There’s a foolish old Scotsman called Scotus

Mostly justly a Pictor Ignotus

(D. G. Rossetti)

INTRODUCTION

Although William Bell Scott acknowledges that Rossetti’s banter “has some sense in it”, and, indeed, freely admits that he had “adopted the second line in beginning to write” his Autobiographical Notes,¹ the description is less applicable today than it was a few years ago. For Scott has in the past decade been truly rediscovered. His reputation has benefited little from the notoriety of being singled out as the nemesis of two Rossettis; but at least those critics who have disparaged him, either as false friend or demon-lover, have catapulted him into a prominence unequalled since Swinburne, over-reacting to imagined abuses in the memoir, dismissed him, with hyperbolic unfairness, as the parasite of the north.²

¹ Edited William Minto, 2 vols. (London, 1892), ii. 188—abbrev. AN. All quotations from AN are documented internally; as are page references to titles mentioned in the text, when there is no possibility of confusion. The following abbreviations are employed in the notes to this paper: Alice Boyd and her brother Spencer, W. B. Scott and his wife Letitia, the three Rossettis—Christina, Dante Gabriel, and William Michael—Ford Madox Brown and Swinburne are designated by their initials—AB, SB, WBS, LMS, CGR, DGR, WMR, FMB and ACS. Letters of DGR, ed. O. Doughty and J. R. Wahl, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1965–7) is abbreviated DW. Three manuscript sources are used in this paper: the correspondence and the day-diaries of AB and WBS in the Penkill Papers (PP) and WBS’ letters to James Leathart are in the Special Collections of the University of British Columbia; WBS’ letters to WMR are in Durham University Library. I am grateful to the U.B.C. Librarian, Basil Stuart-Stubbs, to Dr. I. A. Doyle of Durham, and to Miss E. M. Courtney-Boyd of Penkill for permission to publish these materials.

It is one of the ironies of Scott's career that, following a lifetime of semi-obscurity, notwithstanding a wide range of literary and artistic acquaintances, he should have achieved a posthumous reputation as a disgruntled second-rate painter-poet, hovering on the periphery of a Pre-Raphaelite limelight which, because he could not share it, he could not understand—a stereotype neatly epitomized by Max Beerbohm's grotesque and wombat-like figure, "wondering what it is those fellows seem to see in Gabriel".\(^1\) Paradoxically, Scott has experienced two reactions, each biographically oriented, but no revival. From the controversy following the publication of the *Autobiographical Notes*, Scott emerged as an untalented ingrate. In the late 1950s, a new dimension was added to his reputation for perfidy when the late Professor Lona Mosk Packer cast him in the leading role as the hidden villain in Christina Rossetti’s emotional psycho-drama\(^2\)—a role perpetuated and popularized by several later writers, and most recently reiterated in an unexpected source—*Playboy*. In the issue for September 1973, Christina Rossetti’s best known poem, "Goblin Market", is reprinted as a kind of archetypal Freudian fantasy and identified as "the all-time hardcore pornographic classic for tiny tots". Accompanying the poem, and providing visual exegesis for the uninitiated, is a series of explicit and lurid illustrations by Kinuko Craft that will startle more conventional readers who think they understand the poem. Lurking behind this interpretation is the shadowy figure of Professor Packer’s William Bell Scott, the "energetic seducer of noblewomen and literary ladies" who inspired the poem.\(^3\)

II

The purpose of this monograph—the third in a series preparatory to an eventual biography\(^4\)—is to survey the most

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3. Pp. 115–19; see also *Beyond the Looking Glass*, ed. Jonathan Cott, with a preface by Leslie Fiedler (New York, 1974).
extensive and consistent body of extant life-documents relating to Scott—his correspondence with Alice Boyd, an exchange comprising more than 550 letters and covering a period of nearly thirty years, from 1859-84. Scott himself drew heavily on these materials in his Autobiographical Notes, and the letters provide an indispensable supplement to the Notes, which is second only to William Michael Rossetti's Some Reminiscences in its general usefulness as a Pre-Raphaelite source book. The controversy spawned by the Autobiographical Notes makes even more valuable the documentary importance of the correspondence; for the letters not only support the facts and judgements in the Notes but also offer the best evidence available to refute the claims of Scott's detractors that he used the autobiography simply to defame his friends and acquaintances of half a century, most notably his closest literary and artistic associate, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Almost every modern writer who has cause to introduce Scott endorses the reputation established nearly eighty years ago by Swinburne, Watts-Dunton, and William Rossetti, whose own memoir of his brother was, in part at least, written in direct response to what he regarded as unkind, unfriendly, or unfair remarks about Rossetti in the Notes. In her assessment that Scott "would be forgotten now if it were not for what he wrote of Rossetti in his autobiography", Rossetti's most recent biographer is only echoing sentiments expressed by Swinburne and others during the first reaction. William Rossetti's daughter, the late Helen Rossetti Angeli, in her excellent study

1 See PRG, pp. 41-49 and DGR72, pp. 1-13. In Some Reminiscences, 2 vols. (London, 1906), WMR offered the following explanation for WBS' motives in writing as he did about DGR: "First, an honest desire to treat a man of mark without any of those disingenuous glosses and smug compromises which are often applied to such persons, and thus to strip him of any adventitious prestige and write truths about him—if disagreeable truths, all the more consonant to the biographer's plan. I know as a fact that Scott considered almost all biographies untrustworthy, as ignoring or misrepresenting matters of importance; and he aimed at compassing a contrary result". WMR also attributed to WBS "a jealous or invidious feeling arising after my brother's death, when a great amount of matter—sometimes highly laudatory, but not by any means exclusively so—got published concerning him" (i. 60).

of Rossetti's many associates, faced a dilemma in trying to classify Scott as friend or enemy.\(^1\) On the one hand, Mrs. Angeli, quite naturally, accepted her father's view that the treatment of Rossetti in the autobiography was, if not malicious, at least uncharitable; but she had also to contend with the clear evidence that Scott was one of the closest and dearest friends of both Rossetti brothers. Neatly parodying Beerbohm, she put the relevant and paradoxical question—"What did Gabriel and all the others see in him?":

His performance both in poetry and in painting was not of the highest order. His letters are rather dull and undistinguished; his autobiography is not brilliant or pleasant. He was neither good-natured, nor caustically witty in his ill-nature; he does not appear to have been particularly unselfish, or even loyal in friendship, to judge by his treatment of Gabriel. And yet he must have been lovable, for a number of people loved him. He was a popular companion and ever welcome crony. I was a child when he died and do not remember ever seeing him, but his name was familiar to me as that of a dear and valued friend of the family (p. 151).

Mrs. Angeli's question has been partially answered by those manuscript materials from the Penkill Collection already published in the two previous monographs. They also reveal how much Scott did not utilize in his *Autobiographical Notes*.\(^2\) The materials already published, thus, cast serious doubt on the received posthumous reputation of William Bell Scott. The correspondence to Alice Boyd should lay the foundation for a new and fairer estimate of his living presence.

III

When William Bell Scott met Alice Boyd in Newcastle in 1859, he was already close to 50 years of age and nearing the end of the third major period of his life. Born in 1811, Scott spent his first quarter-century in Edinburgh, where, under the shadow of a father whom he feared and his brother David whom he admired but held in awe, he felt himself trapped by his father's ill-health and diminished finances and destined to become the

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\(^1\) *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Friends and Enemies* (London, 1948).

\(^2\) "My work", WBS says in his last chapter of *AN*, "has not been *Art for Art's Sake*, but truth for truth's sake" (ii. 318).
“family victim” in sustaining his father’s engraving business (i. 99). Educated in the local High School, he aspired to a career in art and poetry, but, under pressure from his father “who cared little for painting”, he learned engraving, publishing before he was twenty a collection of eight engravings of *Views of Loch Katrine and Adjacent Scenery*. Encouraged in his writing by such luminaries of the Edinburgh literati as Sir Walter Scott and Professor Wilson (Christopher North), Scott printed his first poem, “In Memory of P. B. Shelley”, in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1831. He exhibited two small works at the Trustees Academy, where he studied in the Antique School, about the same time, and also had a brief excursion in London drawing at the British Museum. In 1834, he exhibited his first picture at the Royal Scottish Academy, a subject from “The Ancient Mariner”, *Ave Maria of a Hermit* (no. 115); engravings by him were hung at other RSA exhibitions in 1833 and 1835.\(^1\)

Sponsored by Professor Wilson, Scott became the only non-university member of the St. Luke’s Club. With his particular friend, William Shand, and others of the Club, Scott collaborated in publishing a Christmas annual entitled *The Edinburgh University Souvenier* in 1834. It was doubtless the departure of both his older brothers—David Scott for Rome to study art, Robert for no specified reasons emigrating to Demerara—that determined Scott, on their return, to seek his fortune in London.

Arriving there in the spring of 1837, “a shy youth with poetry in his pockets and little knowledge of the world” (i. 103), Scott found a totally different literary scene. Lacking both money and social and professional training, Scott spent his early years in the south familiarizing himself with the London scene and making new literary and artistic friends. His artistic acquaintances—among them Frith, Egg, O’Neil, Richard Dadd (all members of “The Clique”), Wornum, Kenny Meadows, W. J. Linton, and Thomas Sibson, the latter his closest friend, who died young—found a common bond in their rebellion

\(^1\) No reliable catalogue of WBS’ works exists. Graves in his tabular *Dictionary of Artists* (1901) enumerates 31 works exhibited in various London galleries; in the standard works on the two major academies, Graves lists seven works hung at the Royal Academy; McKay, 27 at the Royal Scottish Academy. No works were exhibited at the RSA after 1870 and none in London later than 1873.
against the monopolistic control of the Royal Academy and in their search for new outlets for exhibiting their works, but they were, Scott says, "a society of rivals":

There were too many for the chances of success, too many for the small amount of fame to be divided among them, the emoluments of painters being at that time small, collectors few, and prices low... (i. 110).

Initially, Scott sought to make a name as an illustrator, but while his *Landscape Lyrics* (1839), employing the "painter's etching" process, attracted much attention, his timing was not conducive to success, and he wasted both time and money on a series of Civil War water-colours, entitled "Cavalier and Puritan", which he etched on steel. Eventually, though he found illustrators more congenial as artists, he abandoned engraving for historical painting and exhibited between 1839–42 several works in various London galleries. His first major work, *The Old English Ballad Singer*, was exhibited at the British Institution in 1839; in the same year it was used by S. C. Hall as the Preface heading for his *Book of British Ballads*. It was not until 1842 that Scott had his first picture, *Chaucer, John of Gaunt and Their Wives* (no. 1218), accepted by the Royal Academy.

While artistic work dominated Scott's activities during this period, he was not wholly divorced from literature. Through his meeting with Leigh Hunt, the editor of the *Monthly Repository*, he found a place for an article on art appreciation and for his poem "Rosabell", based on his encounter with an Edinburgh prostitute, which he later claimed as the direct source of Rossetti's "Jenny" and of his unfinished picture, *Found*. Hunt also introduced him to his other closest friend, G. H. Lewes, later to become the "husband" of George Eliot. Years later, in the *Leader* for 5 July 1851, Lewes commemorated the young Scott in a mock-obituary review of *Chorea Sancti Viti*, Scott's quasi-autobiographical allegory depicting twelve *Steps in the Journey of Prince Legion*:

Art gave occupation to his soul; reverie sweetened life; hope beautified it. He led a lonely life, but led it like a noble soul. To see him, to know him, was an influence not to be forgotten... (i. 132).

Of his single volume of poems published at this time, *Hades*; or, *The Transit: And the Progress of Mind*. *Two Poems*, Scott
is singularly silent in the *Autobiographical Notes*, observing only that of the second poem in the volume—he reprinted the first under the title "Music of the Spheres"—"the less said the better" (i. 159).

It was in London, too, that Scott took what he termed "the most imprudent step in my life" (i. 118)—his marriage on 31 October 1839 to Letitia Margery Norquay, the daughter of a seafaring man. She was, he says, his "fate", but he confessed in another context that "she was the most difficult human creature to understand" that he had known. Neither the *Notes* nor the letters illuminates their enigmatic relationship. Letitia is omnipresent but never once is she allowed to step from the shadowy background onto the lighted stage of Scott's life.

