LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MRS. GASKELL BY CELEBRATED CONTEMPORARIES.

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IT is well known to students of Mrs. Gaskell’s work that the bitter and distressing controversies that followed upon the appearance of her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* very naturally made her wish to avoid the possibility of consequences so unpleasant in her own case. She desired that no assistance should be given to anyone wishing to write a biography. Faithful to their mother’s wishes, her daughters throughout their long lives withheld such material as they possessed, only occasionally allowing glimpses of it to respected visitors, friends, and correspondents. But it is not easy to circumvent the curiosity of the literary world, even less the diligence of modern bookmaking. In several books and a host of magazine articles Mrs. Gaskell’s life, her home, her friendships, her holidays, have for some time lain open to the world; and indeed it was a life so dignified and simple, so lacking in elements of the strange and challenging, that it could not at any time have been likely that even the fullest account of it could have had repercussions such as those that filled the air after her story of the Haworth

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sisters. Meanwhile the biographers have done their best, draw-
ing upon scattered sources, succeeding no doubt in stating all
that the world really needs to know, but leaving not only gaps
and disconnections for their successors to remedy, but also
the question whether there might be something more to say.
If the fullest access to material had been granted to some trusted
and capable biographer at an early date, no doubt a fully adequate
Life would have been produced long ago. While the best of
Mrs. Gaskell's work is an imperishable part of our literature,
her life is not a subject of inexhaustible interest; it is a pity
that it has had to be written piecemeal.

Recently a collection of letters addressed to Mrs. Gaskell
by a considerable number of Victorian celebrities, together with
the collection of autographs she so diligently solicited from
friends, have been deposited in the John Rylands Library by
the executors of her last surviving daughter.\(^1\) It seems likely
that at least the late Sir A. W. Ward was allowed to see this
collection, since he quotes from several of the letters in the in-
troductions to his Knutsford edition of the novels. At least
three of them have been published in memoirs of their writers.
There remain a considerable number which as far as I have
been able to discover have never been published. None of them
is of any great importance in any connection; some are totally
uninteresting business or social communications, invitations to
dine and regrets at not being able to do so, and so on. The rest
are interesting in various degrees as representative of their
writers; and one makes it possible to identify (though not with
complete certainty) a hitherto unrecognised magazine article
written by Mrs. Gaskell in 1847. The collection as a whole,
while on the one hand it displays the great variety of Mrs.
Gaskell's friends and well-wishers, and the general respect in

\(^1\) I wish to thank the Librarian and the Keeper of Manuscripts for their
courtesy and valuable assistance. The Gaskell MSS. are in four divisions:
Letters to E. C. and W. Gaskell, 2 vols.; Miscellaneous Letters, 3 vols.;
letters from W. S. Landor; letters from Dickens. This article uses the first and the
third, draws a few letters from the second, and does not touch the fourth. The
Miscellaneous Letters have several interesting items (letters by Lamb and Coleridge
among others) but most of them are of little interest. A considerable group
were addressed to Edward Coleridge at Eton.
which she was held by her contemporaries, obliges one to re-
cognise on the other that a temperament and outlook such as
hers, however gracious and noble, does not stimulate its corre-
spondents to the most spontaneous self-expression.

I. Mary Barton: William and Mary Howitt, Samuel
Bamford, Maria Edgeworth, Carlyle, Mrs. Carlyle.

The letters do not fall into any obvious groups, and are pre-
sented here in a somewhat arbitrary arrangement. We may begin
with some which are directly concerned with Mary Barton,
Mrs. Gaskell’s first novel (1848). That famous tale of Man-
chester life, undertaken to distract her mind after the loss of
her son, was guided into the world of print by William and
Mary Howitt. Mrs. Gaskell had known these two industrious
writers since 1838, had contributed to one of their books, and
had become personally acquainted with them in the course of
a Rhine tour in 1841. In January, 1847, they set up Howitt’s
Journal, carrying it on through three volumes until 1849; and
there three little tales with which we shall be concerned later
appeared in 1847 and 1848. According to Mary Howitt the
first volume of Mary Barton was sent in manuscript to her husband
who urged Mrs. Gaskell to proceed with it. When finished it
went the rounds of many publishers until at last it came into
the hands of Chapman & Hall. John Forster read it for that
firm and recommended it for acceptance; whereupon Howitt
seems to have undertaken the business arrangements for the
author. He writes to her from 107 Strand, London, on
17 November, 1847:

It gives us great satisfaction that you are so much pleased with the
arrangement regarding your work. I shall take great care that Messrs
Chapman and Hall do not imagine that you would have been satisfied with
less. Of course, I took the proposal quite coolly and as a matter of business.

What is to be done in drawing the agreement? It should be done in
your own name, and in that case it must be confided to them in strict

1 For Mrs. G.’s relations with them, see Mary Howitt’s Autobiog., 1889, ii,
28; Margaret Howitt in Good Words, 1895, p. 604 ff.; Mary Barton, p. xxi.
2 Mrs. G. afterwards met Forster at one of Rogers’s breakfast parties. He
offered to send her an examination of all the book’s weaknesses, if she could bear
it. (M. S. Shaen, Memorials of Two Sisters, 1908, p. 39.)
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confidence. If you have any objection to that we must see whether they will be satisfied to have it made in the name of Cotton Mather Mills.

But it seems to me that as you will write (I trust many) other works, it would be as well for them to be known as the works of a lady. I think they would be more popular; and in that case the question still arises what will you do? Pray let me know.

The letter goes on then to thank Mr. Gaskell for his zealous championship of the Howitts even at “the darkest hour,” and relates at some length the story of their recent disasters. They were caused by the sharp practice of a certain Saunders, manager of The People’s Journal, which came to grief in 1847 and in which Howitt was part-owner. He seems to have stolen their money and calumniated them in The Anti-Slavery Standard. Howitt’s Journal contains indignant complaints and letters from correspondents about this affair in the numbers for November, 1847, and January, 1848, but poor Howitt’s misfortunes, bitter and scandalous as they then were, are not interesting enough to detain us now.

At the end of the letter comes, as an after-remark, “The impressions made by Emerson’s lectures would be very acceptable. We have nothing seen nothing of the kind yet.” Now this does not say expressly that Mrs. Gaskell had offered to write any such impressions herself, but one may naturally make the inference. Emerson arrived in Manchester, 20 October, 1847, and resided there some months, delivering his lectures on Representative Men and professing himself well pleased with his reception. In Howitt’s Journal for 11 December, 1847, there is a drawing of him, followed by an article of nearly three columns called “Emerson’s Lectures. From our Manchester correspondent.” It seems very likely that this ought to be added henceforward to the Gaskell bibliographies. However the two Miss Winkworths were at this time becoming intimate with the Gaskells, and studying English literature under Mr. Gaskell’s tuition. They both attended Emerson’s lectures, and one of

1 In the collection of Miscellaneous Letters there is an undated note from Emerson, written at Higher Broughton, apparently to a member of the Shuttleworth family. These lectures were at the Athenæum, but he gave a series of simpler lectures at the Mechanics’ Institution at the same time, according to the article in Howitt’s Journal.

2 M. of 2 S., p. 23.
them might have written the impressions about which Mrs. Gaskell wrote to Howitt. But I think this on the whole unlikely.

There is also a letter dated 20 October, 1849, from Mary Howitt, mutilated at the end by some autograph collector. This too may lead us to a lost piece of Mrs. Gaskell’s early work. It passes on a request for an article from the editor of Sartain’s Union Magazine.\(^1\) It is wanted for the January number (1850). Meanwhile the editor has sent Mary Howitt payment for an earlier article of Mrs. Gaskell’s, £4 for four pages of print. I have not identified this article, but it should not be difficult to do so.

The success of Mary Barton brought its author at once into contact with many outstanding figures of the day, and not only in the field of literature. There is no need here to recall the names of all those who joined in the chorus of appreciation. Few of them in any case could have been so well qualified to estimate the truth of Mrs. Gaskell’s picture of Manchester working-class life as that local celebrity Samuel Bamford, author of Passages from the Life of a Radical, “a man who illustrates his order and shows what nobility may be in a cottage.” His God help the Poor, is quoted in the book, with the foregoing description as a footnote.\(^2\) Sir A. W. Ward has already referred to this letter,\(^3\) but it may be worth while to print it here in full:—

To the Authoress of “Mary Barton.”

Blakeley. Mar. 9th, 1849.

Dear Madam,

I finished reading Mary Barton last night, my feelings having become so interested in the narrative that I could not lay the book down until I had read to the end.

You have drawn a fearfully true picture: a mournfully beautiful one also have you placed on the tables of the drawing rooms of the great, and

\(^1\) See F. L. Mott’s Hist. of Amer. Magazines pp., 769-72.

\(^2\) Chap. ix., p. 125. (Knutsford Edition, from which all page-references to the novels in this article are taken.)

\(^3\) Mary Barton, p. lxx. Parts of it have been quoted also by other writers, as is the case with certain other letters relating to Mary Barton and here given in full. Ward probably quoted from the autograph letters; later writers, when not drawing upon Ward, may possibly have used some printed article on Mary Barton. I have tried to discover their source, without success; none of them supply a reference. See pp. 3, 108, 118, 162, 165.
good it must there effect; good for themselves, and good also I hope for the poor of every occupation.

You are a genius, of no ordinary rank; I care not what the critics say, nor will I flatter you, if I know it, but truth, such as it appears to me will I dare to express, with whomsoever I may differ about it. It seems to me that you have begun a great work and I do hope you will not be discouraged from going on with it. You have opened and adventured into a noble apartment of a fine old dwelling house and on one of the English oaken pannels [sic] you have worked a picture from which the eyes cannot be averted nor the hearts best feelings withdrawn. A sorrowfully beautiful production it is, few being able to contemplate it with tearless eyes—I could not, I know.

Go on dear Madam, and fill all the other panels with the production of your strong but correct imagination, and the effusions of your right noble womanly heart, much remains yet to be done, and may God give you life and courage to finish what you have begun. Sorrow, it seems, has revealed to yourself and the world, the secret of your powerful mind, and the force and truth of your benign feeling. A noble gift have you discovered; a blessed, humanizing thing is sorrow. Let us be thankful for our afflictions, for, ‘whomsoever He chasteneth, those he loveth.’

Some errors may certainly be detected in the details of your work, but the wonder is that they are so few in number and so trifling in effect. The dialect I think might have been given better, and some few incidents set forth with greater effect, but in describing the dwellings of the poor, their manners, their kindliness to each other, their feelings towards their superiors in wealth and station their faults, their literary tastes, and their scientific pursuits, as old Job Legh for example, you have been very faithful; of John Bartons, I have known hundreds, his very self in all things except his fatal crime, whilst of his daughter Mary, who has ever seen a group of our Lancashire factory girls or dress makers either, and could not have counted Mary? Nor is Jem Wilson, and I [am] proud to say it, a solitary character in the young fellows of our working population, noble as he is, but my heart fills as I write, and I cannot go on.

Dear Madam, Give us some more of your true and touching pictures, and meantime believe me to be your obliged, Humble, and most respectful Servant.

Saml. Bamford.

Bamford’s praise must have been highly gratifying to a writer whose aims were so humanitarian as Mrs. Gaskell’s. Hardly less gratifying to her as a literary artist must have been the long letter about her book written by a revered and long established writer, Maria Edgeworth, less than half a year before her death. The letter was addressed to Mrs. Gaskell's cousin, Miss Mary
Holland, and was no doubt soon handed over by her to the person most interested in it.¹

Edgeworthstown.
Dec. 27th, 1848.

My dear Miss Holland—

You delighted your father by reading to him Mary Barton and I have been delighted by hearing it read by my sister Harriet Butler—I am persuaded that you both of you and the author into the bargain would have been happy to have been of the party—

In the first place as I have said Author I must tell you that I mean author to stand for male or female just as the case may be—But I opine that it is a she—From the great abilities—and from the power of drawing from the life and to the life so as to give the impression and strong interest of reality I should have attributed the book to Miss Martineau—especially as the tale shews such intimate knowledge of manufacturing miseries and of all those small details which can be obtained only from personal observation and which can be selected so as to produce great effect, only by the union of quiet feeling with cool discriminating judgement.

But in the Preface the writer says that she is 'no political economist'—I do not think Miss Martineau would be guilty of such a gratuitous and useless falsehood. There fell my supposition that Miss Martineau did write this story. But she need not be effronted but would I think be gratified by having it attributed to her—

The description of the coming on of deafness and of the evils or sense of privation felt by the deaf struck me particularly as being worthy of Miss Martineau's personal narrative—the coming on of blindness too is most beautifully described I—

In truth there is no bodily or mental evil to which flesh is heir which this author cannot describe most feelingly—The evils consequent upon over manufacturing or over population or both conjoined and acting as cause and effect—the misery and the hateful passions engendered by the love of gain and the accumulation of riches, and the selfishness and want of thought and want of feeling in master manufacturers are most admirably described and the consequences produced on the inferior class of employed or unemployed workmen are most ably shewn in action—There is great discretion in the drawing the characters of the Carson family—in not exaggerating—Jem—is a delightful noble creature and not over colored. John Barton too is admirably kept up from 1st to last—and Mary herself is charming—from not being too perfect—The mother of Jem (Mrs. Wilson) is, we think, the best drawn character in the book—tho that is a bold word

¹ It is among the Miscellaneous Letters, vol. i. Miss Edgeworth wrote in somewhat similar terms to Mme. Belloc; see M.B., p. lix. The present letter is among those referred to in p. 106, n. 3.
where there are so many incomparables—Sally is very well drawn with redeeming good nature in the midst of her vanity and selfishness—Here are no such faultless nor any such vicious monsters as the world ne’er saw—But all such as have been seen and are recognised by all who have thought and by all who can feel—all who can look inwardly at their own minds or outwardly at the world we live in—

The story is ingenious and interesting—The heroine is in a new and good difficulty between her guilty father and her innocent noble lover—It is a situation fit for the highest Greek Tragedy yet not unsuited to the humblest life of a poor tender girl—heroism, as well as, love in a cottage—Her declaration of her love before the whole court in the trial is charming though useless to the lover so much the better for the truth of the drawing of the passion and the character—

I am sorry that she and her lover emigrate—I think the poetic justice and moral of the story would have been better and as naturally made out by Jems good character standing against the prejudice suspicion or envy of his fellow workmen as I really believe it would have done—and it would more shew the effect of good conduct in workmen and inspire hope for the future better without its being improbable that the noble conduct of Jem should have made such impression on the rich man and the master manufacturers that they took the case of the workmen for his sake into consideration—This would have been the finest reward and w’d have left not only an agreeable but beneficial feeling on the mind—

Rousseau says Judge of a book by the impression left on your mind when you lay it down.

I am not sure that this is quite just—but it has sense and justice in it—

I would not leave the reader in Despair—Despair never produced Virtue or the energy of Virtue. There must be hope for that.

The fault of this book is that it leaves such a melancholy I almost feel hopeless impression. When the box of evils was opened Hope sh’d have been left sticking to the lid.

It is all too true
But what can we do
What can be done—

It is in fact difficult to say—for we cannot make a new division and equal distribution of wealth without revolution and even if we could do this without revolution and injustice to the present possessors of what permanent avail cd it be? Wealth must immediately and incessantly tend to reaccumulate unless the efforts of Industry and its wages are stopped and this stoppage cd not increase human happiness. There must then be rich and poor—Laborers and Masters. All that can be done is to prevent the labourers from being made slaves and to deter the masters from becoming tyrants—Such a powerful writer as the author of Mary Barton could tend to this beneficial purpose by his pathetic representations and appeals to the
feelings of pity and remorse—But I doubt whether this has been effected
by the present tale—Emigration is the only resource pointed out at the end of
this work, and this is only an escape from the evils not a remedy nor any
tendency to reparation or improvement.—

We are haunted by the spectres of misery which have been raised
to our view and we cannot lay them—We are in a worse condition than
the man who was haunted by him who came continually to the side of the
bed crying

'Give me back my golden leg.'

The cry from these spectres is worse 'Give me a leg to stand upon! or I'll cut off both yours' and the only answer is

'I cannot give you legs without cutting off my own.'

—My dear Mary Holland if you are acquainted with the author of Mary
Barton as I suspect you are please to tell him or her as the case may be,
as much or as little of the foregoing sense or nonsense as you see fit—or as can do any good—For the past work no use criticism but for the future
there may be use—Such a writer cannot but write again and cannot but
be candid and will rejudge the criticism and the book and profit by the re-
judgement—at all events.

—I should add that I feel that there are too many deaths in the book—
Death is an evil common to all and not a peculiar moral punishment and the
mere contemplation of the difference between the death bed hour of the bad
and the good is not according to my view a sufficient motive for the survivors
—to make it advisable for a good moral writer to have recourse to this source
of pathos.—hacknied too and worn to nought.

