If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

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The Gaskell Society

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1996 NO. 21

EDITOR'S LETTER

It is fortunate for our Society that Elizabeth Gaskell was not as attached to Manchester as her husband William was. She enjoyed travel, new scenes and society and we have been able to follow her footsteps for our conference venues and outings - the Lake District, Whitby and Scarborough, Edinburgh and Oxford.

At our most recent conference at Oxford we almost felt under an obligation to enjoy it as much as she had done on her several visits. All our members will share our lecture programme through the next Journal. Our outings to Dumbleton Hall, once the home of her cousin, Edward Holland and to Barford where she first went to school were relevant and pleasant. Some of us also saw Stanton Harcourt Manor, which she visited in 1864 and Sudeley Castle, though the Cotswolds were baked brown by the hot summer. We think we got the right mix between our academic programme and outings, but what makes our conferences special is the pleasure shared and the meeting of friends.

We are always happy to get feedback (on all our programmes) and will try to allot more time for discussion in our next conference. This will be at Chester so that we can have a Welsh theme.

Several of our members have not been in the best of health recently. We send good wishes for their recovery to Geoffrey Sharps, Dudley Barlow and Richard Beckley.

We have had a very pleasant and unexpected boost to our finances. Member Mrs Daphne Carrick from Norfolk died in August and named our Society as a legatee. We share one sixth of the residue of her estate with The National Trust, Friends of Norwich Cathedral, The Brontë Society, The Dickens Fellowship and The George Eliot Fellowship. We hope this will help us in efforts to preserve the Plymouth Grove house, to refurbish the Gaskell grave in Brook Street Chapel graveyard and similar endeavours. We are only sorry that we cannot thank the donor, because it is much appreciated.

I am very grateful, too, for the gift made to me by the Society to mark our 10th Anniversary: The Life of Charlotte Brontë (2 vols 1857) and Cranford with Hugh Thomson illustrations in colour, all specially bound.

MRS GASKELL AND CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

by Graham Handley

In 1932, well before the modern interest in Mrs Gaskell, Jane Whitehill sensitively edited the correspondence between the novelist and Charles Eliot Norton, the young American whom she had met in Rome in 1857. Owing to the warmth of her letters to him, biographical speculation has suggested that Mrs Gaskell may well have been in love with this talented and cultivated young man (he was born in 1827) who was brought up in the Unitarian faith which she also embraced. Certainly the feeling in the letters they exchanged is imbued with loving concern, a harking back to those halcyon days in Rome, a recognition of mutual interests, sympathies, and a delight in each other's different, shared-at-a-distance family joys and tribulations. Norton is much more than Elizabeth's (I can't call her Gaskell) epistolary toy-boy, and she is much more than a surrogate mother to him (his own mother in fact died 14 years after Mrs Gaskell, in 1879). His first letter to her is prelude to the relationship and sets the sympathetic tone which always subsists between them. He tells her how Cranford, so often read aloud in the Norton family home at Shady Hill, provided his dying father with diversion and solace during his last days, adding 'You may imagine what sacred associations it [Cranford] now possesses for us'. Within two years they had met each other, and when she returned to Plymouth Grove Elizabeth wrote him the first of a memorable sequence of gossipy, warm, confiding and stimulating letters, in which her daughters feature markedly (obviously they were drawn towards Norton too). Her own interests are in turn stimulated: she wants to go to America (more, and typically, she wants Mr Gaskell to go but he refuses to budge), and she wants Norton to visit them, telling him affectionately, kiddingly, 'I don't believe from what I hear of your looks, that a republic agrees with your health; do try a little aristocracy, and as a step to it try a visit to us, who are admirers of that "effete institution"'. She writes of her pride in her daughter Meta, reflects on her husband's dislike of change, tells Norton how she lost the chrysanthemums she had been lovingly nursing by leaving them outside so that they were

frozen. And she is anxious, too, to record for her literary friend her admiration for Scenes of Clerical Life, "Janet's Repentance above all, still", and providing him with a potted (and inaccurate) sketch of 'Miss Marianne Evans'. Her critique of Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) includes the delicious 'At any rate I wait to be convinced that I am nothing but a modified fish'.

Mrs Gaskell's humour in these letters sometimes takes the form of whimsy, as when she tells him that she dreams that she is in America, but that it always looks like home 'whh I know it is not'. In relation to 'My girls, my darlings' Unitarian young men don't appear to be forthcoming, and those of wider cultivation are restrained by the more bigotted fathers of the last generation from too much intimacy with Unitarians'. Like her, Norton is a morally, spiritually and socially committed activist but with a practical emphasis: he tells her of 'our model lodging houses' for the poor. In response she goes up-market, telling him of her visit to Oxford in 1860. Touchingly, he can't remember exactly what she looks like, and welcomes the fact that she is sending him a photograph of herself. Their exchanges are an intimate fond record, full of lively debate and sympathetic mutuality, even to the extent of Elizabeth telling him how much he is liked in the downstairs world of her servants ('We wish he'd come again'). This is no flurry of flattery, but a genuine delight in his warmth of personality: there *is* love between Mrs Gaskell and Norton, but it is a giving love, an unselfconscious recognition, a quietly insistent joy. When he receives a letter from her he feels that he hears her voice describing the events. He lectures her on art, maintaining that its one end 'is truth', asserting that the real artist's aim should be 'the development of character through his work'. We note the rigour and vigour of Norton's mind, but we note too his natural sympathetic sincerity when he feels for Mrs Gaskell's servant Mary, whose fiance has been seriously injured. He explains to her the perspectives of the American Civil War, she tells him of the current English prejudices about it (and the suffering): always she probes for the truth, being dismissive of the celebrated war correspondent of the Times, W H Russell, noting his 'Panorama painting'.

In March 1862 he tells 'My dearest Mrs Gaskell' of his forthcoming marriage, asking her, Meta and Marianne to love his wife, to let her 'share' what they have given him in abundance, the generous affection which for him is one of 'the permanent blessings of life'. She responds warmly to 'My dearest Mr Norton', saying how glad she is that he is going to be married, feeling 'almost as if you were my own son'. It is a revealing emphasis. She greets the birth of the Nortons' first child much more perfunctorily, passing on to discuss the war situation, but her last letter to him (written in September 1865) is filled with her self-hugging delight in confiding the secret that she has purchased the house near Alton which she has chosen for her husband William's retirement. It is a positive assertion of her intimate need of him.

There is a postscript to this which, I think, provides a wry indication of their mutuality. In 1863 Sylvia's Lovers, which had cost her much labour, was published. Norton is greatly moved, and tells her that 'having had the happiness of knowing you loving you' he has read it 'with such feeling'. His wife too is part of the experience, and the novel is 'happy & yet half sad, quickening all true sympathies, widening our charity, & making part of our united, sacred secret treasury of precious common memories and affections'. We should read this in the context of Mrs Gaskell's dedication to the first American edition of Sylvia's Lovers, published some two years before the end of the Civil War. 'This Book is Dedicated To all My Northern Friends with the truest sympathy of an English Woman, and in an especial manner to my dear Friend Charles Eliot Norton And to his Wife who though personally unknown to me is yet dear to me for his sake'. This has all the rushing impetuous sympathy which is characteristic of Mrs Gaskell: it subserves her anti-slavery stance, and is bold, even courageous as a public utterance. The dedication of the first English edition of the novel may be set beside it: 'This Book is dedicated to My Dear Husband By Her Who Best Knows His Value'. This is dutiful and studied, and the tone of each dedication is superbly a measure of the personality of the recipient. Norton, himself a distinguished man of letters, called out in the distinguished novelist a warmth and

immediacy, a relaxed freshness of utterance which was part of *her* personality. Convention ensured that they did not even use each other's Christian names, yet their underlying love for each other is clear, unencroaching, expressive and unpossessive. I suggest that it gave her a greater fullness of being, and that Sylvia's Lovers and Wives and Daughters, as well as Lois the Witch and Cousin Phillis, owe something at least to the radiance Norton cast on her life and which she so fully returned to him.

(All references in the above are to Letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-65: Edited with an Introduction by Jane Whitehill, Oxford University Press, 1932)

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MEETING MRS JANE WHITEHILL

by J Geoffrey Sharps

Mrs Jane Whitehill was the Jane Revere Coolidge whose incomplete typescript of a study of Mrs Gaskell is in the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds Library (see bibliography of my Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention).
For many years she lived near Boston, USA, her husband holding a high position at the Boston Athenaeum. When in England some years ago she visited my wife and myself at Scarborough, where she also met Professor J A V Chapple. A gracious lady, she was an admirable pioneer American Gaskell scholar; and both Charles Eliot Norton and Mrs Gaskell would have been delighted for her to edit their transatlantic correspondence.

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Our new cover picture, from a George du Maurier print, is available as a notelet, one of a series of ten. These are sold in packs of 5 at £2.20 or £2.50 by post.
This one illustrates North and South.
Our US Secretary, Lucy Magruder, had these made for us from woodblock prints she owns, all illustrating Gaskell works.

WIVES AND DAUGHTERS - AN ALTERNATIVE ENDING

The Knutsford Edition of Wives and Daughters ends with 'Concluding Remarks', by the editor A W Ward. Although Elizabeth Gaskell died before the ending was written, her daughters were able to tell how they thought their mother intended the story to end.