However productive Scott was during his freelance years in London, he had not achieved a financial security adequate to the demands of a married man. For this reason, when his unsuccessful entry of a northern subject in the Westminster competition in 1843 brought him to the attention of the Council of the School of Design, he readily accepted their offer of a mastership in the newly-formed Branch School at Newcastle, although there was nothing special in his background to prepare him for such a post. Whatever reservations he must have had about leaving London for the cultural uncertainties of the provinces when he took up his job in November 1843, he makes it clear that at the time of his departure for Newcastle he was disillusioned with the London scene. Writing of his first meeting with the Pre-Raphaelites in 1847, he says in the *Autobiographical Notes*:

... this meeting was the beginning of a new interest in life to me: from them sprang a knowledge of many men, and of other fields. My having left London

1 WBS submitted to the competition an 11 x 9 feet design entitled "The North Britons Surprising the Roman Wall", a subject closely related to the English Border series done for Wallington many years later.

2 The exact date when WBS took up his position at Newcastle is not certain. WBS himself says in *AN* that he left London in 1844; Vera Walker Smith gives the date he went to Newcastle as Dec. 1842 (in her 1951 Durham dissertation, "The Life and Work of William Bell Scott" [p. 73], and in "Some Antecedents of the Department of Fine Art, Newcastle Upon Tyne", *Durham University Journal*, xlv (1954), 50-58. Quentin Bell's date (in "The School of Design at Newcastle", *Durham Research Review*, ii [September 1958], 187-92) is almost certainly the correct one. For WBS' assessment of the School, see *AN*, i, chap. 15.
was really the result of disappointment, not so much in my chances of coming to
the front and making a good position, but disappointment in the art and poetry
of the day: I had become indifferent to working my brain in any perfunctory
struggle for popularity. My social circle was not sufficiently interesting. Poetry
seemed to be going extinct. . . . Hunt and Rossetti and all their circle made me
almost regret having left London (i. 251).

Scott's two decades at Newcastle were busy and eventful
years professionally, and not only in connection with his position
in the School of Design. In that function, he was by the end of
his tenure successful, but in the beginning he ran afoul both of
the vested interests of local artists and of the parent organization
at Somerset House, whose avowed purposes and rules he flaunted.

The Branch Schools of Design depended for their financing,
including the master's salary, on an annual government grant.
In discussing the withdrawal of this grant from Scott's branch in
1848, following several unfavourable reports—an episode not
retailed in the Autobiographical Notes—Quentin Bell offers as a
possible explanation, "that Scott, who worked shorter hours
than any other art school principal in the country, had neglected
his administrative duties" (p. 190). However, that Scott was
highly esteemed both by the city fathers and by his students as
an intellectual force in Newcastle is attested to by the acclaim he
received at the time of his retirement in 1863.¹

Scott's artistic and literary output in the first fifteen years at
Newcastle is impressive. Not only did he submit works to the
local North of England Exhibitions, he also contributed regularly
to exhibitions at the British Institution, the Portland Gallery, the
National Institute of the Arts, the Royal Academy, and the Royal
Scottish Academy—more than twenty works before 1859.
During these years he also published two volumes of poetry (The
Year of the World in 1846, Poems by a Painter in 1854); two

¹ When WBS resigned as headmaster, in October 1863, he was feted by the
school and the city; the students gave him a farewell supper and presentation
on 12 November and a Testimonial Committee opened a Subscription List
to support a commission for a picture to be placed in the Entrance Hall of the
Literary and Philosophical Society. The students added to the Town Testi­
monial their own subscription fund to bring the total to just over £200, for which
WBS painted The Building of the New Castle on the Tyne, 1080, completing and
delivering the work to the city in 1865 (information from clippings in WBS'
scrapbook in PP).
volumes of engravings (Chorea Sancti Viti, 1851 and Antiquarian Gleanings in the North of England, 1849–51); and, following the death of his brother, David, in 1849, both a Memoir (1850) and his own engravings from David’s illustrations for Pilgrim’s Progress (1858).

It was the publication of the Memoir of David Scott, however, which first brought Scott a wider recognition. Although Dante Rossetti praised highly his “little allegorical Epic”, The Year of the World, the poem was, as Scott says, “still-born”; and even Poems by a Painter, though widely reviewed, brought him no serious recognition among the ranks of contemporary poets.1 Perhaps the most significant result of his life of David Scott was the subsequent association with the Wallington circle following Pauline Trevelyan’s review of the book in the Scotsman.2 Though Scott did not actually meet Sir Walter and his wife until 1854, by 1856 he had already commenced working on the commissioned English Border series, which, on its completion in 1861, was to win him national renown.3

Little is known about Scott’s domestic life in Newcastle. His mother’s death in 1852 severed his last link with Edinburgh, and left him the sole “survivor of his race”. To such a one, Scott says, “the past and the to-come are more to him, the present less” (i. 273). His sense of loss was unquestionably exacerbated by the disappointment of his marriage, though the death four years later of Letitia’s mother, who lived with the couple, seems to have eased somewhat the strain in their relationship.4

1 In WBS’ scrapbook in PP there are clippings of a score of contemporary reviews of Poems by a Painter from the local, provincial, and London press. Seventeen years later, an important and highly laudatory, unsigned “retrospective” review appeared in the Sunday Times (20 August 1871).
3 The eight border scenes were exhibited singly, as each was completed, and jointly, in both Newcastle and London. The pictures, together with the spandrels, which were executed later, are reproduced in Scenes from Northumbrian History: The Mural Paintings at Wallington Hall, Northumberland, by William Bell Scott (Newcastle, 1972).
4 Writing to WMR re DGR’s impending marriage to Elizabeth Siddal on 24 May 1860, WBS came down hard on mothers-in-law: “I believe the worst thing of all that a man can do in the marriage line is to marry a wife with a mother-in-law for her dower, as I did. A good girl, without being one of those who think
ing his mother’s death, Scott, “feeling [himself] at forty to be an old man” (i. 275), made three resolves: never to enter Edinburgh again, “to be done with the somnambulism in which I had been liable to indulge”, and to write out the experiences of his life to that point. His introspective nature, which he felt to be both a pleasure and a curse (i. 3), led him naturally towards autobiographical reminiscences, and the “big book” to which he committed the memories of the first half of his life was clearly intended as a cathartic for his sagging spirit. Scott’s autobiographical impulses, more than those of most literary and artistic figures, are central to an understanding of his life, and for this reason his comments in the Autobiographical Notes on the whole process of self-examination are highly relevant. In 1854, when he completed the “big book”, Scott, settled in profession and marriage, and anticipating only a future of continuing sameness, could not foresee the radical reversal that the next few years would bring. When in 1877—the date he commenced the Autobiographical Notes—he reread his early reminiscences, he saw how dramatically the first half of his life was contradicted by the second:

Reading my own old letters... as well as re-perusing much of this old folio book, has affected me as if I must have had a double: a creature personating me, whose writings these documents were—so much do we change with the changing years (i. 4).

In determining to commit this first endeavour to the fire, Scott was not so much denying his youth as updating his life and, like Hamlet, wiping from the table of his memory all “the trivial fond records”, the “saws of books”, and “forms”, and “pressures past that youth and observation copied there”—“skin-shedding”,

everything about a man “nasty” and “disgusting”, who seem to be made out of clammy apple pairings and Seltzer water—will consider her mother after marriage as before—with quite unabated regard and devotion—her husband must not have a bad influence upon her, i.e. must not come between her and filial affection. Her past life is perpetuated about her; his new life remains alien. I have even observed the mother-in-law to lend her influence in favour of the husband and still her presence is as an evil eye”.

1 The remains of the “big book”—presumably the portion WBS did not commit to the fire—is in PP. Commenced on 16 October 1853, the manuscript is entitled, “Autobiography of 40 Years, being an Attempt to Understand my Life”.
he called it in the *Autobiographical Notes* when he came to review his early life from the perspective of real rather than imagined age. He was more than prepared for his meeting with Alice Boyd.

IV

Alice Boyd was in her mid-thirties when she met Scott.¹ Born in 1825 in Ayrshire, she was educated in the domestic arts by her mother, who had some talent in drawing. Alice's father died when she was a year old, and her mother, born Margaret Losh, married Henry Courtney by whom she had three children.² Alice was deeply devoted to her elder brother, Spencer, who, on the death of their father, became the nominal laird of Penkill Castle, which was then in a state of total disrepair—decaying, uninhabitable, and heavily mortgaged. Of Alice's early life virtually nothing is known. About 1858, she moved into Penkill with her brother, who, with financial assistance from his grandfather,³ had devoted himself to restoring the little castle that had been associated with the Boyd family since the late fifteenth century. On the death of her mother, on 20 September 1858, Alice went to live with her grandfather, William Losh, a wealthy Newcastle merchant. It was here, "ill and weary from watching by the death-bed of her mother ", that Alice, seeking "to find a new interest in life, and [thinking] to find it in art ", met William Bell Scott (ii. 57).

The relationship that developed between Scott and Alice

¹ AB is not listed in most standard art reference works, such as DNB, Thieme-Becker, Graves, or Wood; she is, however, included in Ellen C. Clayton's *English Female Artists* (London, 1876), ii. 37-41.

² Although Margaret Losh Boyd's second husband is recorded in the family tree in *The Boyds of Penkill and Trochrig* (Edinburgh, 1909) as Henry Courtney, and that surname is preserved by the present laird, Miss E. M. Courtney-Boyd, who assumed the name Boyd when she inherited the estate in 1945, he is referred to throughout William Losh's will as Henry Mayhew.

³ William Losh provided the funds to restore Penkill on the condition that if both Spencer and Alice died without issue, the castle should pass to the children of Margaret Boyd's second marriage. Spencer, in his will, left Penkill to Alice; Alice being the last in the direct Boyd line, Penkill passed on her death to Margaret the daughter of Henry Courtney's son, Henry Courtney-Courtney, and thence to Evelyn May, Henry Courtney-Courtney's daughter by his second marriage (*The Boyds*, pp. 23-24).
Boyd and that lasted more than thirty years until his death in 1890 is generously acknowledged in the *Autobiographical Notes*, but Scott’s description of their union as “the perfect friendship, the ambition of my life” (ii. 293) discreetly understates the depth of feeling, the strength of the bond that existed between them. In every sense save the legal they were married, and even Letitia seems to have acquiesced in the intimacy of their friendship—perhaps because she had no choice.

While the principal emphasis of this study is not on the domestic lives of Scott and Alice Boyd, the pattern of their arrangement influenced the nature of their correspondence, externally by propinquity, and internally by the candour in which writing to a devoted and loyal confidante enabled Scott to indulge. Inevitably, therefore, the letters illuminate their relationship. Because they were together as much as eight or nine months of the year, the letters provide only an incomplete account of Scott’s activities, and it is necessary to look elsewhere for supporting documentation to explain issues left unresolved by the termination of the correspondence when Alice comes to London in the late autumn or Scott retires to Penkill for the summer. The *Autobiographical Notes* is sometimes helpful, but the treatment there is too broad for specific documentation; besides, as Scott says, “exact chronology is of little consequence in these notes of mine” (i. 327). Fortunately, Alice’s day-diaries, though they contain only the skimpiest of jottings, make possible an accurate recreation of their conjoint activities, and Scott’s letters to others—especially William Rossetti and Leathart—assist in restoring the lacunae in his letters to Alice.

The extent of the correspondence has necessitated severe economy in extracting individual letters for inclusion in the running commentary, and many letters have not been used at all, or only paraphrased. Since the main purpose is to illustrate the range of Scott’s contacts as a “friend of friends”, to record his comments on his associates, and to demonstrate his remarkable talent as a letter writer, letters that are primarily of domestic interest are given the lowest priority unless they are central to the narrational development, or to what may be called the “texture”, of his life. Editorial practices follow those established in the
two earlier monographs, including modernization of punctuation for clarity and the silent correction of obvious slips.

THE LETTERS
1859–63

"We cannot tell", Boswell says, "the precise moment when a friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over". The "precise moment" for Scott and Alice Boyd is also not ascertainable, but it must have occurred early in their acquaintance. Following their first meeting on 18 March 1859, an immediate rapport seems to have existed between them, which even the barrier of Scott's marriage did not inhibit.