I may as well empty my mind of all the objections I can make that
the author may the more believe in the perfect sincerity of my admiration—
I have not given half the praise I could and that I did give as I heard the
Work read—But upon reflexion a word or two more of blame occur—

I think or rather I feel—that not only there are too many deaths but
too many living creatures in this book—The readers sympathy is too much
divided—cannot flit as fast as called upon from one to another without
being weakened. The more forcible the calls and the objects of pity the
more the feelings are harassed and in danger of being exhausted

—I think that some of the miserable might be left out—For instance
Esther who is no good and does no good to Mary or to anybody else—nor
to the story—she might be and may be in every town in the Empire as well
as at Manchester. Her faults are not the results of manufacturing wrongs
from masters or evils of men—The circumstance of the husband in his rage
pulling down the nail on wh^h her bonnet hung is admirable and should not
upon any account be omitted—I have heard it wished that the character
of Alice should be expunged. But this is not my wish or feeling on the
contrary this character does not increase the sum of painful or despairing
feeling—But adds to the hopeful and salutary—because in spite of all
external misfortunes she is happy through life and happy in death from her internal resources of benevolence and energetic virtue.

And I can believe in the existence and operation of such virtue—not too good for everyday life—though I never had the luck to meet with like—

Now I have done—and I only hope that I may not have added to the deaths by tiring you to death. I pray you to tell me who wrote Mary Barton and I will add no more—But all well here and there meaning at Clewer Windsor where Rosa and Willy still are and Mariquita[?] better.

I am with kindest wishes of this season and all seasons for your father and you: my dear Mary Holland,

Yours affectionately,

Maria Edgeworth.

I have Helen Charteris ¹ 'from the author' (whom I do not know personally)—but I have not yet read it or Macauley ² [sic].

Mary Barton was anonymous,³ but no practised eye could fail to detect the feminine colouring of the tale in its pathetic effects, its loving and detailed descriptions of old women, the upstanding masculine worth of Jem Wilson, and so on. Maria Edgeworth had been sure of this, and so also was Carlyle in the enthusiastic letter of thanks, encouragement, and advice which he sent on 8 November, 1848. This letter, often referred to, has been quoted at length by Miss Haldane.⁴ Although at that time Mrs. Gaskell had not yet met the Carlyles, she was soon to do so, and was subsequently visited by them both in Manchester. Caroline Jewsbury, the novelist, Mrs. Carlyle's closest friend, must have been a link between them; for she also lived in Manchester, and it was from her house that Mrs. Carlyle wrote to her husband, 12 September, 1851: "Mrs. Gaskell took Geraldine and me a beautiful drive the other day in a 'friend's carriage.' She is a very kind cheery woman in her own house; but there is an atmosphere of moral dulness about her, as about all Socinian

¹ London, 1848, anonymous. The author was Mrs. Harriet Ward.
² The first and second vols. of his History appeared in 1848; after reading it she wrote a long letter, full of discriminating enthusiasm, to Sir Henry Holland, 2 April, 1849 (quoted at length in Helen Zimmern's Maria Edgeworth, 1883, p. 214 ff.)—On 2 February, 1849, Miss Edgeworth sent Mary Barton on to Mme. Belloc, with a letter in which her opinions on that book are again, though more succinctly, stated. (See E. D. Forgues's French version of Cousin Phyllis, etc., with introduction by Mme. Louise Sw. Belloc, 1867, p. 9.)
³ Not, as Miss Haldane says, published under the pseudonym of Cotton Mather Mills. For this see later, p. 126, n. 2.
women.—I am thinking whether it would not be expedient, however, to ask her to give you a bed when you come. She would be 'proud and happy' I guess; and you do not wish to sleep at Geraldine's,—besides that, mine is the only spare room furnished. The Gaskell house is very large, and in the midst of a shrubbery and quite near this.”

My dear Mrs Gaskell

I was going over myself to tell you that Mr C shall be delivered at your door tonight about ten—as I calculate, barring accidents—but Geraldine won't let me for fear of laying myself up again. I have had a quite severe bout of cold, and feel now that the fever has gone, as if I had just returned from the thirty years war—so wearied and dilapidated.
—I shall see you tomorrow morning however before we start for Alderley—
Yours affectionately
Jane Carlyle.

Another letter from the same lively correspondent, also undated, probably belongs to a slightly earlier period, when Mary Barton was still a recent event.

5 Cheyne Row
Friday

My dear Mrs Gaskell

Being one of the most punctual women of Business (!) I must write two lines—in the teeth of Force of Circumstances to certify you of the safe arrival of the Order—I am quite sorry now, that I wrote about it—but I had taken it into my head some shopman had intercepted it, and that there was need of immediate enquiry. Virtue however (and I know no greater virtue than making oneself troublesome and disagreeable from a sense of duty) being ever 'its own reward' unless—as John Mills Tragedian wrote 'unless something very particular occur to prevent it,' so my virtue in the present instance has been rewarded in the shape of a nice long letter from you which I should not otherwise have had—

1 "That ill-natured old maid," he called her.
2 New Letters and Memorials of Jane W. Carlyle, 1903, ii. 29.
3 This must be the tragic actor who died 1736.
For the rest I have new occasion to admire the fine quiet philosophy contained in those lines of some poetic Countryman of mine

‘ Simon Brodie had a cow
The cow was lost, and he couldna find her,
When he had done what man could do
The Cow cam hame and her tail behind her.’

But I am obliged to be off—to Richmond in a series of Omnibuses—and I have to blow up the Butcher besides—and the Dyer! and a man who is covering me an easy chair!—a great deal of blowing up in fact to be executed this fine frosty morning.

And—I ought also if I can keep my promise to take—Mary Barton to a Literary maidservant whom I visit at St. George’s Hospital.

So under this pressure of astonishing work excuse brevity and illegibility.

Love—oh dear no it was affection—Affection then and respect to Mr Gaskell and a kiss to Meta and ditto to yourself dear Woman

Jane Carlyle.

II. LORD SHAFTESBURY, COBDEN, G. F. WATTS, TOM TAYLOR, FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, F. PERRONET THOMPSON, JOHN FORSTER AND THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.

In the preface to Mary Barton Mrs. Gaskell had disclaimed any special knowledge of political economy, but nevertheless the subject of the book, the activities of her husband and herself in Manchester, and her constant interest in public affairs especially as they affected the lives of the struggling poor, ensured for her the respect of radical politicians and social reformers. Ashley Cooper, afterwards Lord Shaftesbury, writes to Madame Bunsen, 8 May, 1849, ‘Your kind invitation was not put into my hands until my return home late yesterday evening. It would have given me great pleasure to meet the Authoress of Mary Barton—she must be a first-rate woman.’

Other well-known names in this field, represented in the correspondence by letters of little interest, are Brougham, Bright, W. B. Carpenter, Lord Lansdowne, A. Somerville, Sydney Herbert, and Chadwick, the sanitary reformer, who writes 3 October, 1851, offering to show her friend the Swedish novelist,

1 In Miscellaneous Letters, vol. i.; Mrs. G. had met Baron Bunsen at the Schwabes that year, and through him made many other friends; see Chadwick, p. 172.
Fredrika Bremer, round the new model houses in London, and sending a copy of Grainger’s report on the origin and spread of cholera.

There are several letters from Richard Cobden, whose local interests had no doubt made him known to the Gaskells long before *Mary Barton* was written. The first of them is on a subject raised elsewhere in the correspondence and which may be disposed of at this point. Thomas Wright, “the prison philanthropist,” was a frequent visitor at the Gaskells about 1848. He was a foreman in an iron foundry. When his highly successful spare-time work in connection with the Manchester prisons had made him famous, he was offered an inspectorship of prisons at a salary of £800 a year; he declined it because, he said, it would diminish his influence. His admirers, however, could not let him suffer thus from the consequences of his own nobility, and they collected a sum of no less than £3248 (including £100 from the Royal Bounty). This was presented to Wright in 1852. In the meantime another sort of memorial had been mooted. G. F. Watts, at that time a young painter whose fame was all before him, having read an account of Wright in *Chambers’s Journal*, conceived the idea of painting his well-known *Good Samaritan* to commemorate the man and his work. Whether it was originally his purpose to present this picture to Wright’s native town is not very clear; but at some point he seems to have mentioned such an intention to Tom Taylor, the dramatist and writer for *Punch*, who was also a friend of Mrs. Gaskell’s.¹ It seems to have been felt that Watts could not well afford to give away the results of so much labour, and consequently the first efforts to collect money were meant to pay for the picture. Cobden writes to Mrs. Gaskell, 9 February, 1850:

> London 9 Feb 1850

> My dear Mrs Gaskell

> I hope you will not think me neglectful in not having before replied to the letter which you did me the honor to send me upon the subject

¹ See *M. of 2 S.*, p. 40; also Haldane, p. 236, where there is a letter from Mrs. G. to “Tottie” Fox. She has heard of the picture from Taylor and surprisingly asks, “Who is this Watts?” She has got several people interested, including the Bishop of Manchester; Cobden is coming at the week-end, “I want to work him up.”
of the painting of the 'Good Samaritan'—My first suggestion to Mrs. Schwabe on reading your note was that to identify the picture with Mr. Wright's philanthropic mission it ought to contain his portrait—This I suppose is not possible—Without this I do not see exactly how it can be identified with his proceedings in Manchester—Further however let me add my candid doubts whether his character be sufficiently known and appreciated by the wealthy inhabitants of your city to ensure the purchase of a large historical picture to be placed as a tribute to his virtues in one of your public buildings—To one so profoundly acquainted with human nature as yourself, and especially the human nature immediately surrounding you—I need not say how completely the words 'a prophet is not without honour etc.' apply to a man of Mr. Wright's humble sphere of action in Manchester—I mention this in all candor and confidence hoping I may be mistaken.—I will endeavour to accompany Mrs. Schwabe at the beginning of the week to see the picture, and at all events will let you know through her my opinion of it, which after all is not worth much, as I am not a connoisseur—Again hoping you will excuse my delay in writing

Believe me
ever faithfully yours
Rhod Cobden

My kind remembrances to Mr. Gaskell.

Meanwhile Mrs. Gaskell seems to have found some way of making Wright known personally to Watts, for on 1 July, 1850,¹ the painter writes to her as follows:—

30 Charles St
Berkeley Square

I return you my dear Madam my sincere thanks for the pleasure and the honour you have done me in making me acquainted with Mr. Wright. Such noble natures are indeed rare, and proud should I feel in devoting my trifling talent, and the little time I think remains to me,² to the object of making known to the world its real but too often neglected riches, I cannot say how much I have been gratified at finding my poor expression of admiration has given pleasure to so good a man, and to his worthy friends and auxiliaries in his heroic undertakings; to him and to those friends of humanity I beg to express my unqualified admiration.

I remain my dear Madam
Yours sincerely and much obliged
G. F. Watts

¹ The month is obscure, and may possibly be Feby.
² In the early months of 1850 he had nervous fever, threatening paralysis (M. S. Watts, G. F. Watts, 1912, i. 125).
In spite of Cobden's misgivings, Tom Taylor persevered in the collection of subscriptions, in the intervals of a very busy life. He was a barrister on the northern circuit at the time.

Board of Health
Gwydyr House
Thursday April 19 [1850]

Dear Mrs Gaskell

What have you set me down for? the leichtsinnigst, the most feather-headed, or the most forgetful of men?

Of course you will have long ago concluded that I had forgotten all about the Manchester Samaritan and Watts' picture and the proposed subscription. Not so I assure you. But in the midst of the first agitation of the thing, here, came Circuit—and I was forced to give it all up, and London agitations of it, to rush off Northwards, to briefs and waiting for briefs.

It was impossible to act in the affair during the movements and distractions of Circuit and I postponed it till my return, hoping, meanwhile, to get over from Liverpool to see you at Manchester. But Fate has fixed it otherwise. While at York I had offered to me the Assistant Secretaryship of the Board of Health. They wanted a lawyer for the work and offered me £500 a year to begin with ¹—The nature of the work pleased me and after some debate, I accepted—and here I am, installed and hard at work—now in my third week—with all the anxieties and over-zeal of a new broom, and having been so much taken up in getting some familiarity with the office and its duties that I have just now found time to sit down and ease my conscience and heart by a letter to you.

I am now ready to resume the matter. The picture will, I hope, be exhibited in the approaching Academy exhibition, and I propose, if you approve, to take up my broken thread of subscriptions and solicitations, where I dropped it. I have already about £10 down, from three or four applications—among them

Mr Justice Earle (a noble person)
the writers and artists to Punch £5
Mrs. Norton
Lady Dufferin
Lady Gordon and Sir Alexander Duff Gordon—

Did the Bishop ² see the picture and Mr. Watts—and what was his impression?

I read Dickens' Household Words—and I think I recognise a certain hand in a sweet story called Lizzy Leigh?—Am I right—or if I am, is it a secret? ³

¹ In 1854 he became Secretary with £1000 a year. ² See p. 114, n. 1. ³ He was right, although the story sometimes passed as the work of Dickens. In Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. I, 1850, when it was reprinted, it figures
LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MRS. GASKELL

My own work is constant and engrossing—We are applying the public Health Act to about 167 towns, but as yet Local Authorities know very little of either the extent of the duties imposed on them by the Bill, or the best way of setting about the fulfilment of them.

Do you, or does Mr Caskell feel much interest in the matter and wd you or either of you, like to see the Reports and publications of the Board? I could send them. Write to me and say that you do not, now, believe me a faithless and worthless person and Believe me

Ever most truly yours

Tom Taylor

The picture was duly exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibition, 1850. For some reason, however, the idea of buying the picture from Watts was not persisted in; perhaps he was unwilling to let them spoil his original generous impulse. All the money collected therefore was eventually presented to Wright in 1852, in which year, 24 March, we have a glimpse of Cobden helping to get the grant from the Royal Bounty:—

If the application on behalf of Mr. Wright be made to the present administration, it is quite as likely to prove successful as if it had been addressed to the former government.—I therefore hope his friends will persevere with the memorial.—I have spoken to Mr. Milner Gibson who will be glad to be made useful in accompanying a deputation to the minister. . . .

In the following month, May, 1852, Watts presented the picture to the Royal Manchester Institution,¹ as a testimony of his “high esteem for the exemplary and praiseworthy character” of Wright. And a few months later he was surprised by a sudden visit from Wright himself who gave him a thank-offering of half-a-dozen handkerchiefs.²

There is another letter from Watts many years later, when in the Index, p. iv., as “Lizzie Leigh. By Charles Dickens.” The mistake, no doubt, arose through its first chapter appearing as the first article in the first number of Household Words.

¹ It was transferred to the Manchester Corporation in 1882; and is now to be found in the Platt Hall Branch Gallery.

² For this matter of The Good Samaritan, see M. of 2 S., p. 55; M. S. Watts, op. cit., i. 130; Life of T. Wright, 1876, p. 73. There is also an account, inaccurate in some details but adding one or two facts, by W. E. A. Axon in Manchester Guardian, 30 September, 1910.
Mrs. Gaskell had written to ask if she might visit him. It is dated 25 June, 1863:

Little Holland House

Dear Mrs. Gaskell

I beg you will consider yourself free of my Studio, come whenever you like, I can only feel flattered by your remembering my pictures and wishing to renew your acquaintance with them.

I shall be at home on Saturday before 12 and after 3 and on Sunday from 2 till 7 but whether I am at home or not you shall always be admitted. . . .

To return to Cobden—there are two other letters, one of little interest from Higher Broughton, and another from Midhurst, 21 March, 1853. It is addressed to Mrs. Schwabe. Ward, who quotes the blessing upon Mrs. Gaskell from it, does not mention the remark about unmarried females. Incredible as it now seems, Cobden’s surmise was justified. *Ruth* was in its day considered dangerous enough even to have had a ceremonial burning.¹

My dear Mrs Schwabe

Your kind letter and the interesting accompaniment reached me just as I was preparing to leave Town for a few days.—I was much gratified with the perusal of Mr Tayler’s ² sermon.—There is in all his productions a clearness of diction, an acuteness of discrimination, and a genial tone of sentiment which gratify and satisfy both the head and the heart.—He seems full to overflowing with those qualities for which men of his profession have not been famous—I mean toleration and charity.

I read Mrs Gaskells [sic] *Ruth* before I left Town;—and I blessed her, as I closed the book, for her courage and humanity.—It cannot be a successful novel; for works of fiction are never so unless they be read by the young; and ‘Ruth’ will be considered dangerous company for unmarried females even in a book.—But the good and brave authoress knew all this when she wrote it, and therefore is there the greater merit due to her—

I am remaining here for a few days to imbibe a little of the South Down oxygen in my lungs.—But I am liable to be wanted at home towards the beginning of the next month, and as these matters are a little uncertain I shall return this day week.—With kind regards to Mr. Schwabe and all your circle I remain

Try yours,
R. Cobden.