Members of a WEA course held at Stamford, Lincolnshire, enjoyed reading the book and set themselves the task of writing the last chapter. Here is Pamela Sharp's version. Another member of the class, Peter Scriven, conjectured Wives and Daughters as the first book in a trilogy and outlined the second and third parts.

Wives and Daughters
a new Conclusion by Pamela Sharp

Whilst Roger was away he sometimes feared that Molly might not have missed him or would still think him fickle. But Molly's letters were long and full of little pieces of news and served to keep her dear image before his eyes. How different from the short,uncaring, self-centred missives which Cynthia had sent to him. And so, Roger, by turns, felt both pessimistic and optimistic of Molly's love for him: he felt that perhaps Molly was being her own kind self in writing these letters, to make him feel less lonely while he was away. Suppose, thought Roger, another man should have come along to pay his attentions to the sweet girl.

At last, the months wore away until Roger (and Molly, too, but unbeknown to him) could count now in weeks the time until the traveller's return. How their reunion would take place had much exercised Roger's mind, alone in his little hut in Africa: how should he greet his beloved? Should he tell her that he was coming ... or should it be a sudden surprise when he arrived at Hollingford?

It so happened that at about the time of Roger's return, Cynthia and Walter Henderson were staying at Hollingford with their new son and heir. They had come to show off this bonny child to his Grandmamma and Aunt. All

Hollingford was in a bustle, and the house not a little put about to accommodate the proud parents, the doted-upon child and his nurse. Indeed, for poor Molly, it was the first real distraction to her secret thoughts and longings to see dear Roger again.

On a fine, sunny, June morning Cynthia had the Henderson carriage brought around to the front door, as she wished to go into the little town to choose some fresh ribbons for young Walter's cradle. Mrs Gibson had decided, as the day looked fine (and she had a new gown), to accompany her daughter.

It was thus that, as Cynthia and her mother were examining the wares in Dunn's drapery store, Mrs Gibson chanced to look up and to see passing by an upright, well-built figure of a man:

"Look Cynthia, I declare that is Roger Hamley", she cried, waving strenuously in his direction, and hoping to catch his eye, as he passed the bow window of the shop. For all her poise and self-confidence, for a moment, a tremor ran through Cynthia's body.

"Hush Mamma, we do not want Roger coming in here - er - into a woman's store, I mean", she faltered. In spite of herself, Cynthia blushed deeply. Events in her life had not left her time to speculate upon how she would behave towards her former lover when he returned from Africa. The serious matter of ribbon selection soon put Roger's appearance out of the minds of mother and daughter, and in time - a much longer time that Mr Gibson had expected, for he was at home awaiting his dinner - they returned. Baby Walter had to be petted and kissed and the ribbons essayed on his cradle before the meal could be placed upon the table. Then a detailed account of all their doings and deliberations had to be recounted for the benefit of husband, grandfather and aunt. It was not until the dessert was set before them that Mrs Gibson remembered another piece of news ...
"Oh! Mr Gibson, you will not be able to guess who I saw in town today", she began, completely oblivious of the impact of her impending disclosure upon Molly. Molly looked up.

Her heart pounded; the colour arose in her cheeks, and she thought that she would choke.

"Can you think who it could be, Molly, child", she asked, looking at Molly across the table. Cynthia remained silent. Walter interjected: "Could it be that explorer fellow, Hamley?" "I heard from the groom that he was back last night."

Roger back - and he had not come at once to see her? Molly's eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, and looking so well", went on Mrs Gibson, pleased at the impact of her news. "I suppose he will come to call upon us when he can find the time. He will be so pleased to be acquainted with your husband, Cynthia, and, of course, he will know nothing of darling little Water", she babbled on.

Mr Gibson looked grave. He was not unaware of the constancy of Molly's feelings for Roger, and he kept his eyes averted from his daughter, as she murmured some excuse and stumbled from the table.

His eyes followed her into the garden, where he saw her hastening towards the arbour and the old rustic seat within it, where she had spent so many hours with a book in her lap, over the past months.

Molly was all of a tremble - she did not know how to calm herself - her mind was in a whirl, and she needed time to think.

"Roger back - where was he? Would he come this very day?" "Or was she not the first thought in his mind, as he was in hers?"
Molly closed her eyes: the thought of Roger being home and not having come at once was like a knife in her heart. Suddenly, she felt a shower of petals fall from the rose whose branches grew around the sweet-smelling arbour. Opening her eyes and looking down at her lap, she saw that they were not fresh petals, but petals of a much darker hue - dried and made brown by long-keeping. As

she looked up, it seemed to Molly that time had flashed back: back to that other time when she had sat perplexed and Roger had come to her ... for there he was again, watching her with tenderness upon his face.

This time he did not ask her what was troubling her, but came and sat beside her and took her in his arms.

Mr Gibson, who had followed Molly into the garden, as soon as he had been able, saw them from afar, and a deep feeling of contentment stole over him - he who had seen so much of life and death. He shed a tear for his own long-lost love, and, indeed, for the impending loss of his beloved Molly: then he marched determinedly towards the stable for his horse, as he remembered the round of afternoon visits to be made.

Time enough, later, for all the announcements to be made inside the house - this present interlude was for Molly and Roger alone.

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If you were to go into Hollingford Church, and to look there in the Register of Marriages, you would see there an entry in a fine copper-plate hand, which runs thus:

29th August 183 - Roger Stephenson Hamley (batchelor)
natural philosopher, Fellow of Trinity
College, Cambridge aged 26 years

to
Mary Sarah Gibson (spinster) aged 20 years

In the presence of:
Robert Alexander Gibson (father)
and Cynthia Clare Henderson
Witnesses

JULIET BARKER, THE BRONTES AND MRS GASKELL

(Juliet Barker: 'The Brontës'. Weidenfield & Nicholson 1994)

by Roy Winstanley

This book was formally reviewed in the Gaskell Society Journal, Vol 9, last year. What follows here is to be regarded in the light of an extended footnote, expressing my own personal opinion and point of view.

In many ways, 'The Brontës' is an excellent book. The author has made good use of her time as Librarian of the Brontë Society at Haworth. Her volume is comprehensively researched and written in a lively and attractive style. It is emphatically both a work of considerable scholarship and a "good read".

It is all the more disconcerting to find that, in the matter of interpretation and judgement passed on the various personalities in the Brontë story, the author's otherwise finely balanced sense of proportion appears sometimes to desert her. Looked at in one way, the book is not far from being a celebration of three persons, all men, who are strictly speaking peripheral to the story of the three famous literary sisters. Their father, "that selfish old man", as Mary Taylor, far and away the most intelligent of Charlotte Brontë's Yorkshire friends called him, is written of terms almost of hero worship. He is called "Patrick" throughout - I think mistakenly.

We could look at him in the light of certain actions in which a modern reader might conclude that he played anything but a sympathetic part. Soon after his wife died, he approached a Mary Burder, whom he appears to have jilted some years back, with the glib suggestion that she should marry him and look after his six motherless children. Her reply to this enticing proposal, only part of which is quoted by Ms Barker, is a masterpiece of controlled indignation. He made two more attempts to persuade a woman into matrimony, before he reconciled himself to a celibate life. Not long after this, he shipped off four of his five daughters, including Emily who was all of five years old, to the notorious Clergy

Daughters' School, which Charlotte implicitly believed had killed two of her sisters. Ms Barker imputes only the very highest motives to him. It was vital for them, she says, when they grew up, to earn their own living, since as children of a poor man they would not have the dowries, without which their chances of contracting a satisfactory marriage would be remote. Accounts of Mr Brontë's relations with his daughters comes mostly from a time after they had grown up. It is possible that he did not care much for the proximity of very young children. At all events, he did not apparently take much notice of what was going on at the school - its appalling mortality rate, for example - and he did not bring them away until two of them were actually dying.

Then there was Branwell, for whom few commentators on the family history have ever spared a kind word. The author undoubtedly finds Branwell an attractive personality. She greatly overpraises his ability as a writer, and the only tedious part of her book is that which deals with the fantasies of his imaginary realms, treating them as though they were serious history. It is true that his sisters began in the same way, but the immeasurable distance between them was that they were able to break clear of "Angria" and "Gondal" and write work which could be produced in public, while he remained helplessly trapped in this dream-literature, so long as he was able to write anything at all. Ms Barker's account of the affair with Mrs Robinson of Thorp Green - if indeed that is what it was, and not a web of lies or monstrous self-delusion on his part - is seen entirely from his standpoint. And in her anxiety to turn Branwell into a complete man of the world, Ms Barker even provides him with an illegitimate child, based on some of the shakiest evidence I have ever seen.

The last of this triumvirate of favoured characters is Arthur Bell Nicholls, Charlotte's husband. There can be little doubt that Charlotte was intellectually slumming when she accepted this man, perhaps the most unsuitable of the four suitors who proposed marriage to her. She began by disliking him intensely, and lampooned him as one of the comic curates of 'Shirley'. It is through

manifestations of the principle like the Nicholls marriage that we see with the utmost clarity how desperately unfair it was to women. Not only was marriage and subjection to a masculine will held to be the crown of every woman's aspiration, but women themselves largely accepted and believed in it. Charlotte Brontë, a highly successful creative artist, so rapturously happy in her new and diminished role, was far worse off than she had been in her father's household, where the three sisters had managed to save and preserve the inventive, individual part of their lives. But there was no escaping Mr Nichollas and all we can say is that she did not live long enough for an otherwise inevitable disillusionment to emerge. The marriage saw the extinction of her literary gift, reflected in his crass remark, after she had made an attempt to begin writing again, a small pitiful venture that did not get beyond a few pages. It began in a school and the husband, probably thinking of 'Jane Eyre', said that the critics would accuse her of repeating herself. But for Ms Barker, Nicholls can do no wrong. Even the harmless Ellen Nussey, upon the whole a good friend to Charlotte, and one who never resented the heavily patronising way in which Charlotte treated her, is harshly criticized, and for no better reason than that Ellen could not bear Nicholls at any price.