In the beginning, the friendship was nurtured more through personal contact than correspondence. Scott and Alice exchanged frequent visits in the first few months. Alice records their fourth meeting on 11 April, and on 23 May Scott was introduced to Alice's brother and grandfather for the first time. There was talk of his going to Penkill in July but the visit was postponed for a year. Meanwhile, Alice began to sit for several pictures—first for Una and the Lion, later for Grace Darling. Their meetings certainly were not restricted, being held either at Scott's, at William Losh's, or at the School of Art, where Alice was engaged in at least semi-formal study.

Though they exchanged more than fifty letters before 1863, only fourteen survive. In the early letters particularly, Scott is solicitous—recommending reading, discussing pictures, and familiarizing her with his circle of friends and acquaintances. If the three extant letters from 1859–60 are typical, Scott may at the outset have tried to preserve his pedagogical distance, while at the same time recognizing his growing attachment, for his letters are a strange amalgam of domestic trivia and tutorial advice. In his first letter of 21 June, for example, which begins with

1 Life of Johnson (Everyman ed.), ii. 122.
2 Una was exhibited in the RA 1860 (no. 474) and the RSA 1861 (no. 46), now at Penkill; Grace Darling was the seventh in the History of the English Border series at Wallington.
references to his recent stay at Wallington, his projected trip to Penkill, and a tour to London that he and Letitia are about to embark upon, and concludes with observations about Lady Trevelyan and Miss Capel Lofft, he gives Alice a brief lesson in modern art and poetry, relevant to his picture of *Mariana*.

I am glad you find something in the picture—do refresh your memory with the poem which is one of the earliest as well as the best things Tennyson has done. Truly excellent. The sentiment of course is the great point, but the accessories no doubt express it in a great degree. The Spider is not in the poem if I recollect right. In the poem are many illustrations of the household neglect about her, and the mental preoccupation which could not be introduced into my scene, so I found others to express the same.

Similarly, on 30 December, he writes of his lodgings at Tynemouth, where he and Letitia had gone for Christmas, and concludes with this amusing literary observation:

I have read the first volume of *The Mill on the Floss*. It is hardly so good as I expected, there is such a lot of horrid Scotch looking rats of women—aunts of the heroine, who is the only trump or interesting figure. She is admirable, and has your hair and eyes it appears from the description. Tom is a man, but not over good, and without delicate sense of any sort. Finishing the 1st vol. I took up the 3rd by mistake and did not find out the error till I had read nearly 100 pages. There must be something wrong in a story where one can lose oneself this way must there not? There I find Stephen Quest seemingly a new character, a handsome muff whom perhaps ladies may admire, as men like Thackeray’s good lady characters, tho’ insipids.

By the end of 1860, their friendship was firmly established, though there is nothing in the letters or in Alice Boyd’s diaries to suggest a more intimate relationship. Alice continued to sit for Scott’s pictures throughout the year, modelling for *The Border Widow* after *Grace Darling* was completed in late October. He did a group portrait of Alice’s family, and even stood to her for his own portrait. In July 1860, Scott made his first trip to Penkill Castle, a building he found as compatible and comfortable as the “friendship at first sight” he had experienced with its owner and a retreat to which he returned every year until his final removal there in 1885. At Penkill, he painted a number of Ayrshire scenes that Alice brought her grandfather to see in September. On 3 October, by which time she was a regular

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1 Exhibited RA 1861 (no. 446) and RSA 1862 (no. 131), now in the Aberdeen Art Gallery. The location of the other pictures is not known.
guest at the Scotts', Alice met Swinburne at St. Thomas' Crescent. Through him also she met his two principal patrons, the Leatharts and the Trevelyans.

In the following year, Scott and Alice went to London in June for the opening of Gambert's exhibition of his English Border series at the French Gallery before going on to Penkill. On 4 August, William Losh died, less than two months after his ninetieth birthday, and Scott sent his condolences to Alice in a letter which indicates clearly the closeness of their relationship:

You know, dearest friend, there are many things you have to think of to give you the blessing of peace of mind, and to make the hand of God less heavy and more sustaining at present. The dear Grandfather has enjoyed life more fully and longer than most, he had lived nobly and exhausted many things, and found out the limitations of this narrow existence, he was ripe for the great change.

In late October, during William Rossetti's brief visit to Newcastle, Alice went with him and Scott to Wallington to see the English Border pictures in place, which, William wrote in Fraser's, except for the murals of the Oxford Union Debating Hall, form "the most interesting British pictorial experiment of the day on a large scale". He commended Sir Walter Trevelyan's vision in

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1 The first mention of ACS in WBS' letters is that to WMR on 24 Oct. 1858: "I met Algernon Swinburne that other day at Wallington, who tells me he is a member of the Hogarth Club, whose name I find entered in the little printed list as C. Swinburn. He is a trump, and read me some part of a modern Tragedy and a ballad very remarkable". ACS' first letter to WBS was in the same year or in 1859 (see C. Y. Lang The Swinburne Letters [New Haven, 1959-62], i. 23). ACS visited the Scotts in Newcastle in Jan. 1860, at which time WBS commenced his portrait, which was completed on his return trip in October (repro. AN, ii., facing p. 18).

2 WBS' associations with Wallington has already been mentioned. James Leathart was a patron of several Pre-Raphaelite artists, including DGR, FMB, and Arthur Hughes, many of whom he commissioned on advice from WBS. For a general description of Leathart's pictures, see Paintings and Drawings from the Leathart Collection, the catalogue of the retrospective exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle (1968).

3 A Descriptive Catalogue was issued to accompany photographs by Charles Thurston Thompson (London, 1861). On the exhibition, WBS wrote to Leathart on 12 July: "As for Gambart, whom Rossetti calls Gamble-art, and whose name may with advantage be shortened into Gam, he is a sharp little fellow who talks on purpose to prevent one getting much said to him, and who shifts his ground in a slippery manner".

4 "The London Exhibitions of 1861", liv (November 1861), 582.
commissioning them and hoped that this scheme might set an example to be followed elsewhere in the country.

1862 was a busy year for Scott, with trips to London for the International Exhibition in June, an Italian tour with William Rossetti in July, and the usual vacation at Penkill, postponed this year until September. It was also the third anniversary of Scott's and Alice's meeting, commemorating which he wrote on 18 March:

When we talked over this day three years ago and all the accidental circumstances of our first meeting you mentioned my picture of the Cockcrow and that you would like to have it for the association it bears in your recollection with that first interview from which I date so much additional interest in life.

During his six weeks in Italy, Scott had time to reflect on the changed condition of his life and on the impact it might have on Alice. From Milan, on 7 July, he wrote:

How often I have thought of you and seen you again with my eyes shut, leave the cab and enter slowly the open door of 25 Upper Seymour Street! I hope there is nothing wrong in saying so, and I sincerely hope I was going to say—that you don't trouble your head about me, but I shall not force myself to say anything I cannot feel. We ought to be both happier and better for our friendship: to me the best of added blessings.

Nine days later, in response to a letter from her, he made clear the options open to them:

If you are not happier for me I ought to try to say forget me when out of sight—you do not find this good to say or to do, I am grateful to you, and always will be to you even if you tried to comply.

As if to give her the assurance he felt she needed, he concludes with the commitment that it will be his "business in life" to keep her spirits even.

Domestic concerns, however, do not dominate these letters, which are filled with descriptions of pictures, cities, and cafés, the weather, and the inconveniences encountered in travel. William he found a delightful companion, "always ready to give me my way and to oblige and taking a great interest in everything. We never leave each other . . . " Their itinerary took them to Paris, Turin, Milan, Padua, Venice, and Rome, the last of which Scott found "stupendous" but less interesting because

1 Originally sold to Leathart for £25; now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Marshall of the Stone Gallery, Newcastle.
too hard to understand and take into one's mind all at once. . . . Everything here is on a large scale, and bad in architecture. . . . I don't see anything to do in the painting way in Rome. There is no early Roman school of Painting as there is in Florence and Venice, and as for the places of historical interest they are too exclusively architectural (25 July).

In spite of discomforts, the heat, and illness, Scott was nostalgic in summarizing the tour on his return to Newcastle (16 Aug.):

When I think over all I have seen in the short time lately spent in Rome and elsewhere, it seems a miracle that one can by putting a little money in one's pocket and committing oneself to railways and diligences live so much in so short a time, change the character of one's experiences and participate in the result of 20 centuries of the world's history. And now at this moment the sun no doubt is shining in the Via Quatro Fontane, the Colosseum stands where it did, the priests, soldiers, and beggars, are all swarming about, while I am in this cool silent crib writing to you. No doubt the fellows are all sitting in front of the Cafe Greco with their small brass trays and coffee cups before them, as they sat when my brother used to write me about Roman things, and as they will sit when flies of the present season are all dust and forgotten.

Owing the tragic death of Elizabeth Siddal in February 1862, there was some question whether William Rossetti might be able to accompany Scott to Italy at the time arranged. Scott wrote to William on the 19th, advising him to adapt his plans to Gabriel's needs:

. . . irrespective of me, why delay till middle of April? Gabriel should go now if at all, indeed if he does not go now it is more than likely he will not go at all. My knowledge of Gabriel leads me to fancy he will either be away immediately or not at all. If he gets involved in the interest of his picture engagements he will not leave them.¹

As Scott predicted, Rossetti salved his grief through work rather than travel: "I have now", he wrote to Mrs. Gilchrist on 2 March, "to be thankful for obligations connected with my work which were a source of anxiety before; for without them it seems to me that I could never work again" (DW 430). Under intense psychological pressure, Rossetti worked furiously on several pictures and on completing his part of The Life of Blake, which Gilchrist's own death in January had interrupted.² Throughout the summer and early fall, he was making arrangements for his move to 16 Cheyne Walk, and on 8 December he

² Virginia Surtees, in her Catalogue Raisonné of DGR, lists a dozen works dating from about 1862.
came to Newcastle to stay the month with Scott and to paint the portrait of Mrs. Leathart. Five days before Christmas he did a pencil head of Alice Boyd, which many years later was engraved by Scott.¹

By early April 1863 Scott was considering retiring from his position with the Newcastle School of Art. Writing to William Rossetti on the 7th, he notes:

My connection with the Dept. and with this School of Art in particular, I almost think will terminate finally on the 31 September. There is impending a measure to do away with appointments of Head Masters under the Board of Trade, giving them pensions. They can remain in the Department thereafter irrespective of their pensions under the new conditions, but this is out of the question with me.

By 26 May, his decision was taken, and he was casting about for the future:

They give me a pension when I drop this. Is it not a lark? Superannuated with a pension! I wonder what it will be,—60 or 70 I am told. Better than nothing. I have often speculated on the probable amount of luxury and isolation to be got in a Workus, and now there is no saying but I end up rather a warm old screw. Mr. Crow comes here on the 11th. June and very shortly after that I shall be up to Cheyne Walk for a week—Gabriel offers me a room and a ghost—After that Letitia appears, we take a lodging somewhere about Kensington or Brompton and Miss Boyd joins us from Brighton to spend 8 days or so among Exhibitions... We shall look about for houses. There are three courses open. One is to remain here, and shut up two-three months in the year, going to London or abroad. Another, to sell off, and go to Florence or Rome and live cheap, making one’s clothes wear a fabulous length of time. The third, remove to London, where I shd. have to make some money so that the “ends” might meet. Neither of them unpleasant prospects; but after all, life ain’t what it was used to be, nor, in my opinion, what it oughted to be.

Half of Scott’s extant letters of this year were written after he returned on 29 July from Penkill, where Alice remained to care for her ailing brother, who was brought to Newcastle for an operation for fistula in mid-September. On 7 August he tells her of his forthcoming visit to Wallington, where Ruskin was to be present:

As far as I can judge from Lady T’s notes there is nothing whatever in the wind, only gossip seems to be the motive for her wanting me: she wants to hear all about Cheyne Walk household, which she thinks must be fun, she says. I must keep a wary tongue in my head.

