies,” appeared serially in the *Weekly Budget* in late 1892, and “The Last of the Vikings: Being the Adventures in the East and West of Sigurd, the Boy King of Norway” was accepted by *Old and Young* and published in 1893. Both appeared subsequently in book form from James Henderson and Sons, Ltd. These efforts and others by both Sharps enabled them to go south for the first two months of 1893. In early December Sharp told Stanley Little they were planning to go to Florence via Switzerland and the Gothard Pass and then on to Sicily and North Africa. He urged Little to accompany them as far as Florence or Rome. Little needed a break from work, and he would find wonderful paintings to view and assess. By mid-December, they had

decided to go to the Mediterranean by ship "as it is at once considerably less expensive, & more restorative for E."

In a letter to Arthur Stedman at the end of November, Sharp said he had just "finished reviewing for the *Academy* the book of the season in literary circles here — the late Wm. Bell Scott's *Autobiography*." A Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter, Scott left a large body of reminiscences when he died in 1890, and the Scottish critic and novelist William Minto set about editing them. His *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott and Notices of his Artistic and Poetic Circle of Friends 1830 to 1882, Illustrated by Etchings by Himself and Reproductions of Sketches by Himself and Friends* was published in 1892 in two substantial volumes by James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. in London and by Harper Brothers in New York. Though "full of misstatements and ill-intentioned half-statements," Sharp wrote to Stedman, it was a fascinating book because of its letters and anecdotes. Algernon Charles Swinburne, he continued, had a different opinion. When dining at his house in Putney a few days ago, Sharp found Swinburne "excited over 'The Monster' [Scott] to whom he has paid so many affectionate tributes in verse!" He was going to "slate the book unmercifully (and very foolishly) in the December *Fortnightly*." Titled "The New Terror," Swinburne's review appeared in the December issue of *The Fortnightly Review*, and Sharp's in the December issue of *The Academy*.

In mid-November, Sharp's opinion of the *Autobiographical Notes* was less balanced. Theodore Watts [not yet Dunton] asked Sharp to review the book. Perhaps influenced by Swinburne's anger, Sharp had nothing good to say about the book in a November 14 letter to Watts. He recoiled at Scott's treatment of Watts: he "persistently pooh-poohed your good & gracious service to" Rossetti and portrayed himself as Rossetti's only true "nurse & friend". He continued:

As to the lies current that you, and others including myself, assisted rather than deplored D. G. R.'s chloral habit, & made out that he was much worse than he was, will gain some colour by the implication in the second allusion to yourself. I think you know how I love and reverence Gabriel Rossetti's memory. I am not blind, of course, & I know his faults & weaknesses — but he was a great genius, & as man he won my love, & shall have it till I die. I have glanced thro' the D. G. R. passages since I wrote to you last, & with deepest pain.

Next, Sharp complained about Scott's "insultingly cruel epithet to Ruskin" and expressed his amazement that Minto, the editor, had "let pass uncorrected (if he could not suppress, as he ought to have done) so much that ought not to have seen the light." He was outraged by

the remarks about Swinburne — one of the greatest poets of our century. The more one knows & rereads his work, & critically & comparatively, the more one admires it & his high attitude throughout. He was my idol in old days, & now again I realise how great a poet he is. And just as the public mind is slowly veering towards that high acceptance of him which is his due — out comes this foolish & spiteful nonsense, which will spread abroad to his detriment! Well, W. B. S. can't hurt A. C. Swinburne, nor a thousand W. B. S.'s.

Sharp said he would send his review for Watts and Swinburne to read and suggest revisions.

Several days later, in a November 18 letter to Watts, Sharp said he was having trouble writing the review and had decided to start over from scratch.

Now that I have finished the book & gone carefully into it, I not only more than ever regret Swinburne's article but think we have all underestimated the good in the book. There is a great deal of interesting matter, particularly in the letters introduced: and I do not see how the book is to be killed, or that it should be killed. [...] Once pruned of its misstatements and otherwise carefully revised, it would be extremely entertaining and to future students of the period profoundly interesting & even valuable. One must be fair all round. It is a damnably difficult thing to do in this instance: but I'll have one more shot anyway!

Since a deadline for the December *Academy* was approaching, Sharp said he would stay up all night writing if necessary. The next morning he sent Watts a portion of the article with a note: "It has been an infernally difficult review to write. I began, after a third trial, in this more moderate & advisable fashion." He asked Watts to "rectify" him if necessary and added "Please do not cut out or alter in any way my MS, but jot any suggestions in pencil on a separate slip."

He finished the article in time for it to appear in the December 3 *Academy* and wrote again to Watts on December 7 to thank him for his

generous appreciation, though I'm bound to say I don't see anything particular in the review, except tact — for it was infernally difficult to be

just to what is good in the book and yet to blow the counterblast. From what I hear, it has been a good deal noted in the very quarters I wanted it to be — namely among those who bear neither you nor me any good will: and it is admitted that my frank outspokenness knocks the ground from under "Scott's" feet as regards D. G. R., your relations to him and so forth.

He knew there will be one or two American critics "who will hold up W. B. S. as a trustworthy authority to show how poor a fellow D. G. R. was, how deserted by his worthiest friends, and how you were only "a minor newcomer," & so forth." He planned to go out of his way to have his review reproduced in one or two influential American journals to set the record straight. Despite the difficulty of writing the review, he thought he had reached the right balance, and the review appears to have been well-received.

On November 18 Sharp wrote to Kineton Parkes to propose for the December issue of the *Library Review* a review of a "remarkable book" by E. C. Stedman — *The Nature and Elements of Poetry* — which was a revised reprint of his "much-noted essays on Imagination, Truth, Beauty, Melancholia, etc. which have been appearing in *The Century*." The next day he wrote again to Parkes to say he was too busy to write an adequate review as he wanted to do more than a mere notice. He could, though, send Parkes an article on Scott's "'Reminiscences' with its wealth of addenda concerning the poet-painters and painter-poets of the Pre-Raphaelites." On November 28 he wrote to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine* in Edinburgh to say he would be able to submit an article about William Bell Scott's relations with other painters and poets in the Rossetti circle by the end of the week. Writing again on December 5, he said he was too busy with commissioned articles and other literary work to finish the Scott article for the January number. The promises and retractions indicate the extent to which he was overextending himself trying to acquire funds for the impending trip.

He did, however, accomplish a good deal of writing in the first half of 1892, and there were a sizeable number of publications. His *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn* appeared in February, and *A Fellowe and His Wife* appeared in the spring in England, America, and Germany. He published articles on Philip Marston and Maeterlinck in *The Academy* and on Thomas Hardy in *The Forum*. *Flower o' the Vine* containing poems

from his *Romantic Ballads* and *Sospiri di Roma* was published in the United States. “Second Shadow: Being the narrative of Jose Maria Santos y Bazan, Spanish Physician in Rome” was published in the *Independent* in New York, and an article titled, “Severn’s Roman Journals” appeared in Boston’s *Atlantic Monthly*. He completed and submitted *Vistas*, the Maeterlinckean short dramas or interludes he started writing in Germany in the fall of 1891, to Elkin Mathews in England and Charles Webster in America. They decided not to publish it, but the volume would find a publisher in 1894. In mid-1892 the Sharps had settled into Phenice Croft where they hoped to experience a Phoenix-like rebirth, but the need to generate money forced a delay in their plans for creative work.