Ms Barker rather sweepingly assumes that the work of all previous Brontë biographers has gone into the creation of legend. "The Brontë story is riddled with myths". If Charlotte herself began this process in what she wrote of her sisters, it was Mrs Gaskell, our author says, who was most influential in her enthusiastic embroidering of the legends. The authors of the Brontë novels, books which lay beneath the imputations of immorality and coarseness, were turned into what Ms Barker calls "graduates of the school of adversity, writing in all innocence about the barbarous society in which they lived because that was all they knew". There is a certain amount of truth in this judgement. But elsewhere in her long book its author pays just tribute to the power and eloquence of the famous Gaskell biography.

Ms Barker strikes me as being on firm grounds when she

deals directly with the three famous sisters who, after all, must be at the heart of all the books about the family. She is good on Charlotte, well analyzing her complex and not altogether attractive personality. She highlights Emily's ruthless egotism, in preserving her own way of life from Charlotte's well-meaning attempts to run it for her. She deals quite devastatingly with many of the famous Brontë stories, such as the one which has Anne Brontë in love with the handsome curate William Weightman. At the same time, I am not sure whether we can follow her when she states that it was Charlotte herself who was greatly attracted to Weightman, and that she began to jeer at him, calling him "Miss Celia Amelia" in letters to her women friends, only after he had shown his lack of interest in her.

The reader of 'The Brontës' will have the argumentative pleasure of disagreeing with perhaps a small part of the book, and the much greater satisfaction of admiring and responding to most of it. It is a biography that everyone with a sympathetic interest in the Brontës, as writers or simply as human beings, should not miss reading.

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JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Back numbers are out of print but in demand. We plan to reprint but would welcome returns (£2 a copy for Journals).
Please send to our Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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AVAILABLE FOR SALE AT MEETINGS OR BY POST:

Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society offprints:
Family values: Friedrich Engels and Elizabeth Gaskell by Alan Shelston, from Vol. 90 (1994) £1.50 or £2 by post

Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton: A Novel of 1848? by Angus Easson from Vol. 86 (1990) £1.50 or £2 by post

BOOK NOTES
by Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell 'We are Not Angels'; Realism, Gender, Values, by Terence Wright (lecturer in the Department of English, University of Newcastle). St Martin's Press, £35.
A straightforward yet detailed analysis of Gaskell's writing, which does not try to score points against other novelists but lets the quality of the books speak for itself. Each novel (Life of Charlotte Brontë is omitted) is devoted a chapter. Cousin Phillis, My Lady Ludlow, and most welcome, Lois the Witch are given equal treatment with the longer books and there is a full chapter on the short stories. All goes to show that the variety of her writing parallels the variety of the woman herself, and above all reveals a sensitive and poetic style.

Moorland Cottage and Other Stories by Elizabeth Gaskell, edited by Suzanne Lewis of the University of Sydney; World's Classics, OUP, £5.99.
A companion volume to Dark Night's Work edited by Lewis in the same series. This collection also includes Sexton's Hero, Christmas Storms and Sunshine, The Well of Pen Morfa, Heart of John Middleton, Morton Hall, The Manchester Marriage, and Crowley Castle, a selection which is loosely connected by the theme of love. Many of them, incidentally, were published as Christmas books. There is an extensive introduction which provides welcome critical analysis to a neglected section of Gaskell's work.

Curious, if True: Strange Tales by Mrs Gaskell, selected by Jenny Uglow; Virago Modern Classics, £6.99
Another selection of shorter writings, never published together before, namely Old Nurse's Story, The Poor Clare, Lois the Witch, The Grey Woman, as well as the title story. These serve to illustrate Gaskell's fascination with the macabre and uncanny.

Elizabeth Gaskell by Kate Flint (University Lecturer in Victorian and Modern English Literature and Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford); Writers and their work, Northcote House in association with the British Council. £6.95

This is a comparative rarity among Gaskell studies - a short, basic introduction for the general student. It is part of a series which will cover more than fifty authors. There is a brief biography, a chapter on each of the major novels including Cousin Phillis but omitting Life of Charlotte Brontë. The short stories are included in the chapter on Cranford.

Subversive Heroines: Feminist Resolutions of Social Crisis in the Condition of England Novel, by Constance D Harsh, Associate Professor in English at the Colgate University. University of Michigan Press, £27.60
A new evaluation of the social problem novels of the 1840s and 50s with which Gaskell is so often compared. Mary Barton and North and South are discussed, alongside Hard Times, Sybil, Alton Locke, Michael Armstrong (by Frances Trollope) and Helen Fleetwood (by Charlotte Tonna) in particular the way in which social problems are so frequently resolved by the female characters. A final chapter shows the effect of these novels on later books not always seen as industrial novels, such as Wives and Daughters, Felix Holt and Little Dorrit.

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321104 - SEPARATE SPHERES
Lectures by Fran Cannon, BA MLitt Linda Shaw, PhD

Although rarely studied*, Mrs Gaskell's fiction is valuable both as literature and as social history. Both these aspects of her work will be studied in this course which will re-evaluate Mrs Gaskell's "industrial" novels and selected short stories and will show how her portrayal of tensions in the family and the workplace reflect the rapid changes in society during the first half of the nineteenth century. We will also explore Mrs Gaskell's Manchester connections in her work and with a field visit.
A book list will be sent on enrolment.
Thursdays 10.30 am-12.30 pm University Humanities Building. 10 meetings beginning 18 April 1996. Fee £32 (£25/£17). Enrol by 4 April. Further information from Courses for the Public, Humanities Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

*Please note these lecturers will be introduced to The Gaskell Society to correct such misapprehensions.

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN "AN ITALIAN INSTITUTION" BY E GASKELL

Elizabeth Gaskell has recently been rediscovered in Italy. In fact the publication of La vita di Charlotte Bronte (1988), Storie di bimbi di donne e di streghe (1988), and of Mia cugina Phillis (Marisilio 1993), adds to the 1929 edition of La cugina Fillide, two existing versions of Cranford (1935, 1951), the 1981 translation of Mary Barton, and to the essays on her works produced mainly from the end of the '70s. In her novels, which today maintain a great appeal, not only for their artistic content but also as documentaries of the period, Gaskell narrated a generation's reaction to the oppressing experience of industrialism, class conflicts, and the former rural world, describing the obscure existence of weavers and labourers, prostitutes and unwed mothers.

A friend to artists and progressive intellectuals, Elizabeth Gaskell was an active philanthropist and a reformer as is testified also by the socio-political character of many of her non-narrative writings. On March 21st, 1863, Gaskell published an article on the Neapolitan Camorra [*Camorra - a mafia-like protection racket*]. The piece, which has a strong literary flavour in the dramatic picture of the action, was motivated by the attention given by Gaskell to themes of social relevance and the consideration of the effects of the class differences. She aims to give to the English public opinion an image of the Camorra that goes beyond the folklore clichés of the time in the representation of the South of Italy, and substitute the traditional oleographic description of the methods of the "organization", with a critical reading of what might have been the socio-cultural and political causes of the phenomenon. "An Italian Institution" which the review *Segno* publishes in the first Italian version, appeared in London in the Dickensian periodical "All the Year Round" to which Gaskell was a contributor as she had been to "Household Words".

She had been to Italy in 1857 and on that occasion may have visited Naples, since on her second journey in 1863 it seems she arrived only as far as Civitavecchia. She must

have gathered other information on the subject not only from conversation (especially with William Wetmore Story) and from correspondence (with another admirer of Italy and intellectual companion Charles Eliot Norton, whose Notes of Travel and Study of Italy - 1960 - she admired), but, presumably, also from texts on the subject such as the one registered among the volumes of her library by The Gaskell Sale Catalogue (namely La camorra by Mareo (sic) Mounier).[1]

The camorra question would not have been new to the English reader - the customs and habits of the South were part of the fashionable model Italian itinerary of the time. What was uncommon was the image communicated to the vast heterogenous public of such a well-known periodical, so different from the rhetoric of the clichés and from the merely "observant" tone of other English representations of the time.

Speaking first about the camorra as a 'system of extortion' grown to "institution", "so extended and organized as to apply to every walk in life and every condition of human industry", with a government that protects it and uses its protection, the article did not limit itself to the description of the 'methods' of the organization, but aimed at exploring the causes of the phenomenon, exposing them with a certain sense of drama made more incisive by a bitter ironic spirit. Charles Dickens himself who in Pictures from Italy had noted his many impressions of Naples, had preferred not to make any "grave examination into the government or misgovernment of any portion of the country", abstaining himself "from the discussion of any such questions with any order of Italians ...". Gaskell's clearly critical approach, though not without some populist overtones, expresses the desire of liberal artists and intellectuals to understand better - even from a historical point of view - the social reality of the South by tracing it back to its political context rather than relying on easy commonplaces or, what was worse, fixing, once and for all, the traditional representations of the Neapolitan "character", on the basis of a sort of "anthropological explanation".