¹ Repro. AN, ii, facing p. 56. AB accompanied the Scotts to Tynemouth for New Year’s Day on 29 December, leaving DGR, who returned to London on the 31st.
Scott is unequivocal in the *Autobiographical Notes* about his antipathy to Ruskin (ii. 6–13). ¹ His hostility was based in part on his resentment of the influence that Ruskin exerted on Lady Trevelyan and Rossetti. Furthermore, though Scott recognized Ruskin’s “rhetorical genius”, insofar as it was applied to eulogize Turner, whom Scott abhorred, he was angered by what he felt to be Ruskin’s wrongheadedness. Meeting Ruskin again in 1863, he softened only slightly his earlier impressions:

Ruskin is very good and sweet and kind to everyone, myself included, dancing to amuse little Constance [Hawdon], and playing at Croquet standing behind the ball and knocking it before him like a woman, so I suppose one ought to be delighted with him: yet is he a little nauseous (13 Aug.).

During August and September, the British Institution held a massive exhibition in Newcastle about which Scott was enthusiastic. “The collection of pictures”, he wrote, parodying his antagonist’s lisp, is “really great, about 20 Turners, all waving works as Ruskin would say”. During the period of the exhibition, he met Rossetti’s patron, Ellen Heaton, whom he found on first acquaintance “meaningless and fidgety”, but later came to recognize as “a rather pretty little woman in spectacles, very well dressed, full of chatter and as it turned out possessed of discrimination” (6 Sept.). ² In early September, he saw Madox Brown

¹ Though he later changed his view, Ruskin, at least in the beginning, was more charitable, describing WBS, in a letter to his father of 18 Sept. 1863, as “a very good and clever man, and one of the honestest and best scions and helpers of the best part of the Pre-Raphaelite school” (The Works of John Ruskin [Library edition], ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn [London, 1904–12], xxxvi. 454; for William Downey’s photograph, which gave rise to Ruskin’s letter, see Van Akin Burd, “Ruskin, Rossetti, and William Bell Scott: A Second Arrangement”, PQ, xlviii [January 1969], 102–7). The principle area of contention between Ruskin and WBS concerned methods of art instruction, especially at the Working Men’s College.

² “But”, he continued, “to expect her to be interested in pictures or in anything, more than two minutes is hopeless, she flew out of one meeting into another, asking after all the celebrities, and was truly grateful if another ‘eminent individual’ was pointed out... I offered to go [on] any of the Excursions with her but she did not avail herself of the offer, indeed I fancy she likes her own sect, and considers men as only more or less eminent or uneminent individuals. There: —you will say I’m an ill tempered satirical wretch and angry she did not take to me. Perhaps that is true, besides I am now a hedgehog as you will see by the enclosed note [from Pauline Trevelyan who used the term for WBS]. Is it not curious your name for D. G. R. is applied to me ”.


who was then at Tynemouth and discussed with him his plans for retirement.

Scott’s professional activities do not loom large in these early letters to Alice Boyd, which contain, for example, no references to his work on the Wallington murals, to the publication of his *Half-Hour Lectures*, or to his two works exhibited at the RA and Royal Scottish Academy. The fall of 1863 was preoccupied with planning for his departure from Newcastle. His two houses were both put on the market, and his household furniture, books, pictures, autographs, and prints were disposed of in a three-day sale conducted by Mr. Muras, which brought in less than £400. By the end of November, the celebrations attending his retirement had been concluded, and he and Letitia removed to Tynemouth, Alice remaining behind in Newcastle for Spencer’s second and third operations. On New Year’s Eve, Scott acknowledged a note from Alice received that day:

Its contents not very invigorating, still I quite believe that the worst is past and that all will be well soon, and that you will be able to think over these dark days with the sun shining on you. It is now just on 12 and in vision I have you here and hold your hand, as it was last year.

Alice brought Spencer to Tynemouth to recuperate on 6 January, and on 19 February, Scott left for London and a new and uncertain life. The following day, from lodgings in Russell Square, he expressed some of his misgivings in the first of his London letters to Alice:

This is not so well-ordered a lodging as the Bloxham’s, and without you everything seems to have lost colour—with and without your presence being to me like the difference between a painting and an engraving. But it is *so improper* to think that way I must not speak of it.

1864

Scott’s removal to London was a return to the world of the living after his two-decade exile in Newcastle. Two days after his arrival in the city, he had begun to renew his acquaintance with the “set”, as he informed Alice on 22 February:

Yesterday (Sunday) I went all about this region looking up for tickets to let! and then to Chelsea where I saw Hedgehog, Swinburne and Chapman. It was late when I got home. What do you think he has got a peacock and hen, poultry in lots and a live hedgehog as bristly as himself! He is getting fatter than ever, and
has just invested in blue china to the extent of 120 pieces at a cost of £50. Today he is to take me to all the obscure curiosity shops to look for chairs, tables, cabinets, etc. After that I dine at Chelsea with the set Morris, Brown, Marshall, Jones, etc., etc. illustrious names! When one writes them in a row, one is struck by the portentously aristocratic character of the catalogue. Really, however, some of them are the best. Jones has just finished a picture of the "Merciful Knight". The gilt figure of Christ stooping to bless a knight who has spared his vanquished enemy.¹

A few days later (27th), he spent an evening at Woolner's, where he came upon a large party over their wine after dinner. Tennyson, Holman Hunt, the two Palgraves, Fairbairn, Spedding, and a lot more. It was a stroke of luck. Woolner you may imagine now goes in for the great style, with an unexceptionable white chocker to serve, and no end of visiting acquaintances. He says he must go out to everybody because they are his employers—different from a painter who almost never sells a picture in London to a private purchaser.

Temporarily situated in Russell Square, Scott's first task was to locate lodgings suitable for a ménage à trois. In just over a fortnight, he found an appropriate new house at 33 Elgin Road, Kensington Park Gardens, Notting Hill, the lease of which he took for four years from the flower painter Valentine Bartholomew at £80 per annum plus rates. Alice proposed dividing equally the household expenses, in addition to the rent and rates, but Scott insisted that she pay no more than a third during the period she was actually living there.² He wanted Alice "to feel that the house was as much yours as mine—(you observe I speak as if we were merely detached individuals!)" (3 Mar.)—and inquired what earthenware and glass she would be bringing, as all theirs had been sold on leaving Newcastle. Anticipating the joy they would have in furnishing the house—"after rummaging in old furniture cribs to lounge in the evening in a lotos-eating way"—he tells her of his purchases of chairs and tables and

¹ Exhibited R. W. S. 1864. Of Burne-Jones' picture, which Leathart finally purchased, WBS wrote (24 Feb.): "The Merciful Knight is a stunning picture. It is quite worthy of my brother in his best time—but for the immense deduction that Jones can't draw. He is a poetic artist who has never learnt the elements of his art. The Knight I still think not quite the character in build. He is more likely to beg for mercy than to dispense it".

² WBS wrote Leathart on 29 March 1869 that he had cancelled AB's share on Spencer's death.
comments on the appropriateness that his "entry into our house takes place on the day after" their anniversary (20 Mar.).

Scott's separation from Alice aroused anew "his old notion of putting an end to myself", but, he admitted, only in a "half desperate, half comic way". Facetiousness aside, he certainly felt alone without Alice:

This last week, dearest Miss Boyd, has been one of the dreariest I ever spent. If Tynemouth was only within a day's return journey, wouldn't I be with you now and then! Tell me what jacket and what gown you have worn and if you have been awful jolly and looking splendid. If I could only run into your room before breakfast instead of sitting here in the dingy cold till the teapot draws! Or at night feel your dear sweet weight in my arms for ten minutes before turning in instead of snoozing and thinking about you. There! what a queer mixture this note is of business and "imperance", but discussing the home expenses, made me think about our living together. You know it may be a little more when we come to try, but Letitia is an economist and will endeavor to keep things within a narrow limit. I think we shall have some pleasant time together (29 Feb.).

However great his longing and his anticipation of their new life together, he remained sensitive to her feelings about their altered circumstances in a new environment:

I hope you are not melancholy, nor have any misgivings; and I think you will be happy here; and now, dear, I say in all sincerity, if after experience, you would like to undo as far as possible, or to change, you must do so. I shall, always believing in you, and always, (as far as a human creature can tell what they will continue to feel in the future) retaining the same affectionate faith in you, love and believe in you whatever you do. You may always trust in me, I think, in this respect. At the same time, and while I say this, I thirst for the sight of your face and the sound of your voice. Shall always do so. But only, remember, as far as our proximity adds to your happiness and wellbeing.

In writing to you, I can never divest myself of the idea that I ought to write to you in such a manner, that my letters by any fatal chance, meeting any other eye, may not compromise any one, or seem too different from the letters of ordinary friendship, so if I ever do write anything you think better destroyed, you will please put the offending paper in the fire. You know how much I respect you (22 Mar.).

Alice came to Elgin Road from Penkill on 10 May, and she and Scott were immediately launched on a round of social engagements—attending the private view of Holman Hunt's pictures on the 16th,\(^1\) entertaining Dante and Maria Rossetti and

\(^1\) Hunt had a private exhibition at 16, Hanover Street for his picture *London Bridge* and several other works, including *The Last Day in the Old Home* by his pupil, Martineau. See *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2nd. ed. (London, 1913), ii. 188.
Simeon Solomon at Elgin Road on the 26th. In mid-June, Alice left for the country on the day of a huge party, the details of which Scott sends her the next morning (17th):

The blessed party came off (last night) with all the usual dullness. Constraint on all hands I think may be said to have been the prime characteristic of the evening's proceedings as it is on all similar occasions. However there were redeeming features, my cousin Marion was in a state of splendour in white satin, bare arms, low dress, and looked stunning I can tell you. She thought it was a great party, and blushed so winningly as she said so in excuse for coming so gorgeous. She is awfu' Scotch besides being, as far as I can see, without any charms of character, but she has a figure and no mistake. The hedgehog who duly came and stayed long after everybody was gone (till nearly 2 O'Clock!) was loud in her praises, "Oh she should always dress that way! such handsome people should always dress well, men as well as women—but if a fellow has a stomach that comes into the room ever so long before him, what's the use? he may just as well go anyhow". Every now and then too he was saying "where's Miss Boyd?"—"when is she coming back?"

During the summer, Scott and Alice entertained all the Rossettis (except Christina), Swinburne, Woolner, Hunt, and G. E. Street, before leaving for Penkill on 11 August, where Scott stayed until 8 September, returning to London via Newcastle. Scott's work in the first six months in London progressed slowly, but he did manage some progress on The Eve of the Deluge, and on his subscription picture, The Building of the New Castle; and he brought from Penkill four studies which were well received by his Wallington friends, whose guests included Ellen Heaton, Pauline Power (Lady Trevelyan's niece), and Emelia Pattison, the wife of the Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, whom Scott describes in two letters to Alice, as

about 25 but looks quite between the girl and young lady, a beauty, with her hair en toupi like the Queen Anne time, with two loose ringlets hanging from the back of the ears in front of the shoulders. She is tremendous in anecdote and conversation and is considered at Oxford as a pet. Very clever... She is made up in every possible way, and is the dislike of all the women I fancy. Lady T.

1 WBS' completed the picture in Apr. 1865 and the picture was hung in the hall of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society by July. By late summer, some of the subscribers had still not sent their contributions, and WBS was becoming impatient about payment. Writing to Leathart on 14 August, he was petulant but still good humoured: "I shall advise the next artist who gets a 'Testimonial' to take the silver teapot at once and make himself happy... I hope it will not bore you to finish with the subscription affair. Don't sacrifice time to a few pounds standing out".
I have found out hates her like brimstone, and so do I. She is so pretty, so
clever, so brilliant in conversation, knows so many celebrities and is so artificial
and heartless, she is a kind of monster. (11, 13 Sept.).

There was, he said, at Wallington then “a scarcity of men, but
I can do without them, with young ladies who are so well bred
and up to anything that’s nice”. Scott says that he was bored
by “so many ladies painting”, but he may have resented being
the frequent butt of Pauline Trevelyan’s jibes—she referred to
him as “Mr. Porcupine”—one of which he passes on to Alice:

This young fellow George Trevelyan says he wonders how anybody can be moping
and dull. There are so many things to interest one, and so many books to read,
and Lady T. with the sparkle in her eye calls out, “oh yes, I can’t bear people
who don’t enjoy life, and moon about”—then after a moment—“except at parties
who can’t be expected to be very lively, you know Mr. Scott!”