¹ *Ruth*, p. xiv. There is a good account of the objections raised, in Haldane, p. 63.
² J. J. Tayler, Unitarian divine, and minister in Manchester 1821-53.
Among the unmarried females who did read *Ruth* and read it with the greatest admiration, was Florence Nightingale. Mrs. Gaskell seems to have got to know her in 1854, the year in which she went out to the Crimea. Shortly before she left the country Mrs. Gaskell had been staying with the Nightingale family at Lea Hurst, Matlock, and a long letter describing Florence Nightingale’s character is on record in Miss Haldane’s book.\(^1\) While she was staying there she received the following note, written on the flap of a long envelope:

My dear Madam

I have the consent of two, (Mrs. Booth and Lady Canning)—to Mrs. Clover’s admission.—Intrigue carries the day. I now propose her on a day when Lady Cranworth is not present and when Mrs. Herbert to whom I have written to come, is.—Intrigue has it. Such is the history of benevolent Committees—Send me Mrs. Glover’s papers filled up (herein enclosed) and I will make it a Government question and I do heartily hope, poor woman, we may do her some good.

Ever yours

F. Nightingale.

The context of this letter can easily be supplied from Sir E. T. Cook’s *Life of Florence Nightingale.*\(^2\) In 1854 she had taken up her first situation, as “Superintendent of an establishment for Gentlewomen during Illness.” This institution was managed by a Council which appointed a ladies’ and a gentlemen’s committee. She found the gentlemen the more manageable, of course; the ladies were only amenable to cunning. Miss Nightingale’s chief allies were Lady Canning and Lady Inglis, while Mrs. Herbert joined the committee with the special purpose of supporting her. Determined at the outset to avoid intrigue, she found she could do nothing without it. In a letter to Mrs. Mohl, on 20 August, she offers up a desperate prayer with which anybody who has attempted similar work will readily sympathise. “From Committees, Charity and Schism, and from the Church of England and all other deadly sin—from philanthropy and all the deceits of the Devil, Good Lord deliver us.” When she left for the Crimea, on 21 October, she may well have thought she had undertaken a lighter task.


\(^2\) 1913. See i. 133-5.
Soon the name of Florence Nightingale was known throughout the land. In 1856 many meetings were held to collect money for the Nightingale Fund: at Manchester, on 17 January, Lord Stanley, Sydney Herbert, and Monkton Milnes spoke at a public meeting in the Town Hall, and it is to this that Parthenope Nightingale, Florence’s sister, probably refers in an undated letter from Romsey, asking for a copy of the Manchester paper which contains the best report of the meeting. “You cannot however think how the echo of all that is said of her falls entirely dead before it reaches her. She never reads the newspapers, she is so entirely engrossed in her work that she takes no heed. She seems quite unconscious of it my Aunt says. Her toil (she Mrs. S. S. says) is incessant, and with so much that is annoying and distasteful, the tending of the sick being the rest and comfort as it were of her day.” She eventually reached home on 7 August, 1856. Shortly after this, no doubt, another undated letter was sent to Mrs. Gaskell by her sister. It is naturally adoring, not to say reverential; but the picture it paints of the home-coming of a national heroine perhaps makes it worth reproducing.

*Lea Hurst,*

Saturday.

My dear Mrs Gaskell

I have had my head and my heart so full since our dear one reached home, that I have not been able to answer you. Her ‘posts’ are something serious, and take up a great deal of our time. Anything so curious you cannot imagine, the piles of begging letters! from the Clergyman writing from the Queen’s Bench for £70, to the Costermonger requiring a ‘donkey by return of post,’ or the young lady desiring a correspondence ‘because I admire you so, and please let me have a letter by Tuesday.’ Then requests for places of every kind from Officials of all kinds, particularly the bad ones who have opposed her very much—or patronage for a new kind of fancy work ‘because my Father was descended from Welsh princes’ or ‘because all my male relations died in the reign of George III,’ or some one with an infallible receipt for mending the world, only requiring ‘some money,’ or a madman addressing her as ‘Empress of Civilisation’ and dating from ‘Armageddon,’ and in the midst of all this rubbish, such beautiful letters, addresses from workpeople (by the bye she was sadly

1 Afterwards Lady Verney.

2 Mrs. Samuel Smith, “Aunt Mai,” who went out to Scutari in 1855.
annoyed the other day at one of her answers being put in the Times), such feeling letters in queer handwritings, beautifully expressed. One of the prettiest is from the 'female Tenantry' of an estate of my Father's where we rarely go, with a magnificent clasped Bible. Indeed the feeling that the people have shewn her is the only part of her ovations which seems to give her pleasure. Her indifference to praise one must really see to believe, [she] just seems to pass on without heeding it to what interests her more. It comes in now in streams every morning, newspapers, music (there have been six songs about her this week with fine pictures, highly genteel) poetry letters, addresses, books, dedications, presents in such curious variety.

As to her own self it is beautiful to see her, she is so calm so cheerful so simple. All the ignorance and carelessness and cruelty and falsehood she has had to encounter never seem to ruffle her (or to have ever done so my Aunt who was with her says) and what she has had to go through you cannot conceive, we ourselves did not know till this summer, (when we saw different Chaplains Doctors and officers coming home from Scutari and the Crimea) the sufferings inflicted upon her from mere spite. Dr. Blackwood and Lady Alicia 1 told us for instance how the Purveyor at Balaclava for 6 weeks would give the nurses no fresh meat (when all the army had it). They had nothing but preserved meat out of tins, often quite bad. And Mrs. Roberts (F's head nurse) came to Lady Alicia saying with tears in her eyes that Miss N was riding and riding 10 and 12 hours a day among the Hospitals, which lay very wide apart, and had not even decent food to support her. This was before she was lent the baggage cart without springs taken from the Russians, which is now grandiloquently called the 'carriage'—but don't tell this, for I don't want to make a 'martyr' of her. The charm is so great of her absolute freedom from it. I cannot get at any of these things from her—

And she is as merry about little things as ever in the intervals of her great thoughts, with as much interest in the small things of home as if she had not been wielding the management and organization of the material and spiritual comfort of thousands of men. And how much this depended upon her very few will ever know fully, tho' I believe the people have an instinct about it.

We are trying vainly to give her rest. She has so much necessary business about the work to which she has devoted her life. And life seems only valuable to her as a means of doing it. I am grieved to say she has a journey before her which she is very little up to, but she thinks some good may be done, so she will go, sorely worn as she really is, tho' she looks well in the face.

What a long letter but I cannot stop when I begin about her, to those who know how to value her. I enclose the letter to Mr B which pray

1 Lady Alicia accompanied her husband, Dr. Blackwood, who went out as a chaplain.
keep—but do not shew it to any who can misunderstand. I am sure that Lord Stanley may see it. I believe he has something of the same stuff in him and can understand her. Dear Mrs Gaskell in haste, Believe me
Yours very sincerely
Parthe Nightingale.

The heroine herself, presumably not long after her return, wrote to Mrs. Gaskell thanking her for some expression of admiration for the men who served in the Crimea, and sending her the diary of a Sergeant Jowett, with pages turned down to mark passages "characteristic of our men's good sense and simple endurance." There are two other letters from her. The first seeks to enlist the novelist's help in what appears to have been an excellent cause.

30 Old Burlington St. W.
Sept 28/60

My dear Mrs. Gaskell

Your Capt. P. Jackson (who is also 'my' Capt. P. Jackson) is I am afraid rather in a scrape about his Gibraltar 'Soldiers' Home'—You know I dare say that he is married—that it is of material importance to him to be repaid the money (above £1000) which he has advanced to the Institution. You know I dare say that he is not very business like—that he has taken, altered and fitted up houses (for the 'Home') without any written agreement as to lease or tenancy—upon a mere verbal arrangement with an old man of 73. But I say, there were many business-like officers in the Garrison who did nothing; and there was one unbusiness-like one who did it all—And we ought to help it out of its scrape—that its want was pressing in a place like Gibraltar, and that it has answered the want is certain.

There are many difficulties which no one knows who does not know the soldiers as well as I do—

I believe we could get the War Office to take over the whole thing, paying all the costs, if some kind of lease-security could be had. But then it would fall under the Barrack Dept. And if a Barrack Master were to be seen in the place, not a soldier would come near it.

I have often been told,—better 'beg, borrow or steal' the money than do that.

Under these circumstances, I am going to 'beg.' I am going to beg £1000 of which I may perhaps get half from the War Office, as a grant—

1 This book surprisingly brought £35 at the Gaskell sale in 1914. (Manchester City News, 23 February, 1914.)

2 A friend of Mrs. G.'s (see p. 123), but I find no more about him than a mere mention, in Cook's Life of F. N., ii. 76.
And I am going to beg from you—The W. O. will bring us in a few other subscriptions. And I hope you will be the War Office in Manchester—

Perhaps Lady Coltman, Miss Pilkington's friend, would give something. I am so incapable now of writing any but the most urgent business-letters that I ask you, as being Capt. Jackson's first friend—not to give but to use your influence to make people give. The rent of the place is £144 a year—But if the debt could once be cleared off, the soldiers are so fond of it that they will make it nearly self-supporting. It is only on this plea, viz. the success of the experiment, that I think we ought to ask for support—

Ever yours sincerely
F. Nightingale.

Mrs. Gaskell willingly responded to this appeal. She writes to C. E. Norton, 10 December, 1860, "One piece of business—very much out of my way—only it really fell in it—I have done this autumn—helped Florence Nightingale and another friend of ours in establishing a Soldiers' Home in Gibraltar, where they can have cheap refreshments, can read, play games, write letters, etc. I am still working at this, as F. N. wishes above all things, before she dies, to see such Homes established on a permanent footing in all garrison towns." ¹

In the last letter, three years later, and on black-edged paper, Miss Nightingale returns thanks for Sylvia's Lovers, but passes without further comment into a momentary sadness, and then into a topic which, whatever she may say in the letter, was at the moment a matter of the most pressing interest to her:—

_Hampstead N.W._
_Aug 17/63_

My dear Mrs Gaskell

I take the first moment of respite (almost) that I have had, since the first of January, to thank you for your beautiful 'Sylvia's Lovers'—

As soon as I found out that it was you who had done me the honor of sending me a copy, I asked three different people to thank you for me. I dare say not one of them has done it. Alas! I find out that one must depend on none, except those connected with one, in some 'high emprise.' And all those, who were once so connected with me, are already in another world.

¹ _Letters to Norton_, p. 74.
I am afraid to talk to you Manchester people, whose higher interests are so dreadfully pressing, of any less pressing interest. But I remember how much you were interested in Capt. P. Jackson’s Soldiers’ Homes. I have been entirely absorbed since the beginning of the year, in bringing out the Report of our Commission on the state of our Army in India and in acting upon it. I mean to do myself the honor of sending you a reprint of one of my papers on the subject.

‘By mistake’ Sir C. Wood (so he writes) has not presented our whole Report and its documents to the Houses of Parliament. ‘By mistake’ the type has been broken up. Should the subject excite the least interest in you, I should be ‘proud’ to furnish you with all the information possible.

Ever yours gratefully
Florence Nightingale.

She had been throughout the guiding spirit of this report, and had embodied her comments upon it in a paper entitled “How people may live and not die in India.” When Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, had made these convenient mistakes, she became even more determined, and remedied affairs by preparing and printing at her own expense a special summary of the report and making the War Office recommend it officially to all officers in the Indian Army.¹

There is another letter connected with Sylvia’s Lovers in the collection, from General Perronet Thompson, for many years M.P. for Hull. He gave Mrs. Gaskell a good deal of help in the composition of the book;² and the present letter was possibly intended to supply a few details of local colour:—

1 May 1860

My dear Mrs. Gaskell,

I remember being once at Middleham,³ and apprehend it to have been then (it is like Waverley, 60 years ago) in a very wild country, which may make it all the more valuable now. I remember an old hostess in that part of the country pointing out to me the skeleton of a post-chaise, which she said was the first ever witnessed there, and when it came into the town the boys ran after it and cried, ‘See-thee, See-thee, a leather cart wi’ brass nails.’ Descriptive enough of the style of ornament; which was by brass nails external, like some trunk-boxes.

Even at the date spoken of, a post-chaise was so far a novelty, that I remember from personal experience, the carters in the narrow roads refused

¹ Life, ii. 35. ² See Sylvia’s Lovers, p. xxv. ³ In Wensleydale.
to be assistant in allowing it to pass, and tried to run against it, reviling it as ‘a bone-cart.’

But even in this country there was a darker still. I remember a certain ‘Vale of Dent’ of which the story ran (traceable perhaps to either Athens or Bagdad) that a girl from that region said, ‘O, that’s nothing like the moon we have in Dent.’ A fine wild country all nevertheless, and a capital place to hear the spirit of the moor discoursing with the spirit of the fell.

I will not fail to communicate, if I extract any more information from Hull. But my principal informant (he is understood to have been once a player) says he is ‘in the sere and yellow leaf,’ and I am afraid his chariot-wheels are taken off.

Yours very truly and sincerely,
F. Perronet Thompson.

This may be a convenient point to mention two letters of particularly local interest. In 1856 J. E. Taylor, the proprietor of The Manchester Guardian, applied to Mr. Gaskell for help in finding a new writer for the paper. “He must be a man of really vigorous style, an easy writer, of good political knowledge and moderate opinions. For a really good man, we are prepared to pay very well and must do so, on account of the disadvantages to a literary man which residence in Manchester entails. We should not require generally more than 4 articles a week in the usual way.” This must have been sent on to John Forster who, in his reply, 29 March, 1856, emphasises the disadvantages mentioned by Taylor; he has a young man in mind exactly suitable, but the bribe would have to be very large. He will understand if he gets no reply “because I really do not see how the paper would be able to afford any great sacrifice in this way.” But Taylor’s enterprise was being greatly assisted at this time by the removal of oppressive taxes. The Guardian became a daily in 1855 and reduced its price to 2d.; in 1857 it began to be sold at a penny. What young man was found, and how large his bribe, I have not discovered.¹

III. Godwin, Leigh Hunt, Landor, Wordsworth.

However great was Mrs. Gaskell’s devotion to social causes, her eminence was that of a novelist; and naturally the greater

¹ The editor of the M. G. has kindly had an enquiry made, without success.
bulk of these letters come from literary correspondents. They range from lingering survivors of the last era such as Godwin and Wordsworth to such fore-runners of a new age as Rossetti and Charles Reade. Occasionally they are addressed to Mr. Gaskell. Beginning then with the veterans, there is a curious note from Godwin written in the year before his death and three years after Mrs. Gaskell’s marriage, the earliest of all these letters:—

Dear Madam

I am sorry to say that Mrs. Shelley had the audacity to take away Tomkins, Jenkins and the Minister for two or three days. If they must be delivered, they will be found at no 7 Upper Eaton Street, Pimlico.

Presumably these must have been books, lent perhaps, or from a circulating library; but I have not been able to identify them.

There are two characteristic letters from Leigh Hunt, still obdurately humanitarian at the age of sixty-six. In Howitt’s Journal, 1847, Mrs. Gaskell had published a pathetic little tale, much admired in its day, called Libbie Marsh’s Three Eras. It was published again with two other tales in 1848, under the title, Life in Manchester; while in 1850 all three were republished, the other two in a booklet issued “for the benefit of Macclesfield Baths and Washhouses,” and Libbie Marsh by herself. No doubt it was these two little books that Mrs. Gaskell sent to Leigh Hunt, and the date of his letters is probably 1850. (He left Edwardes Square early in 1851.) The story which offended him was that of Libbie Marsh, who with the best of intentions, bought a canary called Jupiter, Peter for short, for the little invalid, Franky Hall. What is worse they took Jupiter for an excursion to Dunham Woods. “Such green homes for

1 There is also a letter from L. H. to W. J. Fox in the Miscellaneous Letters, vol. ii.

2 “By Cotton Mather Mills,” the name she had once intended to use for Mary Barton. It sounds local enough, but Cotton Mather was the famous New England divine who figures eventually in Lois the Witch. He must already have been in Mrs. Gaskell’s mind. The other two stories were The Sexton’s Hero, and Christmas Storms and Sunshine, both of which had appeared in Howitt’s Magazine.

3 Correspondence of L. H., 1862, ii. 132.
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birds!” says Franky, “Look, Peter! would you not like to be there, up among those boughs?” And the first thing Hunt would see as he picked up the book was a picture on its green cover depicting the little party in Dunham Park, the smoky chimneys of ‘Dumble’ away in the distance, and in the nearest foreground—Jupiter in his cage. Who can wonder that the old poet objected?

To Mrs. Gaskell.

I have plenty of grandchildren, and I hope they will all admire and love Mrs. Gaskell’s writings as much as the rest of us do. I thank you very much for the three little stories you have sent me. They are charming; and I go, heart and soul, along with every word of them, except in one passage. Do not think me impertinent or ungrateful, if I mention that. It is the incident of the bird-cage. Remember that I was once confined for two years in a prison; and hence it is that I cannot see with comfort a gift made to your poor little invalid of another prisoner. I think so highly of you, that I will even send you a fable which I wrote on this point some thirty years ago.¹ I know that custom’s custom, and I see that the custom prevails among the poor Manchester workmen; whom God comfort! but I cannot wish them to be comforted in this manner; and I am sure you are not the woman to be custom’s slave. Witness your brave and lovely good word in behalf of the unhappiest of your sex.²— I have to beg you many pardons for the delay of this acknowledgment; but I have been in a trouble (as the border of my paper will explain)³ and I was loth also to make my objection. Think your kindest, pray, both of that, and of your obliged humble servant,

Leigh Hunt.