Certainly the text reflects the movement among English progressives and reformers of attraction to and solidarity with the Italian cause.

Besides confirming the authorship of the article, documents and letters provide evidence of Gaskell's discussions with Patrick Bronte about Italian politics, exchanges of information on Garibaldi's activities with Charles Eliot Norton, and relations with Emily Winkworth, her friend and fervid supporter of Mazzini. We also learn about the possible existence of a second article of the author's on the camorra ("that unlucky piece of work") refused by "The Cornhill". Did it perhaps criticize the 'current governors'? "An Italian Institution" is, at any rate, marked by scepticism, if at the beginning the author declares herself to be still 'far from believing that the current governors are able to dominate the phenomenon', she closes the article laconically by affirming that the camorra 'has penetrated and now permeates every public branch, abounding in the 'ranks of the army''. The social commitment of Elizabeth Gaskell in all her work, and which is so evident in this article, while inspired by her unitarian principles, deserves much more appreciation given the reticence of the writers of the time on such subjects, given the range of the audience to which the piece was addressed and, especially, given all the implications of the fact that the author of the piece was a woman.

[1] For source information we relied particularly of J G Sharps (ed.) Mrs Gaskell Observation and Invention, London, Linden Press, 1970. The Italian version is based on the text contained in the Knutsford Edition, The Works of Mrs Gaskell, edited by A W Ward, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1906, vol. VI, pp. 531-34.

This article is an edited translation of Professor Daniela Corona's introduction to the Italian version: E Gaskell, "La Camorra, un'istituzione italiana". *Segno*, Anno XVI n.117-118 settembre-ottobre 1990 pp.34-42

One aspect of the Camorra as described by Mrs Gaskell seems relevant today:

'In the lottery, the Camorra played a distinguished part, the news of the successful numbers being transmitted hither and thither by the fraternity ...

... As the lowest venture in the state lottery is four carlini, or about a franc and a half, on the Saturday, the last day of the venture, it is rare for the poor Neapolitan who has played during the entire week to find a single grain in his pocket. With, however, the very smallest coin he can scrape out of it, he repairs to the office of some secret Camorristo and by his intervention is able to associate himself with others as poor as himself, and by whose conjoint efforts the requisite sum is made up.'

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The Spectator - 24th February 1996
Books on Tape review by Robert Cooper

Wives and Daughters, Mrs Gaskell's final novel, (Cover to Cover, unabridged, £44.99) has been called the most underrated novel of the 19th century. Listening to Prunella Scales read this classic tale of 'youthful folly' you can see why. It was written in 1866*, and Mrs Gaskell died barely a chapter from its completion, leaving just a few loose ends to be tied. Andrew Davies, the reigning King of TV adaptations, is said to be making a close study of Gaskell's work. Let's hope that Wives and Daughters is high on his short list: sharp witty, dialogue with no shortage of tragedy and a host of memorable characters - Prunella Scales should play them all.

Finding a way to fill the void after being gripped by 25 hours of rural life may be a problem. Fathers and Sons by Ivan Turgenev (Cover to Cover, £19.99) could be the answer.

*Ed. note: Hardly likely as Elizabeth Gaskell died 12th November 1865!

SOUTH OF ENGLAND BRANCH
1996 MEETINGS

Saturday 27 April
2 pm Francis Holland School
'Snobbery: a light-hearted look at Class-Consciousness in the novels of Jane Austen and Elizabeth Gaskell' -
E Margaret Perry

Saturday 14 September
2 pm Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT
'Sybil' and 'Mary Barton: A Historian's Perspective' -
Howard F Gregg

Saturday 9 November
2 pm Francis Holland School
'Gaskell's Gothic' - Jenny Uglow, Vice President of the Gaskell Society, author of 'Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories' and other works of literary criticism.

When meetings are held at the Francis Holland School anyone who wishes to do so is invited to meet at 12 noon at the entrance to Sloane Square underground station for a light lunch at the Royal Court Tavern (also on Sloane Square).

Please note that the April and November meetings will be held at the Francis Holland School. The September meeting will be in the library at Pimlico School.

For travel directions or other information please contact Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727)

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

The Gaskell Society

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1996 NO. 22

EDITOR'S LETTER

We hope you received your 1996 Journal safely and enjoyed reading it.

It helps to keep the mailing list accurate if dues are paid at the correct time, that is 1st September or at AGM or London meeting on 14th September. We have included details about paying by banker's order. Membership cards are not necessary and will only be sent if SAE is included. We must try to keep down postage costs and regret that in future Journals will be sent surface mail to overseas members. US members may pay dues of $18 to Lucy Magruder, The Gaskell Society, Box 5424, Fullerton, CA 92838.

During our summer season we have enjoyed three outings; the first to Lancashire where we visited Hall i' the Wood for its connections with Samuel Crompton and textile history, next we went to Derbyshire to well dressings at Mayfield and Sudbury Hall where scenes from the TV version of Price and Prejudice were set. A hot Saturday in July found us in Conway and Beaumaris following in Gaskell footsteps; we cooled off by sailing round Puffin Island; this tour may be part of our itinerary at the Chester Conference. You will hear more about this with a Christmas mailing but put the date in your diary, 8-11th August 1997, and the chance to add a day at either end. At Oxford all our speakers were members and we now issue a CALL FOR PAPERS. The conference will be titled: "The Victorians at Leisure".

We have a busy Gaskell year ahead with various events and activities planned for you and we hope that you will be able to share these with us.

It promises to be a good year for publications too. Manchester University Press have in hand Professor Chapple's text for Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years, which he has been researching assiduously for some years. We anticipate publication about March.

Enclosed with this Newsletter are details of Private Voices by Chapple & Wilson (Keele University Press) which will have a wide appeal.

Member Anna Unsworth, who read a paper at our Oxford Conference and was a Gaskell enthusiast and scholar well before the Society was formed, has a book due to be published in October - Elizabeth Gaskell: an Independent Woman, Minerva Press £12.99.

All these books will be available to members at Society meetings.

As a token of our appreciation for the legacy given to us by Daphne Carrick (see NL 21) we will remember her by naming our AGM talk as THE DAPHNE CARRICK LECTURE.

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ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The Mary Webb Society is to provide the speakers for the post-AGM programme of the Alliance of Literary Societies in Birmingham next April. The author and poet, who lived in Shropshire, died 70 years ago next year. The Mary Webb Society (Tel: 01952 244810) was founded in 1972 and its president is Dr Gladys Mary Coles, the prize-winning Merseyside poet.

Two new officers were appointed at the 1996 annual meeting of the ALS - Mr Bill Adams (chairman of the George Eliot Fellowship) has become the new hon. secretary and Ms Thelma Thompson (chairman of the Shropshire Literary Society) is the new hon. treasurer.

Half the literary societies in the UK are not affiliated to the ALS and Bill Adams has promised a special mailing to non-member societies advising on the benefits of membership.

The newest 'recruit' is the Romany Society (Tel: 01625 504507).

KENN OULTRAM

BEHIND THE SCENES: SOURCES AND CONTEXTS

by J A V Chapple

The diary Elizabeth Gaskell kept for a few years after the birth of Marianne in 1834 was published in a limited edition of 50 copies by Clement Shorter in 1923 and is very rare indeed. After Anita Wilson had published her article entitled 'Mother and Writer: A Study of Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary' in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1993, she thought that such an early, significant composition would have a broad general appeal and proposed a critical edition of the whole text to the journal's editor.

Alan Shelston suggested that she should collaborate with me and put us in touch with a publisher for the book now with Kelle University Press, to be entitled *Private Voices*. It will be based on Mrs Gaskell's original manuscript and on the parallel manuscript journal kept by Sophia Holland (née Isaac) about the babyhood of Thurstan (Newsletters 17 and 20). Some associated material, especially a long letter William Turner wrote to his daughter Mary shortly after her marriage in 1811 to William Gaskell's senior colleague at Cross Street Chapel, John Gooch Robberds, and Mary's own short autobiography composed in the late 1860s, will be printed in an appendix.