Scott returned to Elgin Road by the 20th and immediately
began reworking his Penkill studies; he also embarked on a new
design for The Sea King’s Burial,1 which both Brown and
Rossetti encouraged him to paint. He was eager to show his
work to Alice, but she wrote on the 10th, delaying her return by
a week. “‘Hope deferred makes the heart sick’”, he responded
but I ain’t sick, and don’t wish to hurry you, the longer you stay the more I shall
have to show you—only I should like sometimes to stroke your smooth black
hair and feel that you have no staybones under that quilted jacket which I hope
isn’t yet wearing out beyond refurbishing (12 Oct.).

In the same letter he informed her that Sir Walter “came to the
scratch about the series of Chevy Chase for the upper part of the
Hall. So that is something to think of—not to do yet a while,
but to design and prepare for. I had made up my mind (the
drawing was with me) to make an end somehow of this matter, so
I brought it out”. The trip to Wallington had not, after all,
been a waste of time.

Alice returned on 14 October, followed two months later, on
24 December, by her brother Spencer, whose sudden and
unexpected death on 1 February 1865 would blight the coming
year and radically upset the pattern of Scott’s and Alice’s new
living arrangements.

1 Exhibited at the British Institution (no. 529) as The Sea King’s Funeral
Boat in February 1865.
Scot accompanied the new “laird” of Penkill Castle to inter
Spencer in the graveyard of Old Dailly Church, beside whom both
he and Alice would eventually take their place. Alice was back
in London in time for Madox Brown’s exhibition in March, but
by 10 May she had returned to Penkill, where she was joined by
her aunt, Miss Losh. Though she spent Christmas at New-
castle, she did not again come to London in this year.

Alice had apparently gone into a brown study after Spencer’s
death, and Scott’s letters consist mainly of social chat to keep her
up to date. “I only wish”, he wrote on 15 May,

I could be with you, and assist in supporting your good heart. If I can do any-
thing to make life less wearysome, and to put a kernel of love and sympathy into
its dark envelope, you know for certain it is my joy and duty to try to do it.
But here I am in London and there you are far off by the sea. I can only think
of you affectionately and hope that you will bear up. We must believe loyally
that God’s way must be best somehow or other.

In this and subsequent letters of May, Scott writes of a portending
“invasion of the baby Leathart” and of several parties for an
assortment of artist friends to meet the northern patron:

Algernon was here yesterday to dinner, after we had spent the day at exhibitions.
One gets so put out by being continually occupied with people and things that I
seem to be unable to collect my thoughts to write to you, dearest—so as to say
anything worth your having. Hughes, Solomon, W. M. R. and perhaps Sandys
dine here today. Yesterday Mrs. L. gave her nursemaid and Mary a trip to the
Crystal Palace, and as it happened the baby was ill and cried all day long.
Swinburne had been refreshing himself after a previous night’s orgie and a

1 FMB’s exhibition was of Work and Other Paintings, held at 191 Piccadilly.
To Leathart, who lent his Browns to the exhibition, WBS wrote on 9 March:
“I find by your note just arrived that I have made perhaps too strong a repre-
sentation of Brown’s peculiarities in his exhibition. I have just had a letter from
Gabriel Rossetti about it, who speaks of the Catalogue with great approval. He
says ‘his Catalogue is so well done that no one can assume to regard him as one
who does not know what he aims at. It will go far to defeat malice and ridicule’.
But of all parties concerned, you, his most important supporter, will have least
to fear, your pictures being all of them precisely the leading works. All of them
the best pictures there, the ‘Work’ and the ‘Chaucer’ being taken into the
same category, and only more important from their size and elaboration. As to
your buying Chaucer, I can only say it appears to me one of the most admirable
works ever done in England’”. Alicia Losh became a friend and benefactor in
a small way of DGR. J. C. Troxell’s Three Rossetts (Cambridge, Mass., 1937)
contains the most complete account of Miss Losh, who died 20 March 1872.
breakfast at 3 O’Clock, so he was in an unbounded state of monomania, his poem being so successful, it seems he could get 1500 for his next volume. However he will not sell the copyright for any money and must bargain for an edition merely. After I have had a few more artists to dine with me I shall close my hospitable endeavors and do nothing more in that line for a long time to come (20 May).

In another letter (26th), he describes an exhibition at the French Gallery where "are several pictures you would enjoy"; "One of them is an evening party in ancient Egypt... by a painter hitherto unknown, called Alma who is married to a lady called Tadema, and is now called Almatadema".1

He confesses "that I got rather tired of my Newcastle connoisseur... although his visit afforded me an opportunity of having men to come and that sort of thing" (28 May); but the Leatharts’ stay may have been dampened by Letitia’s "gradually getting into the nervous line of business", which, he reminds Alice, is "one of the hardest things to bear I know of" (22 May). Of Dante Rossetti, Alice’s favourite among the London circle, he writes on the 28th:

Last night I saw Rossetti, and had a very pleasant chat. He showed me an old Italian book illustrated by Mantegna, the book that had the most important part in making him the particular kind of man and artist he is. It is full of the style, sentiment, and invention proper for mediaeval poetic painting. He would not lend it (he had given away his father’s copy ten years ago, and has been looking for another ever since and just got it) but I think I must get the book myself tho’ it costs about £10.2

Letitia accompanied Scott to Penkill on 6 June, though she stayed only a month while he remained on until late September, returning once again via Wallington. This summer Scott commenced the King’s Quair murals on Spencer’s staircase, which, as companions to the Wallington designs, he always regarded as one of his major artistic achievements.

1 The picture described is probably Tadema’s Three Thousand Years Ago, the first of his Egyptian pictures, completed in 1863. For Tadema’s connection with Gambert see P. C. Standing, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (London, 1905), 26-28.

2 DGR’s book is not identified, but the reference may be to a made-up volume of 9 plates illustrating the Tabulae Triumphi Caesaris, dated in the dedication, Mantua 1599, of which there is a copy in the British Library. In the Cheyne Walk Sale (1882), Lot 452r was 9 photographs from Mantegna’s Triumph of Caesar.
Many of the letters from London written during the fall concern Scott's work on his Noah picture, exhibited at the British Institution, and the reception of his Penkill designs, about which everyone but Rossetti, in whose response Scott was disappointed, was enthusiastic. Other letters contain gossip about mutual friends, including Woolner, the Rossettis, and Swinburne. Meeting Woolner, Scott found him "as dogmatic, as loud, as egotistic, and seemingly as well received as ever", admitting, however, that "he is certainly amusing" (30 Sept.). His first notice of the Rossettis (3 Oct.) treats what elsewhere he pejoratively labels "table rapping":

Last evening I went out to Albany St. and saw William Rossetti and his sisters, and had a short walk and a smoke with him afterwards. He really quite believes now in the communications of spirits. It seems Gabriel's wife is constantly appearing (that is, rapping out things) at the seances at Cheyne Walk—! William affirms that the things so communicated are such as only she could know. No reasoning seems to have the least effect with these absurd people. I am going to be present on Friday evening, but expect nothing but rubbish.

When Alice expressed apprehensions about Scott's presence, he was quick to allay her fears (22 Oct.):

You need not be uncomfortable about the bogies. I need only tell you it was simply childish, and lowers my two very dear friends William and D. G. immensely in my judgment. It is all that three-waisted creature, who makes society there intolerable.¹

That Scott was the opposite of a disloyal friend is illustrated by the episode he reports to Alice regarding Swinburne (14 Nov.):

I had such an astounding letter the other day sent me by a lady who had received it from a person insisting that she should cease at once to consider A. S. a friend, accusing him of the most monstrous crimes and vices. Poor fellow, things seem to be coming to a dreadful pass. The letter was forwarded to me with an urgent request that I would either deny or confirm the assertions. At the very time A. himself comes with his new book—the first copy-proof sheets bound up—and

¹The "three-waisted creature" is Fanny Cornforth. WMR's Rossetti Papers (London, 1903) contains four accounts of "spiritual Seances", in 1865 and 1866, at two of which Scott was present, but there is no mention of one in October. Following a later seance on 25 November, at which WBS' scepticism was shaken, he wrote to WMR (27th): "As Miss Boyd has expressed an extreme dislike to have anything to do with spiritualism, please don't mention to any one our experience of Saturday, which was certainly remarkable enough to be worthy of mentioning. I do not wish she should know of all things in the world".
very quiet and good. You know I don’t believe in his wickedness even when he asserts it himself, so I wrote a long letter saying so and that I knew others thought the same, but fully admitting the unmanly monomania he has of raking up from history and the haunts of the devil all the wicked stories that give rise to the horrible accusations. I gave a solution of the character too,—a solution I am not alone in believing, that the word unmanly may be physically correct. I find my lady correspondent, from being inclined to hate and punish has become kindly compassionate.

It is well known that Swinburne was at this time a trial to his friends. Scott was convinced that Swinburne courted his unsavory reputation, and, like others who loved the poet, he was worried that Swinburne’s excesses would end in catastrophe:

Swinburne came yesterday, stopped to dinner and, as I arranged to lodge him instead of the nuisance of sitting up till all hours, he has just got down. I think the trash he told last night, all redounding to his own credit as a lady-seducer must have been lies, if true the brutality and bareness of his telling it all makes me really consider whether I can retain him as a friend. When at Wallington Lady T. confided to me that Lord Houghton has requested her to try to save Algernon from getting into habits of drinking, and I suppose there is reason to fear this will not be easy. Is it dreadful! (30 Dec.).

Perhaps the best and most revealing passage in any of Scott’s letters of this period is the postcript to his note on the Rossetti seance (3 Oct.). Whether prompted simply by the general idea of death, or more specifically by the shadow cast over their lives by Spencer’s demise, this view of the future represents a marked departure from Scott’s youthful scepticism and agnosticism—a shift that must in part reflect the influence of Alice Boyd:

Just a word or two I must add to yours about time and the future. It is so difficult to put one’s thoughts into words that it does seem one talks nonsense. Groping in the dark, when there is absolutely nothing to feel, is so little good. But of all enquiries, that I have had to entertain or that have come into my mind unbidden, the one I remember earliest, and that still remains above every other in interest is that of the future. When all the organs of sense are destroyed shall we continue to exercise sight, hearing, and the rest? We cannot realize to ourselves any condition in the place of the body, and yet we are constrained to say, yes, we shall live for ever. This belief is inherent in our nature, it has existed always, and all the greatest intellects have assented to it. Of late years, I have been coming to a firm belief in a conscious future wherein we shall say to ourselves “I am the same”, and I feel sure that our duty here is to live as fully as possible, I mean exercising all the affections, experiencing much, and keeping the intellect bright, sympathizing with what we call nature, either in other human creatures or the outer world, and the emotions healthy and pure. Let us live as we would for ever. I do not speak of religion; it has been my misfortune
to have it always presented to me in a way that made me impatient or contem­tuose. I know this has been a great misfortune. I hope my misfortune will not be increased by my influencing you to feel the same.

1866

Scott’s capacity for self-criticism is demonstrated by his letter to Alice Boyd of 8 May informing her that the two pictures he submitted to the Academy had not been hung:

Neither of my pictures [is] hung. This surely ought to draw the line and prevent me submitting myself to further insults from this particular source. . . . All this treatment from the Academy is not quite a mystery to me, but the explanation involves a number of causes. My antecedents are against me—having lived in a provincial town, and had the charge of a S[outh] Kensington School, being known in various other ways as much as in painting the kind of pictures I send to exhibitions;—having had a brother who made no secret of treating with scorn and contempt all the popular painters, and who is always referred to as an example of disappointed ambition. Then I am identified with the set who hate the R. A. and who do not send there in some measure, and I have dropt the old set I knew who have got into the Academy. Lastly, and more influential than all perhaps, the best qualities in my pictures are not conspicuous at first sight, they require to be thought out unhappily—they have an intellectual air about them very distasteful to the most of artists,—to all of the old school,—which is the great cause of my shying these and taking to the new men. The pictures are, moreover, not so good as I, the painter, and you and others, my dear friends, think them.