Mrs. Gaskell took the reproof very graciously. Mr. Whitfield, without knowing of the existence of these letters from Hunt, prints her reply dated 13 September [1850]. Having acknowledged the value of friendly criticism, she goes on to say that Hunt

¹ This must have been The Singing Man kept by the Birds in his Table-Talk (1882, pp. 201-3). Table-Talk was first published 1851, so that Hunt may have had a proof sheet of the fable handy at this time.

² The reference is not to Ruth, which appeared in 1853, but to Lizzie Leigh which came out in Household Words, March, 1850.

³ It is not easy to explain this with the date 1850. In 1848 Hunt’s brother John died, and it may be that all these letters should be dated in that year, in which case another explanation would have to replace the foregoing note—possibly Esther in Mary Barton would serve.

has made her think. It is true that it is a custom of the place to keep canaries in cages, and since she was drawing from the life, it might be allowable to have introduced the circumstance, but to have done so without one word of disapproval might seem to lend a sanction to the custom. "So tell your grandchildren that I own I was sorry." I cannot find that she ever added the 'one word of disapproval' in later editions, but as we gather from the rejoinder, Hunt's grandchildren at least may have been edified by her repentance.

Sept. 16.
Edwardes Square, Kensington.

I did not object to the incident of the bird-cage, but only to what you yourself, on reflection, find to have been wanting in it. On the contrary, I think the incident would have furnished an excellent opportunity for shewing the inconsiderateness, to which the best natures are rendered liable by custom.

Neither did I touch upon the great question of good and evil, which even so light-looking a matter as this sets open. I feel (as I am sure you do), that we have nothing to do with those metaphysics, when the duty of doing as we would be done by is straight before us short-sighted mortals. And only fancy winged creatures in cages!—calling too for their companions:—for this, it is understood, I believe, is the meaning of their song, strong soever as food may render it, and apparently cheerful too. What Heaven is pleased to do, or to allow, is one thing; but what we are to allow ourselves to do, on reflection, is another.

But I need not tell you commonplaces like these. Indeed I almost blush to have taken the liberty of telling you anything, seeing how well you receive it; for I have so much respect for those who can acknowledge an error, that the moment they do it, I feel as if I had been committing an error myself, and an impertinence, in assuming the privilege of setting them right.

That acknowledgment of it too to my 'grandchildren' will give me a fine opportunity of setting them a rare lesson.

I respect and love you.
Leigh Hunt.

While Leigh Hunt takes up the cause of caged birds, Walter Savage Landor no less characteristically proclaims the greatness of Milton, and in his less-known quality of amateur philologist offers comments on Mr. Gaskell's Lectures on the
Lancashire Dialect.¹ Contact may have been established between them after the appearance of *Mary Barton* by Forster who was known to the Gaskells from that time, and was Landor's intimate friend. Among the Rylands letters is an autograph of those thirty-four lines addressed "to the Author of *Mary Barton*" which were printed in *Last Leaves* and have often been quoted. There is also a printed sheet of his *Death of Blake*,² and a part of the proof sheets of *Giovanna of Naples*,³ with his corrections. The first letter, black-edged,⁴ is postmarked 1854, and although addressed to Mrs. Gaskell, is entirely concerned with her husband's lectures:—

Dear Madame,

I feel greatly honored by your note and the Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect. These are very instructive, no less to me than to others.

Etymology is that branch of philosophy which is nearest to the ground. When I was young I was intimate with Walter Whiter, a great etymologist,⁵ and I was interested in Walters's Welsh Dictionary,⁶ in which he shows the similarity [sic] of many Celtic words to the Greek—I think a thousand, or more. There are vast numbers of cognate words running over the world.

It is not only in Lancashire that little birds are called dicky: in Warwickshire it was common when I was a boy.—*Pudgy*—and *pug*⁷ have representatives in the Italian *poggio*. *Os* in *oso*, *tantarum* [?] in the old Latin *Quum tuba terribili sonitu taratantara*.⁸ Clutter is analogous for cluster. *Wor* is common for *was* in many parts of the midland counties. *Sed* is almost everywhere so pronounced for *said*. *Purs* is the same as the Latin *pus*, and pronounced alike, not as our *us* and *thus*. *Nor* for *than* is usual in Warw: Carters in all parts of England cry *woa*. *Eysell*, *esil*, *aesel*, *aisil*, are all correlative with *acetum*. Terminations are unimportant but

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¹ There are two lectures, originally appended to the 5th edition of *Mary Barton*, 1854.
² First printed in *The Examiner*, 13 May, 1854; afterwards in *Dry Sticks*, 1858.
³ Published with *Andrea of Hungary* in 1839.
⁴ On 2 March, 1854, Landor's eldest and only surviving sister Elizabeth died, depriving him, he told Forster, of sleep, appetite, digestion and everything (Forster's *Life*, ii. 485).
⁵ 1758-1832, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and rector of Hardingham, Norfolk; as Landor says, a great philologist.
⁶ John Walters, 1721-97; his *English-Welsh Dictionary* appeared 1770-94.
⁷ Welsh: 'pushing or swelling out.'
1, m, and n are commutative. Now about *acetum* there is a curious piece of nonsense. A Roman poet says of Hannibal montes solvit *aceto*—as if any quantity of acid could dissolve the Alps—but *aceto* is now, and was then, the word for *axe, adze, or hatchet*, with which the Carthaginian made the road passable. The Tuscans give the word a dental sound, but the Milanese and Piedemontese pronounce it as we do.

*Canting,* setting on its side, is also Italian—*da questo canto, accanto.* *Potter* (confuse) is the same as *pother and bother,* and is almost in as common use.

p. 14. *gaum.* There are many words now called vulgar such as *gumson.* When I was a boy, a gentleman's son wd not be ashamed of using it as *intelligent.* *Whittle* is used in Warwickshire.

p. 21. The Anglo Saxon *cuth* has a cousin German in the Latin *catus.*

22. *lennock—lank—link* perhaps too, from bending [2], *lentus* not always *slow,* but *languid,* con passi tardi e *lenti* (Petrarca).

Qu. may not *dreary* have a relation to *dree?*

22. *a quickset* hedge is general for a *live* hedge.

23. Excellently just remark that 'English is very often a *corruption* of the Anglosaxon.' *Housen* is used in Warwickshire: *shoon* also. We say a *chicken* improperly, *en* is plural.

27. *potter* and *bother* are identical.

27. *a shive,* we say to *shivers.*


*Flitter, flittermouse* is a bat.

*drop it,* not only as a Lancashire man wd say, but any man; and gracefully.

30 *ling* means *heath—nearly throughout England—always in Warwicks,* and Staffords:

The adjectives *gainly* and *ungainly* are common.

May not a *mort* be a *more-what* as a somewhat—the final is contracted. People often pronounce *somewhat summort:* the *r* is used or dropt by them ad *libitum,* as the *h* is.

Mr Gaskell deserves the society of our three great men, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton! He will more easily forgive your sending me his book than bringing down on him these crudities of mine.¹

Believe me,

dear Madame,

Your obliged Sert.

W. S. Landor.

¹ I have not thought it necessary to annotate Landor’s suggestions; some of them may quite fitly be called ’crudities’—for example *chicken* is not a plural form, *dreary* has no relation with *dree.*
LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MRS. GASKELL  131

The next letter, undated, was obviously written soon after:—

My dear Madame,

Here is 'The Death of Blake'—a man the most deserving of glory of any that ever bore arms.

Mr Gaskell will laugh at my mort. I did myself. Another childish hit at it is moult—the old French for much—the Italian molt. You know something of Cannock-Chase. My family had rights over it, hunting hawking etc. My uncle the Rector of Colton went to course there with his greyhounds. Ld. Uxbridge, father of the late Lord Anglesea, brought an action and gained it. On the trial at Stafford it appeared that the head of our family might go with an unlimited number of men and dogs, but must be there himself, and could not depute the power. My father was head of the family, which seems to have enjoyed this right before the Pagets were ever heard of. When I sold my estates in Rugeley, Longdon, Colton, Haresfield etc., I reserved my rights over the Forest—but I being abroad for above twenty years they were not exercised and perhaps are lost. Ld. Anson and Sir T. Clifford wd have paid largely for them. The language of Staffordshire is most remarkable for its diphthong oi instead of i exactly the reverse of modern Greek, which loses its full rich sound. Mr Gaskell knows that πολυφλουκυοι is now poliflaisvao. Voltaire made the French spell properly—Francois he wrote Français—donnoit donnait etc.

Returning to mort—we have strange intensives—a 'deadly deal of fun' a mighty weak child—a power of idle words. The Romans had power in this sense—a power of ivy. In Horace is atque hederae vis. The simnel, I find, was composed of sugar, flower [sic], currants, in equal quantities; with yellow of eggs, and enough of the whites to consolidate the mass, with a certain quantity of saffron-water. No butter in interior or exterior—but a hard crust of firm flower moistened with saffron-water and polished with saffron-water, yellow and white of egg, and a very little fine sugar.

I remain, dear Madame,

Very truly yours

W S L

The last of Landor's letters is post-marked Bath, 2 January, 1858; he was then very soon to leave England for good. Mr. Gaskell published a sermon on the anniversary of Milton's death in 1857. On page 8 two passages of some length are quoted; the first, from the Second Defence, "I considered that many had purchased a less good by a greater evil—the meed of glory by the loss of life . . ." is a fine passage, but as Landor must have known, the thought is the thought of Milton but the English is the English of Fellowes. He probably refers to the second,
from the *Reason of Church Government*. “For surely to every good and peaceable man, it must in nature be a hateful thing to be the displeaser and molester of thousands; much better would it like him doubtless to be the messenger of gladness and contentment, which is his chief intended business to all mankind, but that they resist and oppose their own true happiness. But when God commands to take the trumpet, and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in man’s will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal.”

My dear Sir,

Scarcely three hours have elapsed since I received your Sermon on Milton’s death, and I have red [sic] the greater part twice. I consider him as the most perfect Being of God’s whole creation. It appears to me that the Paradise Lost is the noblest of poems. It does not place him before Homer and Shakespeare, because they wrote more than one almost equally admirable. When a great tree is cut down, a hundred suckers spring forth round about it. So happens it in regard to Milton. Nothing grand has followed. A drinking song of Dryden is the most applauded.\(^1\) Within a half-century lived three such prosewriters as never existed since or before—Pascal, Bossuet and Milton. The tone and spirit of our glorious countrymen is far higher than the French. Compare the fullest burst of Bossuet with the period you have quoted in p. 8. In no language is anything so august. Even in the Paradise Lost is nothing grander or more harmonious. I have had occasion, in some other place, to remark that they are magnificent verses. Macaulay in his running commentary (for history it is not to be called, any more than Nieburhs [sic] of Rome) does justice to Milton’s integrity. Of his poetry it could not be expected that an Edinburgh Reviewer should be a judge. But Macaulay has written better poetry than prose. His Lays of ancient Rome are admirable.

Let me now ascend from the mortal to the immortal, and unite my wishes to yours that the death of Milton may be celebrated yearly in all religious congregations [congregations?]. There ought also to be a day of expiation for our sins in keeping holy that of Charles the First—a truckler to the Pope, a swindler, a perjurer, and a torturer. We have only two Saints in our calendar—I do not mean the Newgate, which has many altho of an inferior order. We have Saint George and Saint Charles, who was somewhat more than mere Saint, being also Martyr!

On the thirtieth of this January, which happens to be my birthday, and on which I enter my eightyfourth year, I shall drink a glass of claret to the glorious memory of Cromwell, Ireton, and Ludlow.

\(^1\) Presumably referring to *Alexander’s Feast*; the description is more contemptuous than exact.
LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MRS. GASKELL

With many thanks for your valuable present, believe me, dear Sir, very sincerely yours

W S Landor.

Mrs. Gaskell met Landor at Rome in 1863.¹ Swinburne was there at the time, having come as he says in his poem

The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

Wordsworth she had seen in 1849, he too then on the verge of the grave. Crabb Robinson arranged the meeting; ² and it must have been then that the poet wrote the following contribution to her autograph album:—

He that feels contempt
For any living Thing hath faculties
Which he hath never used.

William Wordsworth.

Lesketh How
20th July, 1849.

Did she, one wonders, remind him that long ago he had written to her husband to thank him for his Temperance Rhymes (1839).³

Dear Sir

I have read your Temperance Rhymes with much pleasure and cannot but think that they must do good.

You have judged well in adding those that present pictures of the good and virtuous, by way of contrast to the wretched whom you would deter from continuing in a course that must end in death, and if not repented of, in misery unspeakable—In this latter division of your work I was especially pleased with the Verses founded on the beautiful old Welsh Custom, with which you have first made me acquainted.

I remain dear Sir with prayers for the success of your humane endeavour

Sincerely yours

Wm Wordsworth.

Rydal Mount
Ambleside.
July 22nd. 40.

¹ Haldane, p. 291.
² See his Diary, 14 October, 1849.
³ They were anonymous. Wordsworth’s letter was sent to the author at his publisher’s address.
The poem referred to is at page 70, *Heaven to Thee*; as an introductory note explains, "In Wales, formerly, on the Sunday after a funeral, each relation of the deceased knelt on his grave, exclaiming, 'Nevoedd iddo,' i.e. 'Heaven to him.'"

The only other representative of the older schools is Barry Cornwall who contributes an autograph of his poem *Lament*, and a brief note dated 24 June, 1867, obviously written, as he says himself, with the greatest difficulty. He was then 80 but lived on until 1874.

IV. MATTHEW ARNOLD, G. H. LEWES AND GEORGE ELIOT, KENYON AND MRS. BROWNING, SOME OTHER WOMEN WRITERS, KINGSLEY, MAURICE, LUDLOW, AND THOMAS HUGHES.

Matthew Arnold, whose private expressions about his contemporaries were generally supercilious and damaging, has left no unkind remark about Mrs. Gaskell; perhaps because her work was so quiet and unpretentious that no-one made any extravagant claims for it. On the contrary the complimentary passages in the following letters are authenticated by Mrs. W. E. Forster’s description of him on one occasion "stretched at full length on a sofa, reading a Christmas tale of Mrs. Gaskell, which moves him to tears, and the tears to complacent admiration of his own sensibility."¹ They had not met at the date of the first letter. He had published anonymous volumes ("by A.") in 1849 and 1852, and had just given to the world *Poems by Matthew Arnold. A New Edition*, 1853. The first poem in this volume is really a sonnet; it is followed by *Sohrab and Rustum*, to which Arnold refers:—

Derby, November 18th, 1853.

Dear Madam

It is always agreeable to try to repay, in however slight a degree, the pleasure one has received; and I was so much gratified to hear from my mother, that you, whose books had given me such sincere delight, had found pleasure in reading some of my Poems, that I have ventured, although personally unacquainted with you, to send you a volume in which they are for the first time collected with my name.

¹ Quoted *Mary Barton*, p. xlvi.
I hope you will not be repelled from the first poem of the collection by its Eastern names; for I think you will find the story a very human one. Believe me, dear Madam, with sincere gratitude and respect, ever faithfully yours,

M. Arnold.

Subsequently they became known to each other personally. No one was better able than Mrs. Gaskell to enlighten Arnold on at least one subject—that of the author of Villette, whose mind, he had said in 1853, "contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage, and therefore that is all she can, in fact, put into her book. No fine writing can hide this thoroughly, and it will be fatal to her in the long run." The next letter shows that if he had come to think more kindly of her before writing his Haworth Churchyard, the change must to some degree be attributed to conversation with her sister novelist and future biographer. The poem appeared in Fraser's Magazine, May, 1855, where Mrs. Gaskell must have seen it; it has a good deal of descriptive detail—one wonders how much of it was "pumped" out of the poet's neighbour at dinner. Harriet Martineau is celebrated in the same poem. She is called "poor Miss Martineau" in the letter, presumably because in 1855, suffering from heart disease, she supposed her life to be near its close and wrote her Autobiography; as the poem says, she was

expecting from Death,
In mortal weakness, a last Summons.

Actually, however, her life was prolonged for some twenty years, the summons being delayed until 1876.

23 Grosvenor St. West.
June 1st. 1855.

My dear Mrs Gaskell

I must find time to send you at least one word of thanks for your most kind letter. Few people's satisfaction could have given me so much pleasure as yours.

I am afraid the metre in which the poem was composed must have interfered with many people's enjoyment of it; but I could not manage to say what I wished as I wished in any other metre: and I was greatly desirous to say something, at such a time, in honour and respect of both those who are the chief personages of the poem. How good is poor Harriet

1 Letters, 1895, i. 29.
2 The lines are unrhymed and have a varied rhythm, mainly with three stresses.
Martineau's sketch in the Daily News! You will have smiled to yourself, I am sure, in reading my lines, in spite of all that was sad in their subject, to think of our conversation at dinner, and how I was pumping you.