This recital of the bald facts ignores the warm hospitality offered by Mrs Rosemary Trevor Dabbs and by Mrs Portia Holland and her late husband, John Swinton Holland. It was a pleasure to see all the pictures and memorabilia that found an honoured place in their homes - a large oil painting of Marianne, small portraits of Peter Holland and Hannah Lumb, a silhouette of the Reverend William Willets, father-in-law to Peter and Swinton Holland as well as William Turner, and so on. Many of our members will recall the library of Manchester College Oxford, where, through the good offices of the Chaplain and Margaret Sarosi, the Librarian who welcomed the Society at our Oxford Conference, I was able to consult the Robberds manuscript now owned by Miss Barbara Hartas-Jackson. Scores more acknowledgements await the publication of my book on Elizabeth Gaskell's background and early influences, now with Manchester University Press.
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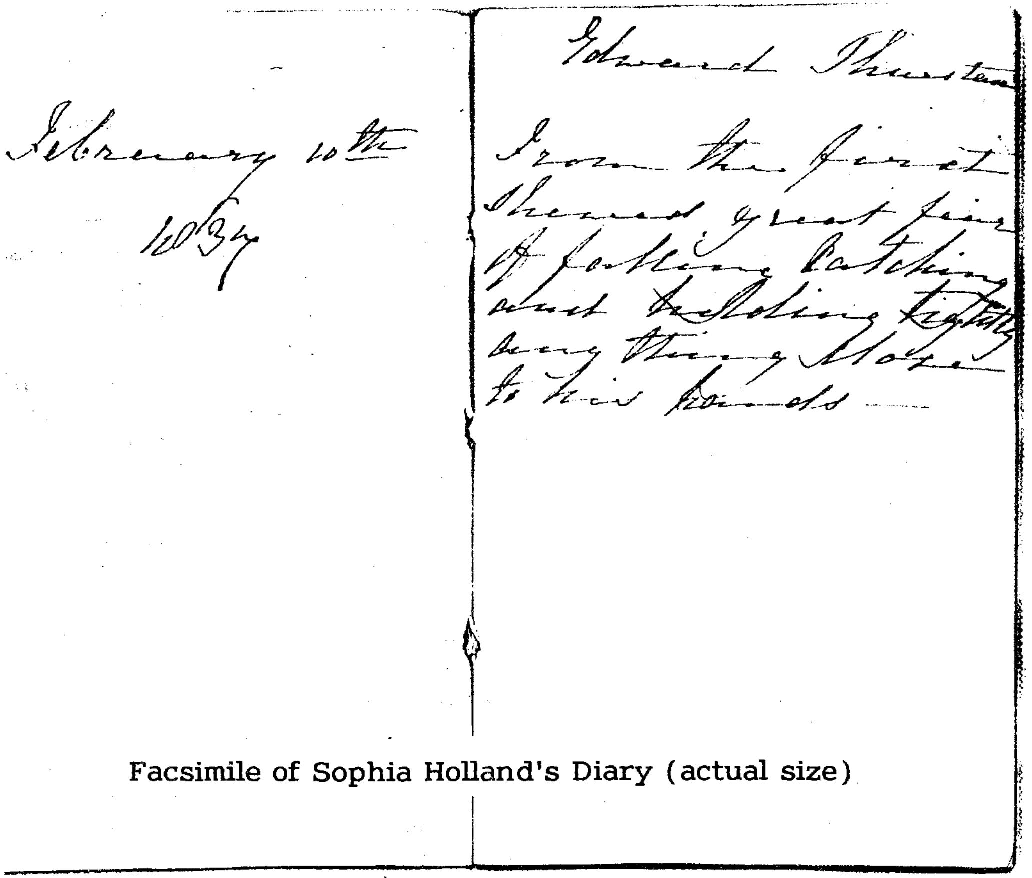
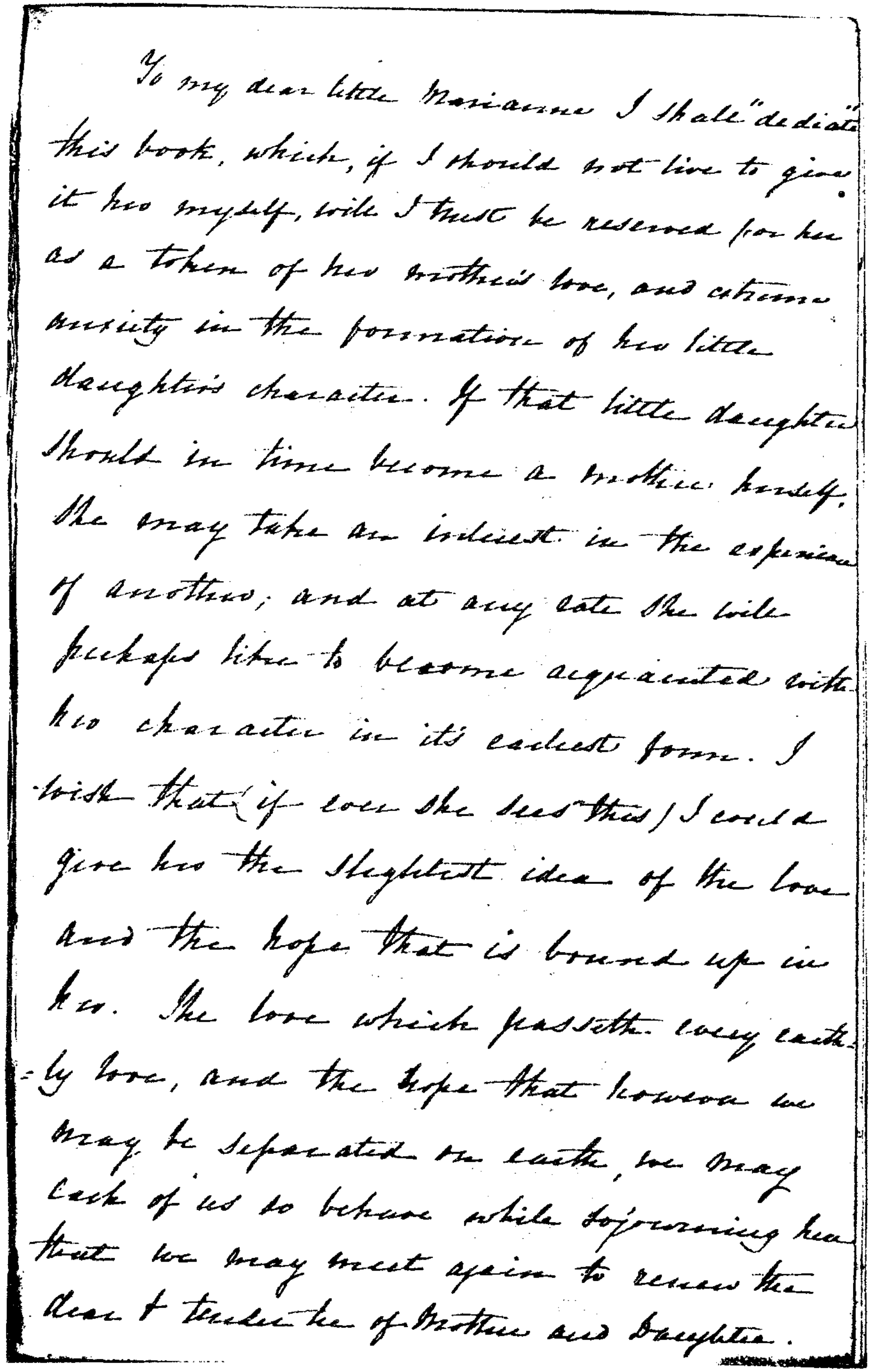

February 10th
1837

Edward Thurstan
From the first
Showed great fear
of falling Catching
and holding tightly
every thing close
to his hands

Facsimile of Sophia Holland's Diary (actual size)

The transatlantic collaboration with Anita Wilson could not have been more gratifying. She has been responsible for the critical and historical introductions to the diaries, whilst I had the easier task of transcribing. It sometimes seems that others do most of my work. Even my most recent little discovery was a double gift of Fortune. In the course of showing a visitor to Hull the panoramic view of the city from the top floor of the University Library, I happened to notice that we possessed a good run of the *Lancet*. A few days later I began to look through the volume for 1832 for information about cholera in Manchester. The word 'Boddington' positively leapt off the page.

The second thing I thought of was my feeble note in the *Gaskell Society Journal* for 1990 ('Boddingtons: not identified'), keyed to Elizabeth's account on 8 August 1832 of cousins of Sophia Holland who had been struck by


To my dear little Marianne I shall "dedicate"
this book, which, if I should not live to give
it her myself, will I trust be reserved for her
as a token of her mother's love, and extreme
anxiety in the formation of her little
daughter's character. If that little daughter
should in time become a mother herself,
she may take an interest in the experience
of another; and at any rate she will
perhaps like to become acquainted with
her character in it's earliest form. I
wish that (if ever she sees this) I could
give her the slightest idea of the love
and the hope that is bound up in
her. The love which passeth every earth-
-ly love, and the hope that however we
may be separated on earth, we may
each of us so behave while sojourning here
that we may meet again to renew the
dear & tender tie of Mother and Daughter.

Elizabeth Gaskell's Diary (actual size)

lightning on their wedding tour. Their umbrella had served as a conductor 'and afterwards the steel in Mrs Boddington's stays, conveyed the fluid to within a straw's breadth of a vital part in her leg', wrote Elizabeth dramatically.

The *Lancet* for 15 September 1832 contains an account by Benjamin Boddington, Esquire, which draws upon a communication by Dr Faraday to a scientific periodical, the *London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine*. Benjamin's address is given as Badger Hall and the wedding couple are identified as a Mr and Mrs T T Boddington.

On Friday, 13th April 1832, they had placed the servants inside their post chariot whilst they themselves mounted the barouch-seat behind, so that on their journey from Tenbury to Bromyard they could enjoy the scenery of the Abberley Hills near Worcester. But a 'slight' storm arose. Then, 'a flash of lightning struck them both senseless, threw the horses on the ground', killing one of them, 'and cast the postboy to a considerable distance'. (This postillion was not so much struck by lightning as thrown by his unfortunate horse.)

Benjamin's account is, as one might expect, partly scientific. Readers of Patricia Cornwell's *Potter's Field* will not be surprised to hear that the steel of the busk proved to be magnetised. Benjamin provides a neat diagram for this. But there are numerous other fascinating details.

The wires of Mrs Boddington's shattered umbrella (which had no ferule) passed the 'electric fluid' to the wire round the edge of her bonnet by her left eye, from which is circled to the back of her head, singeing her hair, 'zigzagged along the skin of the neck to the steel busk of her stays, leaving a painful but not deep wound', perforated the brown paper case of the busk and fused a quarter of an inch of its upper surface. Thereafter there was no mark or discoloration of busk or case until the lightning discharge exited at the bottom of the steel busk in the same way, causing a deep wound dangerously close to her left femoral artery. Though Mrs Boddington's

gown, petticoat and seat cushion were singed, pierced and rent, nothing actually caught fire.