His letters of this year do not begin until May, when Alice returned to Penkill. She had spent Christmas in Newcastle and come down to London on 4 January, not wishing, as Scott told William Rossetti, to be in town on the anniversary of Spencer’s last visit. During the winter season, she and Scott had the usual social exchanges with the “set”, including Burne-Jones, Solomon, Swinburne, Woolner, and all the Rossettis; and Scott made a week-long journey to see Leathart in the north. Though he wrote on the 8th that “if I could write you a letter long enough to amuse you like a book that you could return to I would gladly”, Scott obviously found little to communicate, and this year’s letters are less interesting than usual. On the 12th, he sends her a lengthy critical catalogue of the Academy exhibition, which he found “without any number of very great works” though “Leighton is the principal man of the year”. He was pleased that “with a Scotch President the northern element is going to prevail”, but concluded that “nothing makes any difference to me in exhibition luck”.
Following Alice's revelations about the deterioration of the staircase murals—a nuisance that would continue to haunt his favourite project—he was eager to get to Penkill to inspect the damage for himself. But he was apprehensive about maintaining the fiction of their relationship: "If the state of the staircase makes further painting a waste of work I must just loaf about, but I see no chance of staying so long as we (you and I) have hoped, as it is impossible for me to live at Penkill without a visible reason and excuse." Indeed, he had until late April planned on going to Naples with William Rossetti, but finally abandoned the notion using as his excuse the state of his finances and the pressures of work on the Penkill and Wallington wall pictures. Another, more serious concern was revealed to William in the same letter (24 April): "A week ago I had fixed on enjoying the tour with you, but talking over things and finding both Miss Boyd and Lady Trevelyan have notions about not living, I shall remain at home and work." Scott's explanation proved more than just melodramatic sensationalism when three weeks later, on 13 May, Pauline Trevelyan died at Neuchâtel, where she had gone with her husband and Ruskin. "My fast friend", Scott wrote to Alice a few days later, 'dear and so delightful in intimate intercourse is gone", and he lamented that he had not made the trip to Cowley to see her before her departure for Switzerland.¹

On 23 May he arrived at Penkill, followed a week later by Letitia and Christina Rossetti, who spent six weeks at the castle, departing together on 17 July while Scott stayed on until early October. Initially Scott had planned to wait for the ladies, feeling that "Christina would look queer if I went away just before" (16 May). Such a curtsy to propriety and convention was temporary, however, and, as Scott obviously realized, unnecessary given the common knowledge aspect of the Scotts' household arrangement. At Penkill, Christina modelled for Lady Jane in the murals, and shortly after her arrival, she received her copy of *The Prince's Progress*. Art and literature did not,

¹ WBS' association with Pauline Trevelyan can only be surmised from tangential references owing to the unavailability of the WBS letters at the University of Newcastle, a number estimated at about 500 by C. J. Hunt in his "Preliminary Handlist" of the Trevelyan Papers (1967).
however, dominate the discussions, as Scott writes to William in an undated letter of July: “Christina & Letitia are here, and living with 3 ladies, religion and ailments forming a large portion of daily life and talk, is not exhilarating. As for Christina and I we fight like cats, as is our nature...”.

While Scott was at Penkill, the furor over the publication of Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* erupted in London. After receiving his copy, Scott sent his assessment to William (29 July):

Algernon’s book has come. It is beyond criticism and praise. But I am troubled about the poems being initiated by these two *Visions of Life and Death*, so unwholesome they are. If Tannehauser now absurdly called *Laus Veneris* had begun the book, followed by other important things how much better! But perhaps he has a reason.

Categorically opposed to Swinburne’s going with Hotten after Moxon withdrew the book, Scott implored William to dissuade him (2 Sept.):

I think it an infernal pity for him to go to Hotten at any price, although he is not Holywell St. Doing so is taking a step that his numerous enemies will make as bad, easily. I hope he has not decided, and that you and all his true friends tried all you could to constrain him to keep if not with Moxon, then with other equally clean publishers. Better let the book go out of sale, and become “rare”, than reissue by a questionable agent.

Scott wrote himself to the poet protesting his new publisher, but Swinburne signed with Hotten on the 4th (Lang 19), and on the 16th Scott wrote again to William about the book, this time reporting a rumour that Woolner had influenced Moxon to drop the volume:

I heard that Woolner was the man to bias the publisher and carry the point in the consideration of the withdrawal of Algernon’s book, and I at once wrote Woolner, and asked him the question direct. I enclose his letter and Payne’s, which you can return to me when read. You will prevent Gabriel or any one else repeating the question—observe Woolner says directly that Payne had seen or heard nothing of him for many months—and do justice to an old friend. The story I

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1 No consideration is given in this study to Lona Packer’s thesis that a long-standing emotional relationship existed between WBS and CGR. For her interpretation of the traumatic influence of CGR’s first trip to Penkill, see *Christina Rossetti*, pp. 214–32.

2 WMR’s involvement in the controversy is fully discussed in Roger W. Peattie’s “William Michael Rossetti and the Defense of Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads*”, *HLB*, xix (October 1971), 356–65.
heard had nothing to do with Gabriel, that is to say, Gabriel’s name was not mentioned in the connection.

I wrote also to Swinburne advising him against reissuing the book as it is, but of course found the deed was done, and if it had not, no advice would have had any modifying effect. Have you heard how Lord Houghton takes the Swinburne scandal? In Northumberland Algernon need not show face, and I am afraid it will be the same in other quarters.

In July 1866 the Keepership of the Print Room of the British Museum fell vacant, and William proposed that either he or Scott might be suitable for the job. Scott’s characteristically realistic response of 2 August provides an insight into his financial condition during this period of his first retirement:

A thousand thanks for your note with its proposition. I am not certain that it would really be eventually worth your while to go in for the Keepership of the Print Room, although it would afford much more congenial work of a daily official kind, and give you a tangible connection with art; and I am certain it would not be the thing for me, even if I could get it, which I could not. It is true that it would give me a position which I have not, and be fresh work of a very delightful kind for an old chap, too old to make a position in London as a painter, having lost the chance of so doing younger. But as I am at present possessed of an independence of about £300 a year, and want to get the Wallington things and this Staircase done, work for two years; and above all as I am naturally a loungier, very unhappy in working with other people, and want to be free to live here a good time of the year, I will prefer just doing what liketh me. I dare say when Chevy Chase is done I may be left high and dry as far as professional income is concerned, but for the last 10 years I have astonished myself by realizing (with my independent tin, not much at the beginning of that time) 7 to 900 a year. If I took a situation under government the first result wd. be the loss of my present little pension. All these things considered, however, a clear and fixed income of £500 a year wd. be much in my favour in the remaining chances of life, but I would not accept it with a daily duty and a responsibility in connection with other people. That this frame of mind is a right one is by no means certain, but I have acknowledged it to myself at last, and made up my mind to take myself as God has made me and do as little as possible against the grain.

Most of the remaining year’s correspondence to Alice, who came back to London on 9 November, is taken up with minor details about the publication of the revised edition of Lectures on Art, the Morten subscription, his work on the Wallington spandrels, and Rossetti’s newly acquired aviary, consisting of “two splendid owls, a raven, and 7 or 8 little birds called wax-bills. . . . He has besides a goat, lots of curious rabbits” (21

1 For a detailed account of the obscure artist Thomas Morten, see Allan R. Life, “‘That Unfortunate Young Man Morten’”, BJRL, lv (1972–3), 369–402.
Oct.). Alice stayed on through the winter season, until 20 May 1867, when she, Scott, and Letitia all left Elgin Road for Penkill.

1867

Scott was a steady, if leisurely, worker, as Dante Rossetti observed (DW 858), and lacking the routine of regular employment he enhanced his self-discipline by involving himself in a number of different projects. "Work I must", he wrote to William Rossetti on 6 July, "and never yet have I had half enough to occupy my time". Most of his artistic energies in 1866-67 were devoted to completing the Wallington spandrels, redoing the engravings for a Scottish reprint of his Pilgrim’s Progress illustrations, and, during his Penkill "vacation" (20 May–30 July), working on the King’s Quair murals. Because of his association with the School of Design and his friendship with Sir Henry Cole, he was early commissioned to assist in the decorations for the South Kensington Museum, over several years producing nearly fifty cartoons illustrating the history of earthenware and porcelain manufacture, which were later executed in a modified form of stained glass for the windows of the Keramic Gallery.¹

On 16 July, William Michael came to Penkill where he posed for one of the heads in Scott’s Palace of Venus. Scott, who left Penkill with Rossetti on the 30th, had proposed accompanying him to Paris where the Chevy Chase designs were on exhibit, but in the end he decided against "braving the terrors of the deep". That autumn he worked on three pictures—Rome (A.D. 100 and 150), Sea Children, and the Arcadian Poet; began researching for his book on Dürer (published in 1869), which grew out of his interest in collecting early prints; and undertook the engravings of his wall designs to illustrate lectures on the two series before the Institute of British Architects.² He brought back with him

¹ Sir Henry Cole (1808–82) became sole keeper of the Science and Art Department in 1858 and hence WBS’ superior during his last years at Newcastle. For WBS’ designs, which no longer exist, see The South Kensington Museum (1862) where two plates (nos. 1 and 25) are reproductions of WBS’ works. The complete series of designs is listed in a broadside "Catalogue of the Cartoons... for the windows of the Keramic Gallery" [1872].

² Scott’s lectures with engravings of Chevy Chase and The King’s Quair are printed in William B. Scott’s Mural Paintings... Two Papers (London, 1868).
from Penkill a number of Alice’s pictures, including *The Incantation of Hervor*, which was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy. It is clear from Scott’s letters that he not only encouraged Alice in her painting, but also that on occasion he retouched her pictures with a view to making them more saleable:

Your pictures have been seen by Burton and Brown and hugely admired. The latter said “Why, Scott, this is your own, now, come!” I assured him it was yours, “Well”, says he, “you must call it yours and you will immediately sell it, but nobody will dare to buy it if it is an amateur lady’s work”. There is a great deal of sense in this. However we must try. I think I could make the other little picture very good by very little work, but I shall not touch it at present (26 Aug.).

Correspondence had to compensate for propinquity in 1867, since Alice did not return for Christmas, but Scott found letter writing a poor substitute. “The truth is”, he wrote (2 Nov.), the long separation—interminable it appears is alleviated for a time by writing—sitting down and scribbling all that comes into one’s experience of the day gives one pleasure, in the hope that you receiving the scribbles, live with one to some extent by that means. But months and months make that amusement slow work, and things begin to seem “not worth” writing.

What was “worth writing” he sent her, however, weaving into his letters strands of gossip about a wide cross-section of their friends: the “new” Lady Trevelyan, Laura Capel Lofft, who riled Scott by her (unfortunately well-founded) criticisms of Alice’s pictures (12 Nov.); Holman Hunt, who visited, “looking very melancholy” (15 Oct.); Mrs. Street, with her “strictures [on Madox Brown’s party] private and confidential” (2 Nov.); Brown himself, who “because he has got a biggish home . . . seems to think he ought to have numbers of people” (14 Nov.); at the same party, Mrs. Crabb “(Miss Herbert, the lessee and actress, Gabriel’s old flame)” (14 Nov.); W. J. Linton, “who has now returned to America, I think pretty well primed for his task of writing a History of Wood Engraving” (15 Oct.); Howell, who is “to be married today, and such a pack of troubles he has about him, I never heard of elsewhere” (21 Aug.); and Letitia, who “proposed to me to go down for Xmas day to Penkill! Curious creature is she not”.¹

¹ WBS sent the following anecdote to Leathart but not to AB: “By the way Tebbs is conducting a separation between Gambart and wife. They say he is found to have various little girls in different lodgings about” (22 Dec.).
Of himself, he writes of print-buying junkets; of the progress of his *King's Quair* screen for Leathart; of the fire in the Newcastle Exchange, where, fortunately, his two works by David were not damaged; of the plans for his forthcoming lectures; and of his candidacy for the Old Water-Colour Society. He was not confident of election, "but you see, dear, if I am making tin and you ever want any it will be yours as well as mine, and if I could get into the Society I should have what is almost an independence in London—a good place of exhibition" (26 Dec.). Occasionally, he succumbs to nostalgia and emotional local colour:

After writing last to you I took my owlish walk and thought what a dreary change it was to be patrolling all alone, and you lying on the sofa in the bedroom at Penkill. You would have the fire burning and the sofa turned round. It would be quite dark out of doors at that hour, with perhaps a crimson bar seen through the trees—black silhouettes against the sky. Here it was grey and the muffin man tinkling through the dimness (19 Oct.).