I am almost sorry you told me about the place of their burial. It really seems to put the finishing touch to the strange crop-grained character of the fortunes of that ill-fated family that they should even be placed after death in the wrong, uncongenial spot.¹

Farewell, my dear Mrs Gaskell, with renewed thanks. May you, at any rate, long continue living and working, and delighting us all.

ever most sincerely yours,

M. Arnold.²

Some passages of great interest in the Life of Charlotte Brontë are connected with George Henry Lewes. It was he, for example, who advised the authoress of Jane Eyre to study Miss Austen, and thus drew from her the well-known remarks about that writer's deficiency in passion and poetry. Mrs. Gaskell was not disposed to take a light view of Lewes's unconventional relationship with George Eliot, nor indeed of the principles which she supposed had led to that obliquity. Letting Norton into the secret of the authorship of Adam Bede in 1859, she ends, "all this is miserable enough,—but I believe there are many excuses—the worst is that Mr. Lewes' character and opinions were formerly at least so bad."³

The following letter may be compared with George Eliot's to Sara Hennell, 16 April, 1857, expressing her admiration of the same work, and containing an eloquent description of the Scilly shores:—⁴

_Scilly Isles_

15 April 1857.

Dear Mrs Gaskell

I have just finished your 'Life of Charlotte Brontë'—which has afforded exquisite delight to my evenings on this remote patch of rock, round which the Atlantic roars, and dashes like a troop of lions, making a solitude almost equal to Haworth moors—quite equal, as far as any society

¹ What does this mean? They were buried in the Brontë tomb in Haworth Church.
² Arnold's brother, W. D. Arnold, who had gone out to India, in 1848, wrote on 11 July, 1851, sending £10 for Mrs. G. to distribute among the Manchester poor (cf. Haldane, p. 247) and telling her that Mary Barton was widely known in India. "There can be few societies . . . where the Lessons of Poverty and common Humanity are more needed." The book had constantly brought his father to his mind, as one who, he knew, would particularly have rejoiced in it.
³ Letters to Norton, p. 40.
⁴ Cross's Life, p. 218.
I get here. If I had any public means of expressing my high sense of the skill, delicacy and artistic power of your Biography, I shd not trouble you with this note. But it is a law of the literary organization that it must relieve itself in expression,—I discharge my emotion through the penny post; at least, such of it as was not discharged in wet eyes, and swelling heart, as chapter after chapter was read.

The book will, I think, create a deep and permanent impression; for it not only presents a vivid picture of a life noble and sad, full of encouragement and healthy teaching, a lesson in duty and self-reliance; it also, thanks to its artistic power, makes us familiar inmates of an interior so strange, so original in its individual elements and so picturesque in its externals—it paints for us at once the psychological drama and the scenic accessories with so much vividness—that fiction has nothing more wild, touching, and heart strengthening to place above it.

The early part is a triumph for you; the rest a monument for your friend. One learns to love Charlotte, and deeply to respect her. Emily has a singular fascination for me—probably because I have a passion for lions and savage animals, and she was une bête fauve in power, and splendour, and wildness. What an episode that death of her's! and how touching is Charlotte's search for the bit of heather which the glazed eyes could not recognize at last! And what a bit of the true religion of home is the whole biography!

I have nothing but thanks for the way you have managed my slight episode. There is however one thing I could have wished,—and perhaps in a second edition, if your own judgment goes that way, you might insert a phrase respecting the 'Edinburgh' article, intimating that it is not a disrespectful article to women, although maintaining that in the highest efforts of intellect women have not equalled men. Lord Jeffrey tampered with the article, as usual, and inserted some to me offensive sentences, but the main argument—as far as I recollect it—is complimentary to women, not disrespectful. As far as appears in this book I seem to have written an offensive article, not only one offensive on the personal ground but on the general ground. Is this so? And if not, would not a word from you intimate as much?

I am ashamed to trouble you with so small a matter; but as I did not object to Currer Bell's uncomplimentary passages appearing, you will not, I hope, think me over sensitive in wishing not to be misrepresented on a subject which I feel to be momentous.

Believe me

My dear Mrs Gaskell
Ever truly yours
G. H. Lewes.

1 See Life of C. B., Haworth ed., p. 382.
2 It was highly offensive to Charlotte Brontë at all events. See the Life, pp. 439-40.
The review in question was that of *Shirley* in the *Edinburgh*, January 1850. Mrs. Gaskell originally wrote of this, “Now in this review of *Shirley* the headings of the first two pages ran thus: ‘Mental Equality of the Sexes?’ ‘Female Literature,’ and through the whole article the fact of the author’s sex is never forgotten.” In subsequent editions the passage runs, “Now, although this review of *Shirley* is not disrespectful towards women, yet the headings of the first two pages,” etc. If only all the other objections could have been so easily met!

A very interesting letter from George Eliot herself, 11 November, 1859, replying to Mrs. Gaskell’s compliments on *Adam Bede*, and acknowledging a certain literary indebtedness to her, has already been printed in Cross’s *Life* and since then often quoted. There was indeed more affinity between these two remarkable women than might appear on the surface, both rooted in the provinces, both lovers of farm and countryside, both interested in dissenting circles, and earnestly concerned with social problems. At all events they stood nearer to each other than either of them to Mrs. Browning, three letters from whom form one of the most interesting parts of this correspondence. They may be said to have been the direct product of Mrs. Gaskell’s passion for autographs. She appears to have begged a Mrs. Browning autograph from old John Kenyon early in 1853. He replies 18 June, 1853, sending her a whole letter from his cousin, though not without reluctance, being “shy of giving away letters from friends.” The letter, which is undated, evidently belongs to the summer or early autumn of 1852—the Brownings had settled in Welbeck Street at the end of June that year, and by November were back, greatly relieved, at Casa Guidi:

Saturday—58 Welbeck Street.

Thank you, dearest Mr. Kenyon, for thinking of me on Windermere. Almost thou persuadest me that there are Alps in England—but not quite. Because, you see, (among other because) you might as well

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2 Although, as Kenyon remarks, in a letter of this series, “there is a relationship not very distant between *Mary Barton* and *The Cry of the Children*.”

maintain the beauty of a face without eyes, as of a mountain without snow, against these glorious spiritualities of the earth which we may look at in Switzerland—The peculiar outlooking countenance of the Alps up against the heavens—nothing can rival that, surely, in the world—I, at least, must be forgiven for thinking so, as long as I have not seen your famous English and Welsh hills—As to Malvern, which I have seen, I could as soon compare a child's marble to the globe, as the Malvern hills to the hills about Lucca even!—let alone the Alps.

The weather here is thick and heavy, but warm, and there is not much wrong with me so far. Robert and Wiedeman [Kenyon here notes 'her child'] are well—and now, do you know, you have set yourself right with Wiedeman by sending him a kiss. After your last visit to us, he sadly confided to Wilson that 'Tennyson' (the child has not arrived yet at a knowledge of the courtesies of life)—'Tennyson non ama bene Penini'—because you didn't kiss him!! A kiss is his 'credo' of love, poor little darling!—

So glad I am that you are coming. We miss you dreadfully—Yet we have been turning round and round in a circle of invitations, not able to do half we were asked to do—We went to Mr. Milnes's christening luncheon—and think of his having the good-nature to write from Paris (where he went for a week) to desire that my child should be asked—and think of my vanity not resisting the temptation of it, in spite of Robert and common sense! It was a brilliant luncheon—plenty of fine people, and fine spirits, which is such a different thing!—The baby, carried round the room in India Muslin and Brussels lace to humanize us all—an admirable baby, who understood her position and never once cried. Mr. Thackeray was there, and Edwin Landseer, with the rest. And my child behaved like an angel, and knocked the table when the host had made a speech—only refusing to kiss the baby,—which was a fault certainly.

Then, we went to Farnham for two days, on a visit to Mr and Mrs Paine—and there, we met (besides the purple heath) Mr Kingsley, and I liked him extremely, and so did Robert. He is original and intense, and full of kindness and goodness, it seemed to me.

The Proctors go away to Brighton next Tuesday—on the same morning that their son leaves England—which is well contrived—Today, we met Mrs. Procter at Rogers's, when we went there to breakfast. He was in great force, and pleasant to hear and see,—he asked us to go again on Monday morning,—to which we said 'yes' of course. Mr. Forster paid us a little visit yesterday, and I was quite pained to observe the melancholy into which he has dropt from physical suffering and seclusion. He, too, goes to Brighton on Saturday—and we are to pass Tuesday evening with him in manner of farewell.

1 Mrs. Browning's maid.
2 It was his first child. During this same visit to England Browning attended the christening of another baby, Hallam Tennyson.
Yesterday, too, came the Belgian minister to thank Robert for his essay,¹ but Robert was not at home, so he had to throw away his graciousness (and he was very gracious) upon me instead. He will come again, he says, to see Robert. We two foreigners (meanwhile) talked about you English, with much analytical philosophy and a little criticism.

Are you aware that Miss Bayley, not only dreams of Rome, as you and ourselves do, but seriously make[s] a question of it? Mrs. Jameson, too, turns her face towards Rome, notwithstanding her revelations [?] against it.

Here are the two or three words you asked for. We use many in talking of you, dearest cousin,—Come back soon—

Your ever affectionate and grateful

Ba.²

Mrs. Gaskell replied at once to Kenyon, evidently expressing admiration of Mrs. Browning while taking objection to her remarks on our English hills; whereupon Kenyon wrote again:—

39 Devonsh. Place.
June 23/1853

I thank you dear Mrs. Gaskell for your very fresh and agreeable letter. You may well puzzle about Mrs. Browning's unreadable handwriting. The Boy's name is Wiedeman—I am not sure if I spell it rightly—the maiden name of Mr. Browning's Mother—Luckily he has another name—Robert—for I hold it quite unchristian to christen a child with such a puzzling name as the 'Wiedeman.' . . .

On my part I certainly propose to gratify my cousin by sending her your letter—to Florence—within a few days. I know how it will please her!—

I know your Northern hills—'Whernside, Penygent, and Ingleborough'—and all the lake country hills very well—having spent much time among them—and was among the lakehills only last year—and— as I looked at them—agreed with you that the Malvern hills are not our best specimen.—Yet Wordsworth had expressed to me, more than once, that he considered the Malvern Hills—low as they are—'as the most mountainous-looking range in England.' . . .

I have seen Mrs. Paine—more than once—with Mrs. Browning—a genial-tempered Creature—who struck with my cousin's poetry—affectionately sought her acquaintance.—

¹ This must refer to Browning's essay on Shelley, prefixed to the spurious Shelley letters published that year, 1852. A copy, presumably, had been given to the Ambassador.

² With this compare letter to Mrs. Martin, 2 September, 1852, covering some of the same ground (E. B. B., Letters, London, 1897, ii. 63-4).
I quarrel sadly with the Brownings—both Wife and Husband—for their many and as I call them insolent obscurities—all for want of pains-taking—But I know of no writer who touches the heart of far-off readers—as she does—and if ever you come to know her—as I hope—for both your sakes—you may—you will find that she is only the more estimable the nearer you come to her—I was going to say—love-able only for a doubt whether poets are ever as loveable as their writings—

I am Dear Mrs Gaskell—
Very truly yours
John Kenyon.

He was as good as his word. Mrs. Gaskell's letter was sent without delay, producing the following open-hearted communication from Casa Guidi, complete with tears, Hebrew etymology, and Penini:—

_Casa Guidi—Florence._
_July 16 [1853 postmark]_

I don't know, my dear Mrs. Gaskell, whether I ought to write to you, but, as it would be difficult for me to help it, I follow the morality of the world in doing what is easiest and pleasantest whether it is right or wrong. I had just finished 'Ruth' when my dear great-hearted friend Mr. Kenyon, who finds the directest way of giving pleasure by instinct, sent me your letter to himself. Hear the 'echoes in the hills'!—The combination of a very strong feeling towards you, with the assurance of your kind feeling towards me, is too much for reserve—carries me at once over every thought of our being strangers in the flesh to one another—And I write—and thank you from my heart for your sympathy and appreciation—I love and honour your books—especially 'Ruth' which is noble as well as beautiful, which contains truths purifying and purely put, yet treats of a subject scarcely ever boldly treated of except when taken up by unclean hands—I am grateful to you as a woman for having so treated such a subject—Was it quite impossible but that your Ruth should die? I had that thought of regret in closing the book—Oh, I must confess to it—Pardon me for the tears' sake!—

Shall I spell out to you the name of my child—Robert Wiedeman Barrett. So he was christened! 'Robert' from my husband, because

1 Cf. E. B. B., _Letters_, ii. 141-2. "Tell me if you have read _Ruth_. That's a novel which I much admire. It is strong and healthy at once, teaching a moral frightfully wanted in English society. Such an interesting letter I had from Mrs. Gaskell a few days ago [her reply to the present one]—simple, worthy of _Ruth_. By the way, _Ruth_ is a great advance on _Mary Barton_, don't you think so?" Her opinion of _Mary Barton_ was not very favourable (i. 471-2). Charlotte Brontë also wanted to know of Ruth "why should she die?" (Haldane, p. 65).
there is a family necessity for Robert to follow Robert—But I wont have two Roberts in our house—I strongly object to the confusion—and the pollution—(which ‘confusion’ means in the Hebrew, you know). So I call him by his second name Wiedeman, which was the maiden name of my husband’s mother, German by extraction—It was well to give him that saint’s name,—for she passed from the world as our baby entered it, turning the joy into grief—The association was strong and tender—too bitter at first not to be very tender afterwards—You see it is not a fanciful name, caught up for fantastic reasons, and this time you will be able to read it, wont you? I shall like you to remember the name of our child—He is good and loving, and has it in his face—the faint spiritual little face shut up in golden ringlets; yet with plenty of sound, loud, silver-ringing, earth-joy, which makes the house happy—dear darling!

We are forced to give up our summer visit to England this year, but next summer we hope and mean to be in London—Will there be a chance of seeing you then, dear Mrs. Gaskell?—I write for my husband as well as for myself—He is not a thick and thin novel-reader like me, but he was absorbed in your Ruth and feels all my feelings on it.

May God bless you and strengthen your [rest on flap of envelope] hands and heart to do more good work for the world’s grateful use! Make room, meanwhile, in a kind thought, for one who, if she had seen your face, might boast of being your friend—why not now therefore?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Mrs. Gaskell’s reply found the Browning at the Bagni di Lucca where Robert was busy bringing *Men and Women* towards completion. The scenery of *By the Fireside* is drawn from the mountains where Mrs. Browning rode about on her donkey, and from where on 7 October she sent the following long and self-revealing letter:

My dear Mrs. Gaskell

Your letter followed me to this place where we have been living for three months an exquisite summer-life, somewhat in the manner of the dwellers in tents—which is my native manner I think—for there must surely be gypsey blood in me, unless gypsey-soul should be enough for the purpose. I like social liberty better than political liberty even, and hate Mrs Grundy worse than the Czar. Such a summer we have had here! Nothing makes a strong woman of me,—but I ride about the mountains on a donkey in a round peasant’s hat for which I should be pelted in Manchester, and see such divine visions as of a new heaven and new earth from the summits as you cannot dream of in England except when you are poetical or take opium—But all is at an end now—It is getting too cold, here in the mountains, for a tent-life, and in this room I write in,
is no carpet, while five folding doors keep up the draughts carefully 'sans intermission.' So we go back to Florence on Monday, to stay there a month or more, previous to our removal to Rome for the winter. Next summer we must be back in London for a time.

I turn to a second page (which looks ungrateful) to thank you for your most kind and interesting letter. How it pleased me that you should care to write to me so much of yourself—and, now, how I seem to know you and to hold your hand!—May God bless you, and the world through you!—I think you have the power of doing a great deal of good. But I shall not tell you of my past as you have told me of yours. You are happy to be able to talk of your past. I never can talk of mine—no, not even to my husband. His plough furrowed up all my green lands, so that to look back even to my joyful childhood makes me start with pain. My husband says I am morbid in respect to these things—which is true perhaps—My past will never learn to lie still, as perhaps a past should—It is alive, and throbs even under this present—Feel.—

There is one anniversary which I like to remember, nay, two—my wedding-day, above seven years ago—and my child's birthday—For all the rest I cultivate oblivion, and am in this assisted by a natural gift of inaptitude for numbers and days of the month, and years. But those seven years I am ready to talk of to anybody—I like to talk of them, to lift up the folds of them, and to thank God for all the happiness hid in each—If there are shadows even here,—a little rent or a little stain—it has not been the fault of my husband—no indeed.