Mr Boddington was less fortunate. His clothes were severely torn and burnt. His wife and a servant had to put out the fire whilst he was 'apparently lifeless'. His gold shirt buttons were fused and thrown some distance away, leaving a flesh wound; a knife in his waistcoat pocket was the cause of another wound. He was wearing a thick old navy pea-jacket, which was torn to pieces, but his waistcoat was 'merely perforated' by a pea-sized hole on one side and by a similar hole next to a gold pencil-case, 'where it passed out, setting fire to his trowsers and drawers, and inflicting a deep wound round his back, the whole of which was literally flayed.'

The back of the barouche seat was made of iron, which was broken in two. Its fractured parts almost touched the carriage spring, the discharge passing to the earth by the tires of the wheels, leaving four holes in the road where they had been in contact at the time of the shock. Two months after the accident, two pairs of Mrs Boddington's scissors in a work-case were found to be magnetised. Parts of Mr Boddington's watch, especially the balance wheel, were also highly magnetised. When it was shown to Dr Faraday he 'set it afloat on a cork, and found the poles so well defined' that it was eventually mounted as a compass. Significantly, none of these objects were in the direct tracks of the lightning discharge.

As usual, possible lines of enquiry proliferate. Who were the Boddingtons? (JGS might here consider a series of puns on ale and brewing.) How were they related to Sophia Holland? Was Badger Hall in Shropshire? It is hard to forget that Henry Holland's friend Michael Faraday had just a few months before the accident discovered electromagnetic induction and invented the dynamo - the beginning of the mighty electric power industry. When Sir Robert Peel on a visit to his laboratory pointed to the experimental machine and asked what use it was, Faraday is said to have answered, ' I know not, but I wager that one day your government will tax it' - a story told in a splendid biography of the great scientist by L Pearce Williams. Plus ça change ...

PRIVATE VOICES: The Diaries of
Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell and Sophia Isaac Holland
Edited by Anita C Wilson and J A V Chapple
Keele University Press. £17.95

This book includes two first-hand and contrasting accounts of motherhood in the 1830s.

Elizabeth Gaskell's diary of Marianne's babyhood from 1835-8 (originally published as "My Diary" by Clement Shorter) shows her early promise as a writer. Sophia Holland's chronicles of Edward Thurstan Holland's earliest years from 1836-9 is more prosaic. Thurstan, of course, later married Marianne. There is excellent introductory material to each diary.

As a piece of social history, these diaries document the challenges, dilemmas and rewards of Victorian parenthood. As a piece of literature, there is no doubt that, in cultivating the powers of observation to be found in her diary, Elizabeth was laying the foundations for the wider social vision to be found in her novels.

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The Audio Book Collection now includes Mary Barton read by Juliet Stevenson. 12 cassettes for £17.95 (ABC 136s). Excellent value. You might persuade your library to buy it. Freepost (BA 1686/1) BATH BA2 3SZ for catalogue

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Those of you who are technical wizards may already know that there is a Gaskell page on the internet organised by Professor Mitsuhara Matsuoka, who will be carrying out research at Manchester University this autumn. Find him on

http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html

BOOK NOTES
by Christine Lingard

Novel possibilities, fiction and the formation of early Victorian Culture by Joseph W Childers (University of California, Riverside), University of Pennsylvania Press, £30.95.
A discussion of the important role played by certain social problem novels in influencing official texts generated by parliamentary and radical bodies in order to bring about social change. In many cases the novel provided the inspiration for the social text. Mary Barton is compared to Engels' The condition of the working class in England, and many parallels are found. Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke, and Disraeli's Coningsby are also discussed.

The language of gender and class: transformation in the Victorian novel by Patrician Ingham (St Anne's College Oxford), Routledge, £37.50.
Starting from the premise that the representation of gender is always involved with the representation of class, the author uses six major Victorian novels to explore the way language is used to describe romantic conflict and yet still succeed in avoiding stereotypes. The novels in question are Shirley, North and South, Hard Times, Felix Holt, The Unclassed (George Gissing) and Jude the Obscure.

Walking the Victorian streets, women, representation and the city by Deborah Epstein Nord, Cornell University Press.
Dickens and Gaskell are the two most prominent authors discussed in this book about the depiction of urban life. Section one deals with the role of the narrator who was invariably male; section two with the fallen woman and section three with new women and the end of the century. It deals at length with Gaskell's observation of the street life of Manchester and makes many references to modern critics, in particular Raymond Williams' The country and the city. The book is not confined to the novel. Some parallels are made with a French travel write Flora Tristran, whose Promenades dans Londres was published in 1840.

FIRST MEETINGS
THAT LED TO LASTING FRIENDSHIPS

by Barbara Brill

In preparation for the reading of the correspondence between Charles Eliot Norton and John Ruskin which I shall shortly be embarking on, thanks to the availability of the book in Manchester Central Library, through the kindness of Christine Lingard, I have been reading Ruskin's 'Praeteria'. In volume III chapter 1 I was particularly interested in Ruskin's account of his first meeting with Charles Norton on the boat between Vevay and Geneva in 1886.

"It was hot on deck and we all went down into the little cabin, which the waves from the paddle wheels rushed past the windows of, in lovely wild masses of green and silver. There was no one in the cabin but papa, mamma, old Anne and me, and a family whom we supposed rightly to be American, of the best sort. A mother with three daughters and her son - he in charge of them all, perhaps five or six and twenty; his sisters younger; all of them quietly and gracefully cheerful. Neither of the groups talked but I noticed that from time to time the young American cast somewhat keen, though entirely courteous looks of scrutiny at my father and mother.
In a few minutes after I had begun to notice these looks, he rose with the sweetest, quiet smile I ever saw on any face (unless, perhaps, a nun's, when she has some grave kindness to do) crossed to our side of the cabin, and addressing himself to my father, said, with a true expression of great gladness and of frank trust that he knew who we were, was most thankful to have met us, and that he prayed permission to introduce his mother and sisters to us.
The bright eyes, the melodious voice, the perfect manner, the simple but acutely flattering words, won my father in an instant. The rest of the time till we reached Geneva passed too quickly; we arranged to meet in a day or two again, at St Martin's.
And thus I became possessed of my second friend, after Dr John Brown and my first real tutor, Charles Eliot Norton."

This account of a first meeting reminded me forcibly of the meeting of Charles Norton with Elizabeth Gaskell and Marianne and Meta in Rome in 1857, described many years later in a letter to Norton written by Meta who kept up a correspondence with him after her mother's death:

"I shall keep the anniversary of that Carnival Day when we first saw you as a festa, for I can truly say that your friendship has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life. It is sealed now, too, with deep gratitude to you for your faithful affection to Mama which she prized as highly as she returned it truly. I can see your face and smile now (as distinctly as if I was just turning away from them) when you caught at some confetti that Mama was dangling from a long stick from the balcony - and Mama said "Oh, look, what a charming face!" and Mr Story (I think it was) said "Oh, that's Charles Norton" and there was a chorus of welcome and bidding you come up." *(From Letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-65, Introduction p.XIX. Ed. Jane Whitehill. London 1932).*

In Praeterita (volume III chapter 1) Ruskin refers to Norton's concern for the health of his daughter Lily. Norton wrote from his home, Shady Hill, on April 9th 1887:

"The winter has been long and hard with us ... We have had the usual winter pleasures and all my children have been well, though Lily is always too delicate, and ten days hence I part with her that she may go to England and try there to escape her summer cold. She goes out under Lowell's charge, and will be with her mother's sister and cousins in England."

It is interesting to conjecture whether the Gaskell daughters saw anything of Lily Norton during this visit as they had a special interest in the child who was christened 'Elizabeth', after their mother, and like her was called 'Lily'. In one of Meta's letters to Norton she refers to the christening and to the appropriate christening present she and her sisters had sent out. She wrote on January 13th 1867 from Plymouth Grove:

"Thank you, dearest Mr Norton, for telling me of darling

little Lily's christening. It must have been in every detail the very best that we could have wished or imagined possible. A christening service is so beautiful and solemn and such a glad happy thing - I am going to send Lily a simple locket with some of Mama's hair in it - which I would give to very few. Do you think it would be safe to send it by post, registered? I do so like the think of the flowers on the table, when little Lily was being christened, for all lovely bright things seem symbolic of Mama whose soul seemed to clasp all beauty as the gift of God." *(Letter 2611)**

There appears to have been an exchange of locks of hair as on March 28th of the same year Meta wrote from Cowley House, Oxford:

"Dearest Mr Norton
I have heard this morning from Julia that the locket with darling little Lily's hair has reached home and I hasten to thank you for it, though as yet unseen. It is so kind of you and dear Susan (as she tells me I may call her) to have thought of this gift for me, and though I could never never need anything to remind me of your child and Mama's namesake I long to have it in my hands and to begin to carry it always with me." *(Letter 2612)**

She wrote again after seeing her locket:

"I wish so much that I could see Lily and it is with quite a pang that I think that perhaps we may never meet. It is only in looking forwards that I feel how separate our lives are. In the past it has made no real difference; and every time that I write to you it seems as if I had only just parted from you. I thank you again and again with all my heart for this gift, dearest Mr Norton.
If the locket with Mama's hair in it has reached you, you will perhaps have thought that the lock of hair was clumsily put in, so I wished to tell you how I had not trusted it in the jeweller's hands, for fear of its being changed (which is said often to happen), but our dear old Hearn put it in as neatly as she could [Here a note has been added 'The locket is now in the Gaskell Mem. Hall, at Knutsford']. I have been away from home for sometime

stopping with Marianne and Florence before I came here. It is so pleasant to see Marianne so perfectly happy as she is. She and Thurstan fit into one another beautifully." *(Letter 2610)**

I hope very much to find in the Ruskin-Norton correspondence the same delightful intimacy.