Perhaps the most sensational news of the season was Whistler's expulsion from the Burlington Fine Arts Club after his physical attacks on Legros and Seymour Haden. Scott wrote at length of the episode to Alice Boyd (16 Dec.) noting that "it was so painful to see him, that I abstained from voting". On the issue of Whistler, Scott was in serious disagreement with the Rossetti brothers, both of whom resigned over the episode. Scott had made his dislike for Whistler unequivocal in a letter to William the previous summer:

Your news about the Club and Whistler surprises me. I don't agree at all with your view of the matter, and I consider the man who can smash the nose of a former bosom friend like Legros, or of a brother-in-law, deficient in the essential qualifications for civilized society or club intercourse. For my own part I have come to the conclusion before this rowing and fighting habit developed itself that it was only Whistler's singular faculty in relation to art, (that is the proper phrase to use, as he is scarcely an artist) that made Gabriel and you tolerate him, or rather fraternize with him. Swinburne found him in this circle of Cheyne Walk, and found him a loose fish in a way that recommends itself to him, otherwise he would not have taken to him. No other man for whom I have any regard can bear him, and to me he is loathsome, as an American of the worst type, as

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1 For a full description of this still extant screen see *The Leathart Collection*, no. 72.

2 The two works in question were *Achilles over the Body of Patroclus* and *Orestes Pursued by Furies*. See *Rossetti Papers*, ed. WMR (London, 1903), p. 323.
a dealer in wooden nutmegs, who wants the instinct of honour and good taste equally, and whose personality is disgusting rather (17 June).

When William, whose diary confirms his partisan role in Whistler’s cause, remonstrated, Scott, never one to capitulate when principle was concerned—(his artistic view is another matter)—returned to the attack:

You, the most equable of men, do get roused and riled occasionally, but it is very pleasant to see that the defence of a friend is the opportunity you take. You know Whistler much better than I do: I only wrote my individual and private impression, of that individual. Gabriel, I remember, in relating his attack on Haden, said something implying that the respectable hum deserved his pummeling. “If we all got our deserts who would escape a whipping”? Hamlet asks, but my only point of view in the matter is that Whistler’s use of his fists is such as to exclude him from decent society, and that he is a man eminently qualified to bring the character of painter into social discredit, in my opinion, with the great majority of the members of the Club and men of the world (25 June).

The actual proceedings did distress Scott—“It was a painful scene, very like ‘trial and execution’”, he wrote to Leathart (22 Dec.), and he seconded a motion put by Tebbs that Whistler be allowed to resign; Whistler, however, would not provide the requisite guarantees that he would not attempt to continue his membership, and the motion failed.

Scott’s differences with the Rossettis over Whistler seem not to have interfered with their friendship. When William’s edition of Whitman appeared on 5 February 1868, it was dedicated to Scott, who, like Whitman, was “a true poet and a strong thinker”. The tribute was, as Scott said, “very good of the friendly W” (15 Oct.).

1868–1872

It is convenient to group together the letters from 1868–72, not because during these years Scott’s life was any more or less eventful than in the years before or after, but because the pattern of his activities was to a great extent influenced by the preparations for the publication of Rossetti’s Poems (1870) and by the crisis precipitated by Buchanan’s attack in 1871–2. Scott’s involvement in this crucial episode in Rossetti’s life has been fully

1 WBS generally refers to WMR as “Billy Waggles”. For more on the Whistler episode, see WMR’s diary for 1867 in Rossetti Papers; an even fuller account is in the unpublished portions of the diary.
explored in *Prelude to the Last Decade*, where are printed most of the relevant portions of his letters to Alice Boyd and William M. Rossetti treating the several elements that contributed to Rossetti's final breakdown. To exclude Rossetti totally from the narrative account of these years would necessarily distort the perspective through which Scott is seen and disrupt the continuity of the letters; however, even a skeletal recapitulation of the "Prelude" period would seriously restrict the inclusion of letters relating to other areas of Scott's activities. For this reason, references to Rossetti are limited to contexts not examined in the earlier monograph.

The final years of Scott's first retirement were not exactly fallow, but they were characterized by an increasing amount of what he later termed "ready writing", that is, writing, generally on artistic subjects, commissioned by various publishers. Scott certainly did not abandon his painting at this time—his *Rending of the Vail* was accepted by the Royal Academy in 1869 (No. 525) and the letters contain frequent mention of other works on which he was working—but he was forced, following his rejection by the Old Water-Colour Society in 1868, to recognize that, lacking an exhibition outlet, he could not depend upon picture sales to supplement his income and that he must pursue more vigorously the practical concerns of his art, as indeed he had done years before in accepting the position at Newcastle. His second London period had been, at best, a modified success, and the realization of that fact was inevitably accompanied by disappointment and disillusionment over future prospects. On 10 February 1868, he admits to falling prey to the same sort of ennui he had seen in a recent letter from Alice.

I too, occasionally drop into the vast silent void of ennui, and the sun sets and the dusk of evening falls upon my weary work, and you are far away in the windy woods. But I am not going to grumble, being at least occupied with work, and your next letter may be more cheery.

Scott's depression was exacerbated by Alice's absence, which he could only assuage through work and social contact. That June, after Alice had gone to Penkill, he writes of a call he made on Howell and Burne-Jones:

Jones seemed in a very queer way, so restless and fidgety, and left me at Howell's who has removed close beside him Ruskin having bought out at £200 expense a
man who had a home there suitable for Howell! This act of generosity is in fact an attempt to yet save Jones who is in a state that makes his friends fear for his mind. Georgy is now spoken of by Howell and others as a little fiend, her last act being to force poor E. B. J. to have a sister from Bombay to lie-in in the house at this time when he is so nervous and shakey. Such is female natur! (8 June).

Alice was still in town when the near-decimation of the Pre-Raphaelites that Scott described in a pair of letters to Leathart occurred:

The other evening Jones gave a party in his new house. You know he has taken a fine old house "The Grange" North End Lane Fulham Road. Well, he actually invited all the world and had azaleas and orange trees to decorate his studio, which is a very good one, a delightful room indeed. Howell was Major Domo, and the supper was sumptuous. Every body of course was there, that is every body of the true creed, not sufficient variety certainly to make a gathering of the foremost artists of London, but still (considering I was the only Scotchman there I fancy) it was a very successful evening (8 Mar.).

E. B. J.'s housewarming was a rather extensive affair, and after—fortunately after—all had left, a great part of the ceiling of the studio came down, about 4 hundredweight, had we all been there, the new school as Brown said might have been extinguished,—he, Gabriel, Holman Hunt, Morris, Swinburne, little Simeon, Jones and myself, might have been squashed at one go (14 Mar.).

Scott went to Wallington to superintend the hanging of the Chevy Chase spandrels in June before going on to Penkill. The new environment at Wallington depressed him and he predicted to Alice that this would almost certainly be his last visit:

I can't get on with Lady Trevelyan, and now I see how little taste for art or poetry Sir Walter naturally has,—and how little generosity or friendship he is capable of. . . .

The Chevy Chase is most successful—at least so it seems to me. I leave this however with no desire to hear any more of my dear Sir Walter whom I respected so much as a chivalrous don; nor, most likely shall I ever come here again in his time. It is frightful to see the sugar grudged to the strawberries and the third cup of tea. A foliage spandrel I did last visit, which I did not mean to charge for, I shall now make him pay (23rd).

His annual stay at Penkill was broken in 1868, but from 6 August he had several weeks of uninterrupted work on the staircase before Dante Gabriel arrived on 25 September. Scott was ready to depart by the time Rossetti finally made up his mind to come, but he had no choice but remain on, as he told Leathart:

It is now time I was getting back to London . . . but after procrastinating week after week Gabriel has at last arrived here, so I must prolong my stay to
keep him company and in some degree look after him. You know he has not been well lately. I find him looking well enough, but complaining much of his eyes, and of sleeplessness. He suddenly arrived yesterday, and this morning says he slept last night for the first time for weeks (26 Sept.).

A few days later, Scott sought to mend fences that Gabriel had allowed to fall into disrepair:

Gabriel has just told me to say to you in explanation of his having not sent you the remaining half of the money he owes you, that the fact of his having been saving his eyes this summer has prevented him doing so. He would have written you to explain but is in fact not even writing notes he can avoid. What a dreadful pity it will be, if his nervous apprehensions are anything like realized. Had he come here as arranged long ago he would have been wise, but he went to Warwickshire and walked 12 or 15 miles a day in the very hot weather. Then he did not sleep a wink for a fortnight according to his own impression, here he sleeps well for the first time for months. Of course a painter does not wish to say much about his eyes, only he considers that he should give you some explanation of his failure to pay (30 Sept.).

Physically—and poetically, too, it would seem—Penkill was therapeutic for Rossetti, but as the autumn dragged on Scott became more uneasy about his obligations in London. He wrote to Leathart on 16 October:

Rossetti is still here, and indeed I am only remaining for his sake, and ought to be in town. However, it is so essential to him to have this trial of rest that I remain with him for another week. Unless, indeed, Brown (who has been asked by Miss Boyd) comes immediately, in which case I shall leave Rossetti in his charge. Either way I see little chance now of getting round to Newcastle.

The pair finally left Penkill on 2 November, sharing an eccentric journey which Scott dutifully described to Alice:

It was jolly cold driving down to Girvan, and the wait at Ayrshire with the dying embers of a fire in the waiting room, too bad for a nigger. We went into the town... and dived into the Tam O'Shanter tavern... only a lot of roughs quarrelling and fighting in the room below made the miserable little place into a hell, so we got back to the station. After the train had fairly started, Gabriel proposed a nip of the wine of the country you furnished me with, when I groped in the courier bag, and found it had been opened in our absence at the station and sucked dry! More than that, the two hard eggs had been eaten, only a few fragments left to improve the living. When we found the Bible on the table and the Believers Daily Readings hung up in the waiting room, I feared something would happen. Well, the train continued, the carriage leaked, and at Kilmarnock we had to change with all our traps for the south train! By this time we were rather moist, and on reaching Carlisle at 1/2 past 12, we liquored up you may be sure. Gabriel wanted a hot supper but they declined that accommodation at that hour. I suppose Miss Losh will think all this charming and delightful,
but I would rather have left in day light by the respectable train at 1 o’clock and
got tucked in at the county at a reasonable hour. By the bye, did you hear that
“leery old thing” as Gabriel calls her (at the same time expressing sincere and
great respect and affection) the morning of our leaving making a long explanation
about not having acknowledged some money to her banker, and proposing we
shd. post it at Carlisle to save time, and then changing her mind, etc. It was all
to throw dust in your eyes no doubt, in case you observed her letter in the bag
(4 Nov.).

At several social events in November Scott gathered news to
send on to Alice about Rossetti and Jane Morris, whose friend­ship
was quickly becoming a topic for gossip, if not scandal.
Scott found the influence of Jane Morris—“the model for
everything”—pernicious to Rossetti’s art; he reported to
Leathart on 9 December: “10 life size heads of Janey Morris
either painted or drawn in chalk in progress, and nothing else
visible, or likely to be, as far as one can see”. Paradoxically,
Jane Morris was also the major inspiration in Rossetti’s poetic
renaissance, which Scott saw as the only possible way to restore
his friend’s will to live, vitiated by his recent eye disorders. To
William, a month after the end of Rossetti’s Penkill retreat,
Scott wrote:

About Gabriel—the short ending to his ills in the worst case, was, of course,
often spoken of by him. But we must not think of the possibility of that even
under the dire misfortune. I could not strongly dissuade him, but I feel that it
must not be thought of. But he is poet as well as painter and was a poet before
he was a painter, and even in the interval of rest—we must acknowledge to the
disturbance of his sight even to outsiders—it would be a great thing to get him to
be the poet again. I wonder his spirits don’t break down doing nothing so long
(2 Dec.).