One feels shy, as you say, in speaking of one's husband, so I leave mine to tell you of my child.—Wiedeman,—Penini—as we commonly call him, because in his vain aspiration to say Wiedeman he called himself so—Penini sounds like a fairy's name—and he looks like a fairy—he has been called twenty times a fairy-child by different strangers—and really he does look like a fairy—slight and small, radiant and active, his running is like flying, and his long shining ringlets seem to lift him up from the ground—With an affinity though for angels rather! 'Oh, dear Mamma, I do want a litty angel to play wiz so velly mush—An angel wiz wings, and no dless on!' (He has seen angels 'with wings and no dress on' in his Florentine pictures)—And when his nurse objected to his running about the room in the morning without his nightgown before going into his bath, the answer was—'But the angels does it.' He is four years old. More's the pity—I wish they were coming over again—

Now let me confess to you—My whole personal vanity is absorbed in that child—As women are vain of their eyes and hair and complexion—yes, just so,—just as vilely—I am vain of his curls and his red cheeks, and his long dark eyelashes. I look at him for halfhours together as the Lady Matildas look in the glass—More's the shame, I know.

As to my husband, I am not vain of him—On the contrary a very wholesome state of humility is always connected with him, because I know
so perfectly that he is too good for me—that I am not worthy of him in one thing but love—Only Love is a sort of leveller.

Oh, that first mother’s rapture you speak of, and I have felt and feel!—how I echo back what you say—It was the stronger in me that I had made up my mind not to have a living child—Without much reason I believe, for everything on that occasion had gone right with me—but I was weak you know, and I had had two disappointments already through weakness, as I have had two since—yet in the midst of all these shipwrecks the living soul was landed safely—I couldn’t realise to myself the possibility though—I was sure he wouldn’t be born alive. And I remember how all the time I was ill, the sight of the prepared cradle lined with pink and set at the bottom of the bed, tormented me—how I would have given anything in the world to say ‘Take that cradle away,’ but had not courage because I was too superstitious to say it. (I am horribly superstitious when you come to know me.) And when the child was born I fell into an unbecoming sort of ecstasy—clapped my hands and talked aloud various pure madnesses for which only God and a woman can hold me excused. ‘He is mighty and despiseth not.’ I remember that my impulse was to leap out of bed and dance and sing—Now a solemn joy is what one should have felt. I should have written it so in a poem. But life is stronger than our art.

I could not nurse him and was content. That more than anything will prove to you my overflowing joy—yes, that more than anything—I was as meek and satisfied as was possible when the physician announced to me that for his sake and mine, I could not be allowed to nurse him. Can you believe it, you?—

My husband, I must tell you what is characteristic of him, was nearly, if not quite, as enchanted with the child as I was—My husband, day by day, and week by week, came to see that baby undressed and put into the bath, taking note of how it grew—how the eyebrows were coming—how the hair would be thick one day. We were both like children with a new doll—I of course the more unreasonable of the two!—as is reasonable.

Imprudent marriages are the most prudent marriages according to my philosophy—and experience—for I too have made an imprudent marriage, I thank God for it. I even remember dear Mr. Kenyon writing to somebody, who of course, told me directly, that we might have no children. So the world judges, even the golden side of the world, made of the Mr. Kenyons! For my part, I congratulate you, dear Mrs. Gaskell, from the bottom of my heart, on having made an imprudent marriage—Also, on all your other goods and blessings of life.

Shall we ever put our children together, I wonder? Is there a chance of your being in London next summer, and do you ever bring with you your youngest child who is most contemporary with mine? ¹

¹ They met at Florence in 1857 (for the first time—Mrs. Chadwick’s suggestion to the contrary, p. 238, is unfounded). Ḷ I hear that Mrs. Gaskell is coming,
My love to all of them for your sake—my husband is gone to Lucca to see a Fra Bartolomeo or he should send you a message. Let me remain in affectionate esteem,

Your friend
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

I have sent you a letter of personalities because I liked yours so much—Keep the law with me henceforward even so—an I for an I.

A number of other women writers are represented in the collection, no others so eminent but all of them of some repute in their day. Anna Jameson, probably in the early days of Mrs. Gaskell’s fame, wrote asking to be remembered “as one who must always be with deep respect and admiration and I may add gratitude Sincerely yours.” The novelist, Geraldine Jewsbury, already mentioned, wrote in the course of a day on which Mrs. Gaskell was to go to a theatre, “Macready acted splendidly last night in ‘Richelieu’ but the play is Bulwer all over and so thin that even good acting cannot give it a body. I once saw Macready in ‘King Lear’ and got fairly frightened—I hope you will have the same good luck!” Since Macready retired from the stage, after many last performances, on 26 February, 1851, this too belongs to early days. Several years later is a letter from Caroline Clive, authoress of the very successful Paul Ferroll (1855), referring to the Life of Charlotte Brontë. “The circumstances in which you were placed were indeed disagreeable—but tho there is a beginning and a middle to trouble, when one is in the active part of it, there is an End also, when whom I am sure to like and love. I know that by her letters, though I was stupid or idle enough to let our correspondence go by; and by her books, which I earnestly admire” (E. B. B., Letters, ii. 259). See some remarks on their meeting in M. of 2 S., p. 170.

There is a very human letter from Macready, 23 February, 1856, about a young woman who long before took to the stage against his advice and since had fallen into distressing circumstances. Mrs. G. had apparently met her and written to the famous actor, who sends what he calls a pitiful contribution, wishing it could be more.

She died 1873 through her dress catching fire. Norton describes, in one of his letters to Mrs. G., how the same fate befell Mrs. Longfellow. Mrs. G.’s friend, Mme. de Circourt, after a similar occurrence, never recovered her health and did not long survive. Women’s dress in the middle of last century must have been nearly as dangerous as the shirt of Nessus.
it lies quite behind, and is good but to be forgotten. Yr biography will always be a model work, and one of wh: the Interest is perpetual."

A curiously interesting glimpse of the Victorian literary young woman is to be found in a letter from Miss Mulock politely but firmly refusing Mrs. Gaskell’s offer to introduce her to useful friends, in the interests of a book which she must finish without delay. It has a P.S. “I have just bethought me that the phrase—‘I can’t pay a visit till book is done’—sounds very like a story—since I go in the country on Monday for a week. But that is not a visit but a sojourn at a farm-house for the express purpose of writing all day in quiet and having country evening-walks. A visit, to strangers—or in any social household—would be ruin to my 3rd. vol. which I am very anxious over. So I have not told a story after all. Fanny Martin is out—or I am sure wd. send a message to you. Today is her birthday and tomorrow mine. She, 22—I, 25.—Are we not a steady pair of elderly women?” This industrious young novelist is better known as Mrs. G. L. Craik, and her diligence was fully rewarded after the appearance of John Halifax Gentleman in 1857. When she became 25 in 1851 she had already published two novels; that on which she was so resolutely engaged was The Head of the Family, published in the same year. Her friend, Frances Martin, lived to write her obituary in the Atheneum, 22 October, 1887. In their early days they were considered very daring. “We had been hearing much of [Miss Mulock] just then [Jan. 1851] from Mrs. Gaskell, who had been meeting her and Miss Frances Martin in London, as two handsome young girls, living in lodgings by themselves, writing books and going about in society in the most independent manner, with their latch-key. Such a phenomenon was rare, perhaps unexampled in those days.”¹ But after all nothing more morally subversive than John Halifax resulted from their habits; and as we have seen Miss Mulock could not bear even the appearance of having told a story.

To this list of the famous who were not exactly great we may add another well-known name, that of Eliza Cook. The

¹ M. of 2 S., p. 64.
letter here reproduced was piloted by another from Charlotte Cushman, the great American actress who was in Europe between 1845 and 1849, and who had evidently met Mrs. Gaskell. The substance of her letter is the same as that of Eliza Cook's, requesting Mrs. Gaskell's collaboration in a new weekly journal which, she says, will have a "large chance at great circulation in consequence of the great 'people popularity' of its proprietor, my friend, Miss Cook." This was Eliza Cook's Journal, a paper for family reading, which lasted from 1849 to 1854. It does not appear that Mrs. Gaskell ever wrote for it. Perhaps even in 1849 the aims and objects stated—or perhaps adumbrated is a better word—by the authoress of The Old Arm Chair may have seemed heavy to contemplate.

10 North Parade
Bath
Janry 22nd. 49

Dear Madam

You may have heard of me through my esteemed friend, Miss Cushman, and moreover, the intense and tearful sympathy excited in my breast by 'Mary Barton' is too genuine to allow me to hold you as a 'perfect stranger' therefore without further preamble let me make known my wishes, with warm hope of your accedence to them.

I purpose publishing a weekly periodical in April—something in the fashion of Chambers, but with fresher blood and more vital activity of principle, to consist of papers calculated to advance the broad interests of Humanity and the social feelings of Morality. Instruction and amusement will be blended. No ultra doctrine of any character will mark it, no rabid excitement of the lower classes be instilled, but Truth and Liberal Progression most firmly advocated in all its breathings. Now my dear Madam would it be agreeable to you to let me have a couple of articles on any popular subjects which your mind suggested as being likely to serve the mass. About two pages or two and a half of Chambers size will suit well and I need not say I should be proud of your co-operation. I pledge you my word the work will be thoroughly respectable in every department and you will have no cause to blush for your place. Should you feel inclined to listen to my appeal a line will oblige at your leisure and I will address you more fully. I find all conspiring to afford me great hopes of success—at least I will endeavour to deserve it.

I cannot close this without offering you my grateful and warm thanks for having written such a book as 'Mary Barton.' The vivid nature portrayed in it goes home to the hearts of all and does more good than the
mumbled homilies of a thousand Priests. Your Genius is nobly directed and God speed it in its good work.

With most sincere respect and admiration I am Dear Madam,
Yours most truly
Eliza Cook.

Bidding farewell to this gallery of Victorian ladies, we return to the less effusive gentlemen. The leading exponents of Christian Socialism all contribute something. Two interesting letters from Kingsley were printed in his wife’s memoir of him,¹ and need not be quoted here. J. M. Ludlow, in the postscript of a letter not otherwise interesting, 18 November, 1856, gives us a hint of the way in which ‘muscular Christianity’ may have been applied to the training of the young in Eversley Vicarage. “Do you know of a truthful young pugilist about 10 years old, who might be educated with young Maurice Kingsley, now of that age, at Eversley, under a German tutor, sharing the expense? Truth-speaking and the use of the fists the only essential qualifications. Maurice confiding his troubles to his mother, tells her she ‘does not know what it is to want a boy to wrestle with.’” F. D. Maurice sends “a rather formidable volume,” his Lectures on the Unity of the New Testament, 1854, with a letter drawing Mrs. Gaskell’s attention to what he fears may seem a rather strange allusion to Ruth on page 630.² And finally, Thomas Hughes, author of Tom Brown’s Schooldays, at the time a barrister in the Chancery Court, writes asking her if she cannot write a book “to prove to people that it doesn’t in the least matter whether A or B or anybody else has any given piece of property? I wish you would.” But that would have been a task more natural for a lawyer than for Mrs. Gaskell. He adds that he is glad to hear she will write for “our new Quarterly wherein everybody is to sign his or her name and write what he or she really believes.” The first number was to come out in January, 1859.

¹ Fifth ed., 1877, i. 370; ii. 24-5.
² See Ruth, p. xiv, where the allusion is quoted. Emily Taylor writes during one of Mrs. G.’s London visits, “If you shd be prevented hearing Mr. Maurice on Sunday, I assure you he is in general heard to quite as great advantage (I think much more so) when lecturing in his class at Queen’s College—on Monday morning.”
V. RUSKIN, ROSSETTI, MONCKTON-MILNES, READE.

In the year 1857 Manchester suddenly became a place of pilgrimage for all who pretended to any interest in the arts. An Exhibition of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom was opened by Prince Albert at Old Trafford on 5 May. It was visited by no less than 1,336,715 people, including the Queen, Prince Napoleon, the Poet Laureate, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and many other distinguished personages.\(^1\) The year was remembered afterwards by Mrs. Gaskell as a criterion of busyness, visitors coming and going at her house day after day while she went on for ever.\(^2\) It is only to be expected that the leading art-critic of the day found himself much occupied over this event, examining the exhibits, talking with friends, and lecturing. "Ruskin lectures here on the 10th and 13th [July] on our exhibition," Mrs. Gaskell writes to Norton, "It will be worth hearing." As the weeks went by the excitement gradually turned into weariness, as usually is the case with those who take Exhibitions too earnestly. On Wednesday, 30 September, she writes, "Really after long hard hot days at the Exhibition, showing the same great pictures over and over again to visitors, who have only time to look superficially at the whole collection, one does want to 'sulk and be silent' in the evenings."\(^3\) Ruskin seems to have felt much the same, but neither of them was too tired for visiting and being visited. The "Wednesday" of the following letter, as the sequel shows, was probably that on which Mrs. Gaskell had written to Norton:

"Palatine Hotel
Wednesday evening.

Dear Mrs Gaskell
If I were to come in about your tea-time tomorrow evening, should I find you at home?—I find I have more to do at the exhibition

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\(^2\) Another Manchester event which filled Mrs. G.'s house was the meeting of the British Association there in September, 1861 (see *Letters to Norton*, pp. 75-6). There is a letter from Huxley in this collection regretfully declining an invitation to be her guest on that occasion.

\(^3\) *Letters to Norton*, pp. 6, 8, 13, 72. Norton himself had visited the Exhibition with the Gaskells immediately before returning to America, and wrote an article on it for the November number of the *Atlantic Monthly*. 
than I supposed, and I come home tired and don’t feel fit to go out to dine; but I get rested again by the time you have done dinner, as I suppose.

Probably I may be obliged to leave Manchester with my work half done, as it is—but I hope—not without, one way or another, the pleasure of seeing you again. If you cannot take me tomorrow evening I would come to any part of the exhibition you tell me, at any hour after two tomorrow afternoon—but I could not stay for much chat, as I have found several kinds of things I have to look seriously over.

Most faithfully yours

J. Ruskin.

Sincere regards to Miss Gaskell.

But the weariness was too much for him. He forgot his appointment, precisely because, as he so carefully explains, he so much wanted to keep it. One may well suppose that by this time he had got into a state in which any topic might be regarded as “better than pictures”—otherwise the sentiment with which the letter closes was hardly natural to the Ruskin of 1857.

(Post-mark Manchester)

Oct 2 57

Dear Mrs Gaskell,

Just half an hour before the time of my pleasant appointment today, I met with a friend whom I have not seen for several years;—We got into chat which put everything topsy-turvy in my head—and I only remembered my appointment three hours afterwards.—I tell you this not so much in mere courage of necessary truth telling, as in the belief that you will trust me for also telling you truth when I say that I often make mistakes of this kind when the appointment I forget is precisely the one in which I am most interested; mere formal or discomforting duties I set down in my note book—and they hang over my conscience till I have fulfilled them, like clouds, but when I say to myself ‘there’s no fear of my forgetting Mrs Gaskell’; ¹ it is precisely that which comes to pass. And the worst of all is that I shall not now be able to see you at all, this time, having to leave tomorrow—Still—I could not have been good for much in any kind of way after these exhibition days; I was wearied and confused—as the result of your kindness in coming to the exhibition yesterday shows too well—I hope to see you in London, where we can talk of something better than pictures—

Ever—with sincere regards to Miss Gaskell

Faithfully and respectfully yours

J Ruskin.

¹ At this point he originally wrote “or some such thing” but scored it out.
At the time of the Exhibition Mrs. Gaskell was evidently on terms of only polite acquaintance with Ruskin. But he entertained a high opinion of her work, and his later letters are a great deal more informal and intimate. One of them, bearing the postmark 2 April, 1859, is another confused apology, this time about a wheel (spinning wheel?) which Mrs. Gaskell had sent to the Ruskin family. He had been delaying his answer to her letter “in expectation of the wheel’s arrival,” not knowing that it had arrived long before. He now signs “affectionately yours.” A year later, after the last volume of his Modern Painters had been given to the world, he writes yet another letter of apology:

Denmark Hill
Camberwell.
27th Oct (p.m. 1860)

Dear Mrs Gaskell

When I used to have something to do, I kept some order; now that I’ve nothing to do, I’m entirely demoralized, and all the house is in a litter, and I live in it like a squirrel in a lot of nutshell—(I would use a less complimentary comparison—only then you might think you were expected to contradict it)—caring about nothing in all the wood—I really thought, however, that I had answered Meta’s letter—which I considered—as I do all news from Plymouth Grove—a nut; and I’m sure the envelope of it will turn up among Docketed Shells, some day.—But I was thrown into a good deal of arrear and confusion by an accident which happened to my mother two months ago, a fall, breaking neck of thighbone. She is getting better, and the cure promises to be more complete than is usually the case, but I’ve had a good deal of anxiety about her, at first, and various work and letter writing in consequence out of my way: not to speak of having to read Evangelical books to her, and as if I liked them, too (in order to keep her comfortable at all about the state of my mind)—and going in consequence swearing about the house for some hours afterwards.