*The quotation from the letters of Meta to Norton are published by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (Nos. 2611, 2612, 2610)

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RIVISTA DI STUDI VITTORIANI

This is a new Journal published quarterly from the Centre of Victorian and Edwardian Studies at Pescara University.

The Editor is Francesco Marroni, a Vice President of The Gaskell Society; John Chapple and Alan Shelston have both been appointed to the editorial board, which includes a number of eminent Victorian scholars. RSV will publish scholarly articles on all aspects of Victorian and Edwardian literary culture, in Italian and English. Editor Francesco Marroni, in the opening number, contributes an article on Thomas Hardy's poem 'An August Midnight' and Anna Unsworth writes on Italian references in Cousin Phillis: 'A purer aether, a diviner air'.

The journal also carries substantial reviews of recent scholarship.

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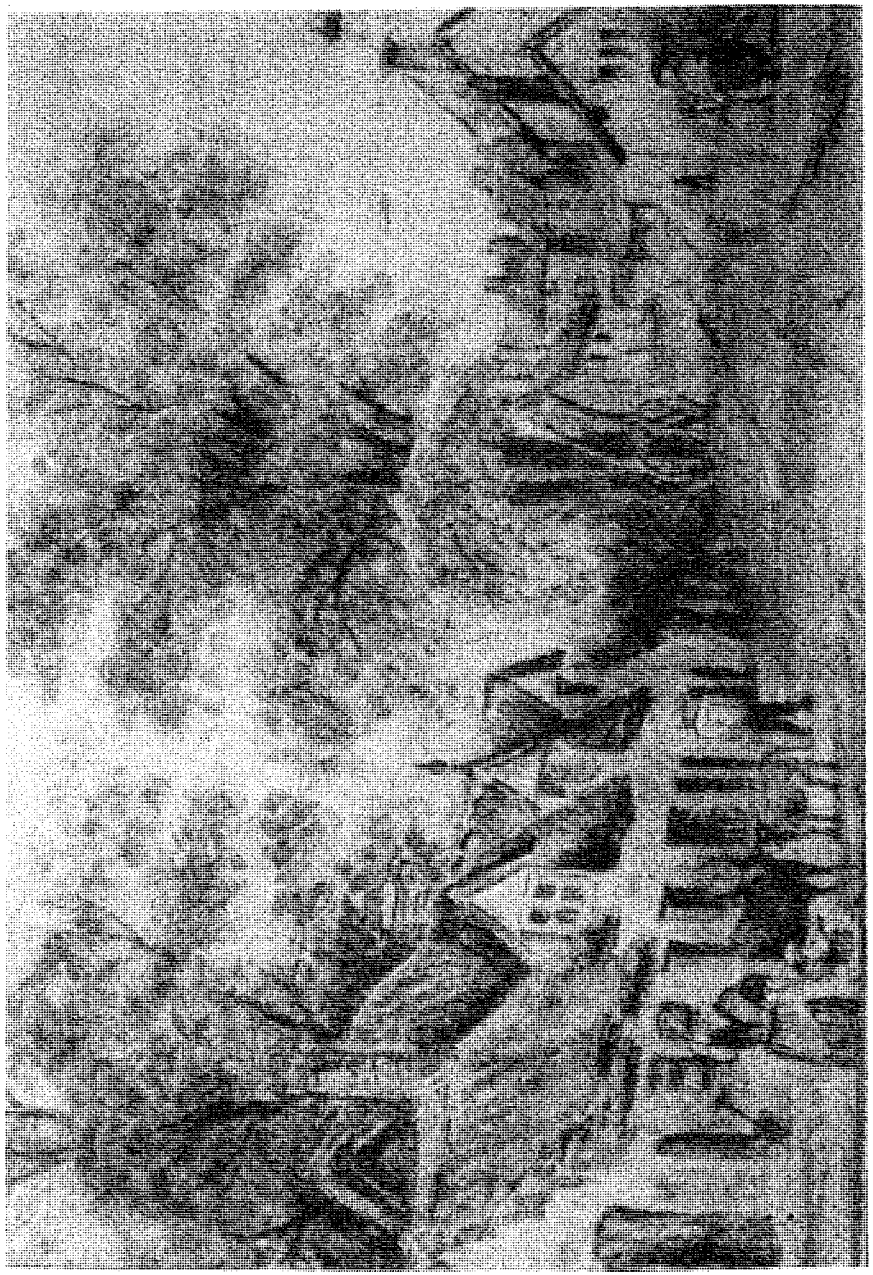
A valuable addition to Gaskell works in Italian translation has been published by Maria Costantini (Edizio Danilo): Storia di un Signorotto di Campagna e altri Racconti. It includes The Squire's Story, The Sexton's Hero and The Heart of John Middleton, with a useful introduction, notes and bibliography.



This Victorian watercolour scene of King Street, Knutsford, about 1860, before the railway came, will soon be available to members as a postcard. Geoffrey Sharps has kindly made it available from his collection. The artist is believed to be Lucy Holland

ELIZABETH GASKELL AND MANCHESTER

Day School organised by Manchester Metropolitan University, Gaskell Society, and Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society

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Saturday 26 April 1977
at
Manchester Metropolitan University
Mabel Tylecote Building, Cavendish Street

Fee: £9.00; £6.00 (members and concessionary)

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PROGRAMME

9.00 am	Registration and Coffee
9.30 am	Unitarianism in Victorian Manchester Ian Sellers (University of Manchester)
10.15 am	Views of the North in Victorian Literature Brian Maidment (University of Huddersfield)
11.00 am	COFFEE and BISCUITS
11.30 am	Footnotes in Mary Barton Terry Wyke (Manchester Metropolitan University)
12.15 pm	Folk Song and Mrs Gaskell Carolyn Jackson-Houlston (Oxford Brookes University)
1.15 pm	LUNCH (those attending to make own arrangements)
2.30 pm	Afternoon Visits Tour 1. Plymouth Grove (Robin Allan) Tour 2. Portico Library and Mosley Street (Alan Shelston) Tour 3. All Saints and Book Street (Terry Wyke)

This will be in place of our usual Spring meeting. It seems very early to book for this but it may be over-subscribed.

Booking forms available at meetings, or send SAE if you have not received one.
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HOLIDAY IN GERMANY

Plans are now in hand for this to take place from 6-12th May by air. Arrangements are being made with Moswins, a specialist firm for German holidays. Our hotel will be a new one, complete with swimming pool (fancy a swimming gala?!) at Mannheim, convenient for our itinerary, a **** hotel at *** price for us. We will have half board.

Moswins has the advantage of being able to arrange flights from Heathrow, Manchester or Bristol to Frankfurt.

Day 1 - Travel and settling in
Day 2 - We will visit Heidelberg, the castle, monastery church, lunch at the Wolfsbrunnen restaurant, all known to ECG. We will have a one-hour boat trip down the Neckar Valley
Day 3 - The Odenwald Valley and Heppenheim (sorry we cannot spend six weeks there but we will visit a vineyard)
Day 4 - Worm, Bingen and Mainz - old cathedrals etc
Day 5 - Explore Heidelberg at will. Afternoon trip to Speyer
Day 6 - Down the Rhine Valley and over the French border to Strasbourg to the mountain area as setting for The Grey Woman

Cost £518, plus travel insurance £15. Single room supplement £80, but you may like to share

We have some spare places. If you would like to see more details, please let me know. We will have with us John Chapple (and Kate if her recent hip operation lets her) who has travelled Gaskell country here and tells me his German is adequate for ordering drinks! I am sure we can rely on Professor Peter Skrine who lectures in German to manage as our spokesman.

Mrs Gaskell had a spot of trouble in Mannheim over RUM! but we will be more careful. Like to join us?

MONTHLY MEETINGS IN KNUTSFORD

These were popular last year and will recommence on 28th October. We will use A Dark Night's Work as course book. A leaflet is available if required; please send SAE or collect at meetings.

NEW YEAR LUNCH

Make a note of the date in your diary - 11th January at The Parish Church Rooms - details later.

LONDON & SOUTH EAST GROUP

SATURDAY 14th SEPTEMBER at Pimlico School,
Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT, 2 pm.
"'Sybil' and 'Mary Barton': A Historian's Perspective" - Howard F Gregg

SATURDAY 9th NOVEMBER at Francis Holland School,
39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, 3 pm.
"Gaskell's Gothic" - Jenny Uglow

For further information send SAE to Dudley Barlow,
44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

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The Gaskell Society

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1997 NO. 23

Editor's Letter

by Joan Leach

The Society has a busy year ahead and we hope that you will all be able to join our activities either in person or spirit. Firstly, we have a monthly lunch and lecture from October to May here in Knutsford, which has been well attended and much enjoyed.