1869 began with a party at Simeon Solomon’s on 4 January
ending up at Rossetti’s with the Morrises from which Scott and
Alice did not get home until 3.30 a.m. This was the year of
Scott’s closest association with Rossetti. Alice’s day-diary
records no fewer than twenty-five social engagements with
Rossetti when she was in town, and other meetings are recounted
in Scott’s letters to her. Rossetti spent a month at Penkill in
late summer (19 Aug.–17 Sept.), and he exchanged a number of
letters during the year with Scott and Alice, sending them on 9
October the first “trial book” of his poems. Once again,
Penkill served as a poetical retreat, and Scott used his letters to William to forward periodic "progress reports":

Gabriel is employing himself with good effect on his poetry, both correcting old and constructing new. At first I thought him very well, but now I see him more intimately, he does not appear so strong and right as I thought. There are disturbing causes, which may be softened away by time. You have had his proofs through your hand doing them good service but the new verses you have not seen yet (6 Sept.).

Gabriel was in exactly the right cue for writing, and but for the restlessness that led him back to London would have worked out the Orchard pits, which promises to be the work. Helen is splendid and complete, the other will be, if finished as it is begun and planned, much greater (27 Sept.).

Gabriel writes me he has done the best he has yet accomplished in the Eden Bower, and that it drove Maria and Christina out of the room, the Oblong is so badly used in it. I still want him to try a reconsideration of the two last lines of the sea-margin. He tells me you thought them the soul of the verses. This may be true, at least they give the necessary completion to the idea, and I feel that their expression is also in harmony with the sentiment. Still, they have the boy's love of quaintness and are in a certain way vapid. He could not write so now, although he would find it quite worth his while to say what the little poem has to say, and these lines in particular (1 Oct.).

On 11 October, Scott sent William the first word that the manuscript poems had been recovered:

A note from Gabriel this morning. He has recovered the M.S. book of his poems. He mentions at some length his meeting with Hake, whose stories attracted him so much long ago, as I very well remember. He says I will take to him, and I hope to meet him, and that he will take to me.

Scott's own affairs during 1869 did not advance appreciably, though there is little doubt that the publication of his Dürer made possible the "ready writing" assignments that came his way in due course. He considered applying for the Slade Professorship, but in the end decided against again committing himself to a teaching position. Meantime, he assisted Leathart in the building of his collection, advising him on purchases and giving assurances about the superiority of his pictures:

You are afraid of your collection being considered by popular and promiscuous judges a peculiarly serious and grave one in the majority of the subjects. But it is just this that puts your collection above that of almost any other man. No doubt your attaching yourself to the painters of genius rather than of talent, as I may call the set I know best and whose works you buy most, compared for example to the St. John's Wood set, is the primary reason for the superiority of your collection (29 Nov.).
Leathart, in his turn, handled many of Scott’s investments in the north, and many letters of this and the next year indicate that Scott was trying desperately to protect his income against market fluctuations, especially as he had so little luck with the sale of his pictures. After his Academy success, Scott had hoped to tempt Rossetti’s extravagant patron, William Graham, to purchase The Rending of the Vail, but, as he told Leathart, “when he asked the price, I saw he was staggered by its insignificance, and he has never mentioned it again” (6 Sept.).

Two of Scott’s letters of 1869 contain particularly interesting accounts of social events. In the first he recounts a “great American gathering” where Swinburne, who was “just on the safe side of being drunk”, was making up to an older Miss Blind (Blint) . . . such a jolly little red republican, with an immense mop and spread of black hair and an Indian or Turkish . . . scarf tied across her and hanging behind. An enthusiasm for me too I found she had, on hearsay, of my “Year of the World”, which I have since sent her a present of” [undated].

The second description occurs in Scott’s last letter to Alice before she came to London on 25 November—a long letter detailing his work at South Kensington, the cataloguing of his prints for a sale at Sotheby’s, his general health, and a loan to Gabriel to pay Leathart, for which “he has given me a bill at 6 months”, and a party at which he met a man new to art, John Nettleship:

The new man, Nettleship, the ambitious designer of pictorial ideas like Blake’s or my brother’s was carried away with admiration of some of David’s designs. How he is ever to make a profession of his art, I don’t see, beginning so late, and having to learn to draw especially. Imagine a man sending to an exhibition God weeping because he can’t keep Sin out of his creation, and another God rejoicing (grinning in fact) having over come Sin. Besides he keeps working these same two impossible ideas over again. Is it not sad, the poor wombat dead! It took fits and tried to run up the wall!

More letters from Scott to Leathart survive for 1870 than to Alice Boyd. Many of those to Leathart concern stock transactions; others involve an acrimonious exchange that arose over Scott’s offer to Leathart of his Rending of the Vail, which he had failed to sell at the asking price of £120, and which, wanting Leathart “to have the best example of me to be had”, he proposed trading for several lesser pictures as partial payment. Scott’s preoccupation with money in this year grew out of his
purchase of Bellevue House, No. 92 Cheyne Walk, and the sudden drop in his European shares owing to the Franco-Prussian War. The house, reputed to have been designed by Robert Adam, was expensive and required extensive repairs. On the day after the house was transferred, Scott wrote to Alice:

Gabriel gave me the history of Chelsea, a book in two volumes, in which a good account of Bellevue house with a portrait of Mr. Hatchett who then lived in it. Gab. had bought the book in hopes of finding a flourishing account of his own house, but as there was no mention of it he was riled, and made it over to me, Bellevue being so celebrated in it (2 Oct.).

Searching for a house and the subsequent furnishing and repairs of Bellevue occupied much of Scott's time from the Spring through November, when he moved in with Alice and Letitia on the 25th. He did complete his Gems of French Art shortly after his aestivation at Penkill (7 July–20 Sept.), during which both Brown and Leathart visited, but he accomplished little in art during the year. Alice was commissioned by Macmillan to do the illustrations for Christina Rossetti's Sing Song, a project that was ultimately scrapped in proof stage, because, while her animals were perfectly adequate, she was unable to do babies and human figures convincingly.  

The best letters, as usual, are descriptive of social functions or isolated encounters. He and Alice had the occasional "sonnets and cards" (Alice's term) evening with Rossetti, but Scott noted to Leathart on 4 February that he was seeing "very much less of Gabriel than I used to". On his return to London from Penkill, he attended several parties which get written up—one at Gabriel's on 28 September:

Gabriel's party was not a numerous one, Morris and Jones, Brown and Swinburne, Faulkner, William, Dunn and Murray, the last appearing I suppose for the first time at one of these dinner parties. There was no great amount of enjoyment. Morris had a bellyache and Swinburne was in a thick-speaking state from the first, and hiccupping, so there was little amusement but from Brown's ocean of slow prose against the Prooshins bombarding a town with women and children in it.

On 8 October, he reported a visit from Swinburne:

Last Sunday Swinburne came in the afternoon and stayed till 12 at night reading his additional pieces for the "Songs before Sunrise"—shortly to be

1 For a full account of AB's illustrations, see Packer, pp. 276–80. The original drawings are still at Penkill Castle.
on 28 October he described a party at one of Ford Madox Brown’s “at homes”:

Last night I was at a party of poets at Bruno’s. There was Gabriel, Morris, and a number of others, Swinburne was invited but I am sorry to say, could not come, all to meet two new poets O’Shaughnessy and Payne. The O’ has just published a book called an “Epic of Women”, which I saw last night for the first time, but which I confess I don’t see anything in. Poor Swinburne has gone worse than ever again. He has a keeper and his father has come up to town, to take him away, only he could not be removed yesterday. We are all very sorry.

A remarkable side effect of Scott’s close affiliation with Rossetti in these years was a renewal of his own poetic tendencies. His poem “Anthony” had appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in July 1868, but that poem was written many years before, and it was unquestionably Rossetti’s decision to publish a volume that led to the reawakening of Scott’s sleeping lesser muse. During 1871–2, he began to compose sonnets and lyrics for a series included in his *Poems* (1875) as “The Old Scotch House”; and he was obviously pleased to pass on Gabriel’s praise to Alice:

after [dinner], with the nuts I gave them my sonnet “The High Chamber”, which met with unqualified commendation, especially from Gab. who by the by, spoke of my song the “Last of Autumn” as having given him great pleasure . . . He thinks “The High Chamber” one of my best, and I think so too (27 Oct.).

He must also have been encouraged by his inclusion among the “Pre-Raphaelite School” in *Our Living Poets* (1871), in which H. Buxton Forman singled out his poetry as perhaps his greatest, if least appreciated, achievement and unequivocally asserted his influence on the younger poets. Such praise must have been heady for Scott, who had never received more than limited recognition. He was never to achieve a sufficient reputation to make a living from either poetry or painting, but it is significant that at this particular time, even while he was turning out hack work such as his book on *The British School of Sculpture* (1872)—completing the letterpress in less than six weeks for a fee of £50—and painting the occasional picture, he was also questioning the effect that the diversity which had always characterized his career was having on his talent. “Your various occupations
don't the least surprise, but they very completely prevent painting",

As Byron said "A poet must be a poet and nothing else", still more I think a painter must be nothing else, and I feel now that the many things I have done all my life and am at this moment interested in effectually break the continuity of thought necessary. With you who are only an artist occasionally this result must be still more injurious (30 Oct.).

That Scott's intercourse with Rossetti in 1871 was constant is evinced both by the entries in Alice's day-diary and by the series of "Kelmscott letters" that Rossetti addressed to Scott from Gloucestershire between July and October. When he and Alice were together in London, their entire social life revolved around the "set" which gathered usually at Bellevue House, at 16 Cheyne Walk, or at either Ford Madox Brown's or G. P. Boyce's. Scott's epistolary gazettes to Alice at Penkill are dominated by those Rossetti anecdotes previously published in the Prelude, but there are other episodes of interest described. He writes of seeing Arthur Hughes' "large and elaborate designs for Christina's book, the best things he has ever done"; of receiving a Pre-Raphaelite novel "written by a lady you know a little, but whose authorship is a profound secret, even from her own family, so you must not even guess"; and of Christina, who, as a result of her illness, "has lost all the beauty she had, her eyes seem so queerly exaggerated" (19 Nov.).

In 1872, Alice left London less than a fortnight before the first indications of Rossetti's breakdown on 2 June. Although Scott spent less than three weeks at Stobhall, Rossetti's condition was the main concern at Penkill throughout the summer and fall. Returning from Penkill on 19 October, well after Rossetti had gone back to Kelmscott, Scott was eager to learn at first hand the true state of his friend's recovery. He was particularly bothered by reports that Rossetti's delusions of a conspiracy made it unlikely that he would again take up residence at Cheyne Walk, and he wrote Alice that he was afraid "we shall never see him

1 WBS figures in many entries of Boyce's diaries, 1851-75, in Old Water-Colour Society's Club, 19th Annual Volume (1941), pp. 9-71.
2 The novel was Magdalen Wynyard or, The Provocations of a Pre-Raphaelite by Averil Beaumont, 1872. The author was Mrs. A. W. Hunt, the mother of Violet.
again as we used to have him dropping in at nights for a *wubber*” (8 Nov.). From Rossetti’s letters, Scott deduced that he “seems . . . quite well, but his direction to Dunn to look out for ‘a house with grounds surrounding it, which are enclosed by a high wall’ looks still a little queer” (19 Nov). In December, Scott went to Kelmscott to see for himself. He wrote a long descriptive letter about Kelmscott on the 10th, and on the 14th confirmed that Gabriel “is really as sane and as strong as ever he was in his life”. The long crisis was over, and, though it had been less intense for Scott than for the immediate family, he and Alice, whose involvement was great, might readily have shared those sentiments which William Rossetti committed to his diary on the last day of 1872:

... the most painful year I have passed, owing to the ill health of Christina, and more especially of Gabriel. Were I to limit myself to what concerns myself personally, there wd. have been nothing to complain of. However, the year is much less black at its close than at some stages of its course.¹

¹ Unpublished manuscript at U.B.C.

The second part of this article will appear in the next number of the Bulletin.