Mother being now generally in a state of progress; and I hope—‘Boston’s fourfold state’ being likely in consequence to come to a standstill—I shall perhaps have temper enough to look at Meta’s drawings without saying anything savage—so please let them come—(to address on this note)—as soon as may be—I shall really have great pleasure in looking over them and believe me ever with sincere remembrance to Mr. Gaskell—and repentances—no less sincere—to Meta—And the creamiest of tender messages to Puss.

Ever faithfully and affectionately yours

J. Ruskin.
Still later in date is the letter quoted by Ward (not in the present collection) in his introduction to Cranford, page xxiv: “I have just been reading ‘Cranford’ out to my Mother. She has read it about 5 times; but the first time I tried, I flew into a passion at Captain Brown’s being killed and wouldn’t go any further—but this time my Mother coaxed me past it—and then I enjoyed it mightily. I do not know when I have read a more finished little piece of study of human nature. . . . Nor was I ever more sorry to come to a book’s end.”

A visit to the great Manchester Exhibition was one of the minor unfulfilled intentions of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In 1857 he was almost 30, beginning to be widely spoken of as painter and poet, and not yet married to Elizabeth Siddal. He did not go to the Exhibition because he with William Morris and others were busy giving an exhibition of their own in the Oxford Union, an exhibition of how not to paint frescoes. A reference to that unfortunate enterprise enables us to date the following letter in the first half of 1858. He had not yet made Mrs. Gaskell’s acquaintance personally, but was to do so within the course of the next year:—

14 Chatham Place
Blackfriars.

Dear Mrs. Gaskell,

I had the pleasure of a visit from your friend Mr. Bright, who brought me a very kind note of yours. I only hope, if you do visit London, it may not happen to be at a time when I am at Oxford again, as I shall have to be for some weeks during the long vacation, and where it seems I had the ill luck to miss seeing you last year. Nor did I ever make one in the world’s visit to Manchester, where I had promised myself, among other pleasures, that of calling on you, but my Oxford work prevented me from going to the Fine Art palace at that last moment to which, as usual, I had put off my visit. I trust however I may not miss you this year in London, but may have the pleasure of showing you whatever I then have by me, which I trust will be more than at present.

Believe me,

dear Mrs. Gaskell,

Yours very faithfully
D G Rossetti

A letter to Norton records Mrs. Gaskell’s impression of the painter when she met him in London in the early summer of the
following year. "I think we got to know Rossetti pretty well. I went three times to his studio, and met him at two evening parties—where I had a good deal of talk with him, always excepting the times when ladies with beautiful hair came in, when he was like the cat turned into a lady, who jumped out of bed and ran after a mouse. It did not signify what we were talking about or how agreeable I was if a particular kind of reddish brown, crêpe wavy hair came in, he was away in a moment struggling for an introduction to the owner of said head of hair. He is not as mad as a March hare, but hair-mad." But she says she had felt his pictures deeply.¹

On leaving London Mrs. Gaskell went for a month to a farm at Auchencairn on the Solway Firth, and to that address Rossetti's next letter was sent. He was then bestirring himself in the matter of those translations from the early Italian poets with which he had been occupied from time to time since the late forties. The Cavalcanti versions, owing to the obscurity of the originals, were among the most difficult to execute; had Rossetti known what has since been discovered, that not one of those poems was written by Cavalcanti at all, he would have been spared some of the laborious endeavours he describes in the letter. The Early Italian Poets was eventually printed in 1861, Rossetti's first volume:—

14 Chatham Place
Blackfriars, July 18th 59.

My dear Mrs. Gaskell

I must have seemed unthankful indeed for your first kind letter and kind offices with M. de Circou~t.² The reason of my long delay in answering was that I was waiting for the return of the proof-sheets which now accompany this letter by book-post. I hope they will still be in time to share, in the measure of their deserts, the enviable destiny which you tell me awaits all missives in your ultima Thule, and of which your letter gives me so vivid a picture. The proofs contain the series of Cavalcanti's poems forming part of my book, the general title-page to which you will find at the end of them. I do not know whether you are acquainted with the Vita Nuova of Dante—his autobiography of his youth—or with such facts

¹ Letters to Norton, p. 38.
² See below, p. 166. I have not found the name elsewhere in connection with Rossetti; there is no reference to it in the historical matter of The Early It. Poets.
as are known about Cavalcanti—but these last you have probably gathered from M. de Circourt’s papers, of which I hope now, relying on your mercy, not on my tardy deservings, to earn a sight. I must tell you, on behalf of my self-conceit, that the most laborious part of what I send you is not on the surface—having consisted in the arranging and rendering as far as might be comprehensible, this set of poems which are scattered in various editions without attempt of any kind to make sense of them either in the way they are printed or in their getting together;—so that much which is in fact commentary is embodied in the translations and headings, as I have tried as far as possible to dispense with the wearisome adjunct of notes. Short notices of Cavalcanti and some others among my Poets will be necessary, and these are the only portions of my work still left to do. But perhaps, after all, I am reckoning on much more attention than you will have time to bestow on my translations, since how do I know what work of your own may be occupying you at Auchencairn,—and reaping no doubt all the benefit of the healthy peace which your letter describes? I have not been to one party since I saw you—it is a thing I can only pull myself up to about twice a Season—but have been working hard at my pictures all the time; in an atmosphere, however, different indeed from yours—of London, and (alas at this season of the year!) of Thames.

I will not ask you how you like the Guenevere book, for I know for certain you must like it greatly by this time. It is a book, as you say, made for quiet places. With all its faults of youth, I must say I think the Arthurian part of it has much the advantage (in truth to the dramatic life of the old romance) over Tennyson’s Idyls of the King, just out; wonderful as of course these last are, in rhythm, in finish, in all modern perfections. Another poem of Tennyson’s—the Grandmother in ‘Once a Week,’—seems more really in his highest vein to my feeling. Nothing finer could be written surely of its kind.

I have read two vols. of Adam Bede—a real book as well as a new one. My brother tells me you are in the secret of its authorship—but that is no reason that he or I should be, you will say. And now, good bye for the present, with kindest remembrances to the Misses Gaskell, and not without such envy as I must needs bear you on this stagnant morning, when I feel bottled and corked down in Thames water, and when the very water cart going by my window seems by contrast fresher than the falls of Lodore—

Ever sincerely yours

D G Rossetti.

P.S. I was actually omitting my thanks to M. de Circourt, whose letter I return.

1 Mrs. G.’s holiday at Auchencairn is described also in the letter to Norton cited above.
2 Published 1859.
Rossetti’s praise of *The Grandmother* will not surprise those who remember the Pre-Raphaelite belief in simple subjects taken from contemporary life, such as Rossetti himself had treated in *My Sister’s Sleep*. This theoretical attitude, together with the growing reaction against Tennyson’s reputation, must have led him to praise this poem in which the Laureate is seen without his singing robes in a vein of sentimental pathos such as he had exhibited in *The May Queen*. On the other hand, while Rossetti’s qualification amounts to a good deal, few will now disagree with his comparison between Morris’s *Defence of Guenevere* poems (1858) and Tennyson’s *Idylls* which began to appear in 1859. At the time many might have disagreed. Caroline Norton wrote to Mrs. Gaskell from Edinburgh in February of this year:

“I have just had a great solemn treat in hearing Tennyson read his new poem of Guenever’s repentance;—Better than 10,000 sermons played to angels’ harps. No woman could ever do wrong who heard it. There is in it a ‘song’ (of the Bridegroom in Scripture)

‘Too late—too late—you cannot enter in’

that is marvellous for beauty and for pain."

The last of Rossetti’s letters in the collection has several interesting passages. It refers to that projected volume of original poems which was long postponed through his wife’s death and his desperate remorseful burying of the manuscript. There is also a touch of uneasiness over the encroachment of his literary ambitions on his career as a painter—did he recollect as he wrote these words, his father’s complaints in earlier days? And at the end there is a reference to Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* volume, 1862, the first real success of the so-called Pre-Raphaelite group of poets. As long ago as January, 1861, Rossetti had had an idea of sending ‘the Goblins’ (i.e. the single poem) to Mrs. Gaskell “who is good-natured and appreciative, and might get it into the *Cornhill* or elsewhere.” Whether he did so or not, it never appeared in any periodical.

1 *Life and Letters*, 1895, ii. 165.
My dear Mrs. Gaskell

I know one has no right to beg and lose and beg again, but in the troublesome delay as to getting my book of ‘Italian Poets’ out, I have lost Monsieur de Circourt’s address which you kindly sent me before. So might I again trouble you for it, as I should like to send him a copy now that the volume is fairly launched at last. I am very limited as to the number of copies at my disposal, or it would have been a great pleasure to accompany this note with one for your acceptance. Do you know, though, I am going to bring out some original doings in verse before long, and hope then to make amends to all friends to whom I could not send this, as no doubt the edition will belong only too much to myself.

Should you happen to know the address of the Revd. Mr Scott, late of Owens College, Manchester,¹ I would be greatly obliged for that also. Nor do I know his Christian name.

This is giving you a great deal of trouble which I rely on your kindness to pardon. I hope you will not fancy that I neglect my painting for any literary attempts. My sins of the latter kind are all old ones, and only now call for confession, and if it may be, absolution.

I shall hope some day to have another welcome visit from yourself and your daughters when in London, and must trust to be ready then with something worth showing, which (the words recall to me with dismay) would be too little the case at present.

My sister, too, has a little volume of Poems nearly ready (Macmillan publishing) which, I have no doubt, will notify its appearance to you in person.

Believe me, dear Mrs. Gaskell,
Yours ever sincerely
D G Rossetti.

I would have been strange if the collection had not contained letters from Richard Monckton Milnes, who made it his business to know everybody. Mrs. Gaskell counted him as a friend from as early as 1849 when she once breakfasted at his house,² and it is he who is reputed to have said that Mrs. Gaskell’s presence in Manchester alone made that town possible as a residence for people of literary taste.³ He writes from the House of Commons on 1 May, [1854?], having just returned from France where he had found so much political discontent “that it tainted

¹ A. J. Scott, 1805-1866, first Principal of Owens College, 1851-57.
² M. of 2 S., p. 42.
³ Mary Barton, p. xxxvi.
all society and made even ordinary intercourse uncomfortable. The nation gave up its liberties to get rest and money—and now they have got both despotism and war which they did not bargain for.” The war presumably was the Crimean. When he next wrote the Indian Mutiny had begun:

_Bognor_  
_Sussex_  
_Sep't._ 16 [1857]

... I am just returned from the Continent, where I have been staying in the country with M. Guizot. He begged to be remembered to you and to express his continued admiration of all you write.¹

You may be sure you have had my full sympathy in your late troubles. I was certainly averse to your bringing out the ‘Life’² so soon, foreseeing that some such adventure as has happened was inevitable. These troubles will soon pass away, and it will only be remembered that you have contributed to our literature one of the best of Biographies, and have proved the membership of your friend to the divine family, of which such as Burns, Chatterton, and Keats are representatives.

I hope you have no relatives or near friends in India: one can think of little else now. I take it as a personal disappointment, having made myself believe that our civilising mission there had been more successful and was an example to the rest of the world.

With best regards to your family from Mrs Milnes and myself,  
I am,  
Yrs very truly  
Richd. Monckton Milnes

Monckton Milnes was raised to the peerage as Lord Houghton in 1863. There are two other notes in that year, one on 21 December saying that he intended to call the next day, and another on the 23rd sending a _jeu d'esprit_ which he had evidently mentioned to the Gaskells during his visit. It is a printed piece of verse called _A Literary Squabble_ and signed J. R. P.; the letters of the alphabet in session quarrel about the pronunciation of Houghton—Hooton, Hawton, Hofton, Huffton, Hoton, Howton. The owner of that doubtful name remarks in his note that the verses omit the usual Yorkshire version of Ooton.

¹ See below, p. 167. Mrs. G. had met him at Monckton-Milnes' house in 1849.  
² Of Charlotte Brontë.
Rossetti alone among the correspondents represents the new movement in poetry; the only forward looking novelist among them is Charles Reade. His letter is dated only Nov. 13, but he was obviously at the beginning of his career. Peg Woffington and Christie Johnstone in 1853 had a discouraging reception; *It is never too late to mend*, 1856, which founded his fame, was also received with abuse in some quarters, and the present letter may belong to that date.¹

28A Regent St.
Nov. 13.

Madam,

You see by my date I have tried to obey you and take no notice of your generous little note: and now you see I have failed at last: how shall I excuse myself? I think I can read you, and I think the Truth will be an excuse with you.

Thus then it is: it makes me uneasy, almost unhappy not to thank you for your valued note: I feel so churlish so ungrateful while I am silent—these feelings are not pleasant:—do you accept my excuse?—

I perfectly comprehend you dear Madam: an infinitesimal quill-driver was, you think, unjust to me a novice and this has made you more than just to me; and with respect to a single passage less than just to two ladies who write that sort of thing much better than I shall ever do it: you will let me accept in full your kind-ness, and modify your praise.

But I am not likely to forget that the Authoress of 'Mary Barton' has discovered a touch of Nature in one of my works and encourages me to proceed. This does cheer me, as you intended it should, and I will own to you that I write with great difficulty, and often faint by the way. So then you will know that words of encouragement from such a quarter are no inconsiderable boon to me: and I hope you will not regret having cast a flower upon my path.

I am Madam
Your very faithful Servt.
Charles Reade.

VI. BUNSEN, MAX MULLER AND FROUDE; OXFORD AND SOME ACADEMIC FRIENDS.

In the summer of 1849 Mrs. Gaskell spent some weeks at Mill Brow, Skelwith, near Ambleside.² While there she received a letter from Baron Bunsen, whose acquaintance she had

² See a reference to this party in Crabb Robinson, Sunday, 14 October, 1849.
made in the same year, recommending his "dear young friend Max Müller, one of our most distinguished, pure, and amiable young men." The famous philologist had come to England in 1846 with an introduction to Bunsen, subsequently becoming one of his intimate friends; and he settled in Oxford in 1848. Meanwhile he was recommended to her also by another recently made friend, J. A. Froude. The latter happened also to be staying at Skelwith at the time with the Dukinfield Darbishires, having undertaken the post of tutor to their sons for a year.¹

Skelwith, Sunday morning.

My dear Mrs Gaskell

Müller (my German about whom I have raved to you) is with me. He is Bunsen's friend as well as mine, and Bunsen as well as I (and yourself in your own Book) has made him anxious to pay his respect to you. May I take the liberty of bringing him to call this afternoon. I fear this is forcing him on you—hardly leaving you the alternative. But pray believe there is the alternative and if you had rather not do not hesitate to say so.

faithfully yours
J. A. Froude.

While I am asking favours I forget to be modest. I have another friend with me Morier,² in like predicament as regards wishing to see you. I cannot promise you as much pleasure from seeing him as I am sure you will feel in seeing Müller. He is only an honest warm polished Englishman. I am taking terrible liberties, but you owe something to your readers if you will write books and I am not bringing lion hunters.

The arrival of this youthful and high-spirited party is recalled by Max Müller in a letter written much later, after 1857, when Mrs. Gaskell had paid her first visit to Oxford. "As you seem to doubt whether I remember our first meeting at the Lakes, may I ask whether you remember the German Serenade with which we disturbed your slumber,—Mr. Froude, Mr. Morier and myself—when we arrived in the middle of the night at Skelwith? It seems to me like yesterday:—you need not be frightened however, for I think I may promise that when I come

¹ M. of 2 S., p. 47; see also pp. 45-6 from which it appears that Mrs. G. had recently seen him in Manchester.
² Possibly (Sir) Robert Morier, 1826-93, afterwards a well-known diplomatist; a Balliol man.
to Manchester, I shall announce my arrival in a less noisy manner. I thought there was some hope of your paying us another and a longer visit at Oxford. When is that to be?” In another letter, 14 August, 1864, enclosing a little poem of his composition in the Schleswig dialect, he recurs to the Skelwith serenade, “You are not at all safe against being disturbed by another Serenade, and though the Serenades of three little daughters sometimes disturb an old father’s slumbers, yet his heart is, I believe, as light as it was fifteen years ago.”

There are five other letters from Froude, but none of them of much interest. He writes on 5 January, 1862, with regard to a certain Cosmo Innes whom Mrs. Gaskell had been introducing to the Circourts: “As to his knowing what Mary Queen of Scots was like, I believe he—or any one else—as much knows it as they know what Titania is like. She was one of those curious people whose features are seen in their mind, an ‘enchanting’ person in the literal sense of the word. Men did not see her—they stopped short in the idea which she produced in their imagination and therefore no two of them saw her exactly alike.” Another letter, 20 October, 1863, written partly in his capacity as editor of Fraser’s Magazine, welcomes her French Life which appeared there in 1864. Longman, he says, has bought the periodical and it may now be possible to offer her “something better in the way of pay than under the old régime.” Meanwhile his second wife was recovering from the birth of her first child, luckily a boy, and not likely to make the two little half-sisters jealous; and the seventh and eighth volumes of his great History were about to be published.

The visit to Oxford mentioned above was instigated, Mrs. Gaskell tells Norton, by him and Ruskin, and by Lady Hatherton. The latter, Lord Hatherton’s second wife, had been Caroline Davenport of Macclesfield; her family had been long known to the Gaskells. Lord Hatherton himself encouraged the visit in a letter from Teddesley, 8 November, 1857.

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1 See below, p. 166.  
My dear Mrs Gaskell,

The enclosed belong to you.—You really ought to contrive to stay a few days at Oxford. A week would not be too long—I only now ask you not to fix any day for your Departure till you have seen Dr Wellesley.¹

You will be surprised and greatly engaged by his learning and information on all subjects—and especially by his feeling for Art—and his acquaintance with its History. There is nothing he does not know or rout out. And then what a Head and brow he has! Besides knowing as much Greek and Latin as is necessary for any useful purpose, he is the first Italian in Italy—and a thorough Frenchman of course—

Then you will see and know Jeune, the master of Pembroke—a learned man—a bold and original thinker—the author and leader of all the recent movements for Academical Reform—and who if he had been a little more complacent in manner—would long ago have been a Bishop²—Both these men are valuable acquaintances for you to make—

Henry Wellesley will find you a Carriage for your exclusive use all day, as long as you stay—and will I doubt not relieve you of much of the expense attending Eating and Drinking.

You really must stay over Sunday next—and hear the peculiar Services of the Place.

H. Wellesley’s Evening Party on Wednesday—will set you going—You will glide with the stream from that Launch at once—a genuine Leviathan—and no hitch.

Caroline will write to Jeune about you.

Very sincerely yours

Hatherton.

You must stay

The visit was duly paid. Mrs. Gaskell did not see Jeune, but managed to see a surprising number of other people in the course of twenty-four hours—Wellesley, Arthur Stanley,³ Matthew Arnold ("getting ready for his inaugural poetry lecture"), The Aclands, the Brodies, and Conington. She heard Stanley lecture, and was not very interested; she was rushed up and down and round about by Wellesley till she was quite bewildered. After ten days she returned for another night, this time meeting Jowett, Mark Pattison, Aurelio Saffi, and Max Müller, and hearing Temple, the new master of Rugby,

¹ Henry Wellesley, Principal of New Inn Hall. He was Lord Hatherton’s brother-in-law.
² Francis Jeune, afterwards V.C. of the University; became Bishop of Peterborough, 1864. The ablest man of business at Oxford in his day (D.N.B.).
³ There is an undated note from him in the collection.
preach in St. Mary's in the morning. Mrs. Gaskell returned
to Plymouth Grove full of delightful though somewhat confused
recollections, and feeling "Mediaeval, that is un Manchester
and un American." On a second visit to Oxford in 1860,
while she and her husband stayed with the Brodies, her two
daughters were welcomed by the mathematician Henry Smith,
Fellow of Balliol, and within the next year Savilian Professor
of Geometry. His hospitality was soon afterwards returned
in Manchester, and on his return to Oxford he wrote as follows
(29 September, 1861): "... Oxford is slowly wakening from
its long vacation sleep, and people are beginning to return,
with newly acquired beards and moustaches from their con-
tinental tours. ... I have ventured to send you a little volume
(which I did not see lying on your drawingroom table) containing
a collection of English Lyric Poetry, edited by Frank Palgrave.
I own I am not quite disinterested in making you this present,
as I am anxious to advertise the book far and wide among my
friends, for Palgrave's sake. However, I hope that you will be
pleased with it, if you have not already seen it." Palgrave too
was a Balliol man; his Golden Treasury had just appeared, 1861.

With Cambridge Mrs. Gaskell seems to have had little to
do, but there is at least a letter from Whewell, the famous master
of Trinity, who had been moved to write by discovering a simi-
larity in situation between a passage in Mary Barton and one in
Goethe's Hermann and Dorothea, translated by Whewell in the
English Hexameter Translations, 1847, which he had recently edited.
"Will you allow me to offer you a little volume of which I was
editor and part author as a testimony of good will and of the
pleasure I have had in making the acquaintance of a person
who does our common county so much honour. I should hardly
have ventured to do so, if I had not thought that you might be
interested to see, in Herman [sic] and Dorothea (which I deem to
be the finest poem of our time) an incident much resembling
one of the most touching ones in Mary Barton; I mean the
woman's declaration of her love forced from her by despair.
It is in the last book of Herman and Dorothea."

1 Letters to Norton, pp. 14-16.  
2 Ibid., p. 53.  
3 12 May, 1849. See p. 106, n. 3.
VII. LETTERS FROM AMERICAN AND FRENCH WRITERS.

The very English quality and sometimes localised interest of Mrs. Gaskell’s work did not prevent her having many admirers in America and even on the Continent. Her books had American editions, and Tauchnitz editions, and translations into French, German, and other languages; through them and through personal contacts she made friends in several countries. Among her American relationships that with C. E. Norton has been sufficiently illuminated by the collection of letters so often quoted in this article. Mrs. Gaskell first met him at Rome in 1857 through William Wetmore Story, the American sculptor and man of letters, the centre of a varied and interesting circle of friends.¹ There is a letter from him in the present collection, written 29 June, 1861, when he and his family were on the move for Geneva; Mr. Gaskell had proposed to visit them at their villa near Siena, but he would be welcome wherever they were. Could not Mrs. Gaskell contrive to accompany him? But Mr. Gaskell, although wanting a companion, did not “wish to have any responsibility during his holidays.” He set off alone, and after wandering up and down in a most odd and erratic way, eventually tracked down the Storys and stayed ten days with them.²

Charlotte Cushman the actress has already been mentioned. John Gorham Palfrey, historian and Unitarian minister, who was in England in 1853, was evidently consulted by Mrs. Gaskell about the documentation of Lois the Witch; there is a letter from him in which he offers to hunt up relevant material upon his return to America. Finally, we have a letter of some length from the American authoress most widely read in England then and for some time to come, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Mrs. Gaskell met her first at a lunch with the Milmans in London, 1853, and was to see her again in Manchester, in June, 1857,

¹ See W. W. Story and his Friends, by Henry James, Boston, 1903. Among them was Aubrey de Vere, who writes to Mrs. G. from 50 Piazza di Spagna, on 1 April [1857]: “If you have not already the Photograph I send you, pray accept it as a little memorial of our visit to the cloisters of the ‘Beloved Disciple’ yesterday.” .

² Letters to Norton, pp. 87 and 94.
paying in fact her first visit to the Exhibition in company with her. The following letter falls between the two meetings.

*Boston, May 24th. 56.*

Mrs Gaskill [sic]

My dear Friend

Permit me to introduce to your notice and regard Mr and Mrs Webb my personal friends.²

Mrs Webb is the daughter of a ‘fugitive Slave’: her freedom was secured by a heroic effort on the part of her mother a short time previous to her birth. She was born in New Bedford in one of the New England states, and subsequently was sent to Cuba: where she passed [sic] her earlier years. She has a decided genius for elocution and as a Dramatic Reader has attained considerable celebrity in our northern states.

Her success is attested by hundreds of notices from the pens of the most competent critics in this country, and her eminent ability has succeeded [sic] in breaking down many of the barriers which prejudice [sic] has reared, and procured her invitations to read from even Pro-Slavery Lyceums and pro-Slavery presses have been compelled to forego their usual sneers at the capability of her race and admit her to be possessed of genius and culture of no common order.

I have recently dramatised Uncle Tom's Cabin expressly for her reading and her rendering of the various characters of the book has been pronounced unequaled [sic].

Mr Webb is a gentleman of talent and culture and any assistance or attention you may bestow upon them will be well-merited by them and be regarded by me as a personal favour.

I take a deep interest in their success in England professionally not only from feelings of warm personal friendship but also that it will advance the antislavery cause in this country by showing how much talent lies concealed in their midst. The talent for elocution and for singing is one which exists to a great extent in the mixed races particularly where as in the present case the mixture is with the warmer blood of Southern nations (Mrs. W’s father was a Spaniard). I am sure that should you hear her read you could not but be delighted and surprised at what must strike you as new and peculiar [sic] in her voice and rendering.

I must say in closing that I and my twin daughters read your ‘North and South’ with so much enthusiasm that it was decreed at the time that mamma should write you an expression of thanks, but Time as he often does stole the pen till the moment of first love was past—but I will not deny

¹ *Letters to Norton*, p. 3; *North and South*, p. xxi; H. B. Stowe’s *Sunny Mem’s of Foreign Lands*, London, 1854, letter xxviii.

² Since the envelope of this letter has no stamp, it may be supposed that the Webbs arrived at Plymouth Grove in due course, bringing the letter with them.
LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MRS. GASKELL

myself the memory of it now. I do hope I may be permitted to see you this summer, I hope to be in England and somewhere perhaps we may meet —You have made me cry very unfairly over Mary Barton when I bought the book to amuse myself with on a journey—but I bear no malice for that. 

With true affection
Ever yours gratefully
H B Stowe.

A much less familiar name though one fairly well known in mid-Victorian England is that of the Swedish novelist, Fredrika Bremer. She was doubtless brought into contact with Mrs. Gaskell by the Howitts—Mary Howitt translated some of her books. In the autumn of 1849 she visited America, returning through England and apparently calling on (or perhaps staying with) the Gaskells on her way. There is a letter from Fairfield, 19 October, 1851, which in its quaint English shows as much moral earnestness as any of the Eliza Cooks and Mrs. Craiks of contemporary England.

Bless you, Elizabeth for your kind heart and all the good and genial influences with which it has surrounded me on my way, all from our meeting in your home! In persons, in books, in letters I have felt it most thankfully. Your friends have been most amiable and useful to me in the informations they have given me, especially the Chadwicks, your books will go with me to my fatherland as dear friends that I there will learn thoroughly to understand, being able to live with them, as time here will not allow off. In your kind letters it is precious to me to see that my written home has been something to your living one. For such purpose, indeed, was it written. I wished to make the picture so that every house, great or small, could have room for it. But I am well aware of that my story of home is only one part of the ideal home, and that the home has a higher aim, higher destinies to fulfil. I have hinted at these in the story of brothers and sisters, but imperfectly, and with the mind still crammed by old prejudices. The morning-dews of a new world have fallen on my soul since then, and have developed latent seeds; seeds that long have kept secretly swelling in my mind. God give them power to grow in his light, and I will do a better work than hitherto, or, at least, I will build an

1 Miss Dullemen gives this date inaccurately as 17 October, 1857; the year looks like 1857 on the letter but the postmark is quite clear. See p. 106, n. 3.
3 Brothers and Sisters, trans. by same, London, 1848.
4 This presumably means that she acquired a higher idea of "the home" from her travels in America.
upper story to my house. Kind friends that took me to your house and home pray with me that the work may be a good one.

Certainly, Elisabeth, I will write to you, when I again am in my own house and home, surrounded by swedish nature and swedish life; I will tell you how that is, in its best and in its worst. So I wanted to look at your Mill and Manufactury-life, so, I think, we should look at all things, then so we can know how to grow, and what is growing, and what is wanting. So I would, in every book, have the heavens and the hells of things, and between them purgatories, and other intermediate realms and means of purification and grace.

When I am at home, I shall study Mary Barton and learn of her; then a story over which Statesmen weep must have power in it for the good of the people.

Goodbye, for a while, kind Elisabeth, love to those you love from your thankful friend.

Fredrika Bremer.

Kind remembrances to the Taylors and the Schwabes.

Finally there are a number of letters from French correspondents. The longest are from de Circourt (Anna-Marie-Joseph Albert conte de Circourt), a scholar of various learning whose chief work was concerned with the Moors in Spain. His wife held a well-known and much frequented salon in Paris; Mrs. Gaskell knew her well, and describes her in a long, graceful and glowing passage of French Life.\(^1\) As we have seen Rossetti applied to M. de Circourt for assistance when preparing the Early Italian Poets, and sent him a copy of the book. “I will receive with great pleasure and gratefulness,” says the French scholar in a letter of 27 April, 1861, “the interesting volume of Mr. Rossetti and I thank you very much for your kindness in giving my direction to the learned author.” For the rest the letters\(^2\) were written to supply Mrs. Gaskell with historical information on various subjects and need not here be reproduced. The first concerns a pretended heroine of the revolutionary wars, a so-called Madame de Cachet, whose supposed existence Circourt characterises as “a monstrous lie.” The second, 23 March, 1862, extends a welcome to Cosmo Innes, the Edinburgh antiquary,\(^3\) and meanwhile supplies him with information

\(^{1}\) Cousin Phyllis, pp. 643-5.  
\(^{2}\) They are all in English.  
\(^{3}\) He was Professor of Constitutional Law and History at Edinburgh.
about old French titles. "My wife," the letter goes on, "re-
mains in the very same state, always struggling with great re-
signation and serenity against the perhaps irremediable and in
some way increasing pains brought upon her by her dreadful
accident. She is now reading with great satisfaction the fine
translation made by Miss Senior of Tocqueville's remains, to
gether with extracts from Mr. Senior's diary, relating to his
conversations with our departed friends. Some of the (till
now) inedited passages are beautiful; some do bear the im-
pression of the transient emotions and the delusions of our
passionate age. In general, the sagacity of Tocqueville for looking
into futurity was not equal to his deep insight into the human
heart and his retrospective knowledge of the past." Ward has
quoted a further passage from this letter imploring Mrs. Gaskell
to give more of her exquisite compositions to the world; but
the date is not as Ward says the autumn of 1861. The third
letter, of 15 April, 1862, records the actual arrival of Cosmo Innes,
"a most agreeable and upright gentleman," and continues the
remarks about French titles to which the enquiries of Innes
had given rise. Less than a year after this Madame de Circourt
died; Mrs. Gaskell had been at her house only a fortnight
before, and hearing the news with great grief lamented with
many others for the husband "who has lived but for her, who
has watched over her so constantly."

The long period of unproductivity which de Circourt com-
plained of, and which was really occasioned by Mrs. Gaskell's
disinclination for composition after her adventure into biography,
is mentioned also by Guizot in the letter of 23 May, 1862, partly
quoted by Ward (Ruth, p. xi). This letter also begins with
Cosmo Innes and his researches in Paris. It goes on:
"J'ai été très sensible à votre aimable souvenir. Rien de ce
qui vous arrive ou de ce que vous faites ne saurait m'être indifférent. Il y a bien longtemps que vous n'avez rien publié.

1 See above, p. 145, n. 2.
2 Journals kept in French and Italian from 1848 to 1852, 1871.
3 Correspondence and Conversations of Alexis de T. with N. W. Senior, 1871. Presumably Mme. de Circourt was reading these two works in manuscript.
4 Wives and Daughters, p. xxix.
Ne nous donnerez-vous pas bientôt quelque nouvel ouvrage?
Je ne connais point de roman qui m'ait ému aussi profondément
que Ruth, et point de Biographie qui m'ait intéressé aussi viva-
ment que celle de Charlotte Bronté.

"Mes filles vous prient de leur conserver les bons sentiments
que vous me témoignez pour elles."

"Croyez moi toujours most sincerely and respectfully yours
"Guizot."

Among other French acquaintances was Prosper Merimeé,
who mentions Mrs. Gaskell in a letter to Mrs. Mohl among
the autographs. To conclude with an even greater name, on
25 July, 1868, after Mrs. Gaskell's death, Victor Hugo wrote a
testimonial to the valuable social work of one of her daughters.

"On m'a communiqué tous les détails relatifs à la cuisine
pour les pauvres établie à Manchester sous l'intelligente et
généreuse direction de Miss J. Gaskell. Je ne puis trop recom-
mander aux bons coeurs cette institution excellente."

Those who have had the patience to read through these mid-
Victorian letters will not, I fear, think themselves rewarded with
any new and striking information. Yet the writers, if they say
nothing of special interest, do at least write in character, so that
this collection has something of the nature of an anthology.
Certainly as one turns from one letter to another, reflecting on the
characters and achievements of their long dead writers, the
literature and history of the period pass like a pageant through
the mind. Carlyle, who advises Mrs. Gaskell to be concise,
is toiling through the thirty-one volumes of his works; Ruskin,
deep in art, geology, and political economy, forgets to keep
his appointments and to answer his letters; talented young ladies
are filling the circulating libraries with their vision of the world,
three volumes at a time, and in order to do so have begun to
assert a startling independence; Mrs. Browning has fled from
Wimpole Street and tyranny to Casa Guidi, freedom, and donkey-
riding in the Apennines; Rossetti's frescoes are glowing out

1 Guizot's daughters had published a French translation of Ruth in 1856.
2 This testimonial seems to have been secured and forwarded by H. de
Mouilpied, an official in the Customs at Guernsey.
their brief year or two of life in the Oxford Union; Manchester for a few surprising months becomes a place of pilgrimage for all lovers of the arts; and while even the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny hardly shake public confidence in England’s well-being and her civilising mission, sensitive minds of all classes are growing yearly more deeply concerned about the real state of the people, so faithfully described in the pages of that quiet and unpretentious writer to whom these letters were addressed.