Our London and South East group meets five times a year for an excellent series of lectures; one of these forthcoming is to be shared with The Dickens Fellowship.

Forty-two members are looking forward to their tour to Germany 'In the footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell' from 6th to 12th May. We hope to take some photographs to share our experiences with others.

With this Newsletter you will receive details of a meeting in Manchester on 22nd March. On 26th April you will have a choice between lectures in Leeds, London or Manchester!

Those of you who can reach Birmingham may like to join the AGM meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies on 19th April when the Mary Webb Society will be hosts. SAE for details, please.

We have two publications to look forward to: Elizabeth Gaskell: the Early Years by our Chairman, John Chapple. Many hours of research and fascinating discoveries have gone into the making of this book, which will be published by Manchester University Press in April.

MUP have also decided to reprint The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard. This will be a paperback edition.

These books will be available at our meetings at discount rates or direct from MUP.

The programme for our Chester conference is nearly complete. The trips into North Wales will be very pleasant, and any members who choose to stay an extra day on Monday 11th August may like to visit Knutsford and Gaskell country.

IF you are not able to get to our meetings, you might think of arranging a literary lunch in your area which might result in the formation of a group who could meet to read and discuss Victorian literature.

A Study of Mrs Gaskell's Handwriting

by Caroline Arnaud

Whether or not you believe in graphology as a science, I think you might be interested in reading the following study of Elizabeth Gaskell's handwriting. It was made by a graphologist I happen to know personally - Madame Coulet - who was kind enough to do it for me out of friendship. Madame Coulet is no specialist of the Victorian Era, and, as a Frenchwoman, she knows nothing at all about Elizabeth Gaskell's life and writing. This "naïveté" might be regarded as a drawback. On the other hand, it could be viewed as an asset, since I would imagine it must be difficult for an English graphologist not to be biased when dealing with the handwriting of someone so famous.

The three samples Madame Coulet has had the opportunity of studying are unfortunately not original manuscripts - as I possess none - but photocopies of them. However, I was glad to be able to supply her with various extracts (since you should never draw conclusions from one document only). All of them come from the Central Library of Manchester. Two of them are extracts from letters to Mrs Schwabe. They are dated "1852" (librarian's hand) and "April 30th 1852" (Gaskell's hand). The third one is not dated. It is a sample of Mrs Gaskell's writing followed by Meta's words "This is my mother's writing/M.E.Gaskell-/2 March, 1909". They are referred to in the library as Gaskell manuscripts numbers 2, 3 and 10.

But let us delay no further the analysis of the handwriting itself, which I have tried to translate for you as accurately as possible.

Mrs Gaskell was a most dynamic and energetic woman. She was quick at repartee: her conversation must have been very fast as well as full of quick, clever and amusing remarks. Mrs Gaskell was not one to bend to other people's will or authority. She was quick to rebel. She was easily moved to enthusiasm too, and took on lost causes. She felt she had missions in life. Her energy was the most striking part of her temperament. She was always ready and willing to fight and argue. She had a remarkable fighting spirit.

She sometimes found it difficult to refrain from doing what she felt she had to do. At times, she even fought too much, that is, to the point of becoming muddled. She knew how to define clearly what she meant and to lay emphasis on what she wanted to say. Her authority sometimes verged on authoritarianism. Thanks to her energy and her capacity for decision-making she was something of a leader. She was one to spring into action. Even though she was an attractive character, she was not liked by everybody, as she did not try to make herself pleasant to everyone. She could be disagreeable and unpleasant when she wished to be. Once convinced that she was doing the right thing, she would fight her battles to the end. She regarded people who disagreed with her as mere fools. The Era in which she lived partly accounts for this personality of hers. There were such strong-minded matrons in the nineteenth century. She was not one to follow the lead of her husband. Her handwriting belongs to the "animus-type"[1] rather than to the "anima-type". She had a critical mind as well as a very inquisitive one: she was a keen observer of what took place around her, even though she focused on things that interested her and tended to forget everything else. She became totally involved in what preoccupied her. Her mind was very active. Indeed, she was mentally superior. She could clash with people. Hers was not a restful temperament. She enjoyed shaking up both people and set ideas. There was something of the pioneer within her, as she was good at starting things. It was certainly more difficult for her to carry on doing what she had initiated. Daily life and habits tired her out. When she was no longer interested in what she was working at, she needed to start up something new again so as to regain her enthusiasm. Hers was a passionate nature. It is not certain that she could remain attached to the same person for a long period of time. Affections did not come first and foremost in her life. They were not what counted most for her. She would bravely - not to say obstinately - champion the cause she believed in. When her beliefs and her feelings happened to clash with one another - as they were bound to in such a one - the former would win over the latter. She did not treat people diplomatically. She did not pretend to agree with what she disagreed with. She was not a shy person. She knew what she wanted to say,

and said it. Even though she could be very thoughtful towards people, she certainly was not always easy to get on with on a daily basis. She must have been a very socially attractive person. Her intellectual honesty was not to be questioned, but she would not let herself be distracted with details. When she was engrossed in something, you should not disturb her with something else either. She was driven by her passions. She never knew when to stop. She must have been liable to breakdowns since there are signs of regular exhaustion in her handwriting: she felt drained now and then. She would pass judgments and make choices first, and then think them over afterwards. She needed to fight for a cause that shook her to her very soul. She would champion this cause passionately, without ever considering in the least whether it was in her interest to do so. She would spare no trouble: this is what was most attractive about her. There was not the slightest shadow of hypocrisy about her. She could be carried away by unusual fits of anger. All in all, her personality is a most interesting one, and it really is worth studying: Elizabeth Gaskell was an exceptional woman.

Madame Coulet privately concluded by confessing that although Mrs Gaskell's handwriting is a most beautiful one, she would not have liked living in the same house with her.

I would conclude by saying, in a nutshell, that I for one was struck, shaken and ultimately utterly convinced by this analysis of Mrs Gaskell's handwriting made by Madame Coulet. I would be most happy to know your opinion about it. It is no easy task to picture to oneself the temperament of someone you only know through her writing. Doesn't this analysis of her handwriting made us more familiar with this fascinating and wonderful woman?

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[1]Emile Caille thus defines the "animus" woman: her way of thinking may be qualified as "masculine". It is very likely that she sometimes wished she were a man (translation mine). Emile Caille, Graphologie analytique (Paris: Masson, 1990) 63

Humour in Mrs Gaskell's Letters (1)

by Graham Handley

Reading the letters of a great writer - and Elizabeth Gaskell's claims to greatness are being steadily advanced - one feels all the time the consciousness of connection to the published work. Forty years ago I read the first seven volumes of Gordon Haight's edition of *The George Eliot Letters*, listening to the voice of the serious evangelical Mary Ann Evans, then to the cry from the heart after her father's death, then pondering the self-conscious Journal entry on HOW I CAME TO WRITE FICTION, and so on through the writing, the forms of publication of the individual works, the utterances on art, morality, life, domesticity. It was both fascinating and salutary, and at times I felt that the eye of the writer was firmly fixed on posterity. Just over ten years on from that reading I turned to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* edited by Chapple and Pollard. The complete contrast of tone with that of George Eliot, the constant familial emphasis, the wonderful rush of enthusiasm, emotion, warmth frustration, were underpinned by a running, delicious range of humorous innuendo, sometimes self-mocking. The eye was firmly fixed on the present in unselfconscious commentary. To read Mrs Gaskell's letters was to know her.

Mrs Gaskell's humour is present from her very beginning in *Mary Barton*, that otherwise sombre novel being irradiated, for example, by Job Legh's feeding the baby. *Cranford* is impregnated with comic modes, life's little ironies, Amazonian snobberies, the tragi-impersonation of poor Peter and the whimsy sentiment of his return. Deft touches made servants aggressively funny in *Ruth* and *North and South*, and Dn'l Robson moves from comic obstinacy to bloody-minded tragedy in *Sylvia's Lovers*. There would, I suspect, be general agreement about the pre-eminence of *Wives and Daughters* in Mrs Gaskell's comedy canon. None of her contemporaries, I suggest, outdid Mrs Kirkpatrick, her inflexible egoism even surviving the reined-in bluntness of Mr Gibson. She anticipates Rosamond Vincy: the difference is that Rosamond is not funny.

The humorous elements in Mrs Gaskell's letters have often a

natural and bubbling spontaneity, a vivacious curiosity, a rambling triviality or a gossipy flow. Perhaps their most endearing quality is her capacity of self-mockery (more of this later) and, sometimes, an innocent enjoyment in her own achievement. Take this almost throwaway account of how *Cranford* was informed with real-life incidents which she still treasures: this from a letter to Ruskin is some twelve years after its publication:

> ... whenever I am ailing or ill, I take 'Cranford' and - I was going to say, *enjoy* it! (but that would not be pretty!) laugh over it afresh. And it is true too, for I have seen the cow that wore the grey flannel jacket - and I know the cat that swallowed the lace, that belonged to the lady that sent for the doctor, that gave the emetic ...
> (L 562, late February 1865)

And she goes on to tell the story of the servant-girl who had been taught by two maiden ladies 'to vault or jump gracefully' over the 'white places' in the carpet 'lest her feet might dirty them'. In fact her own public writing finds humorous mention in her casual letters. Before her suffering over *Ruth* there is a smaller worry over *Mary Barton*:

> I find every one here has most convincing proofs that the authorship of *Mary Barton* should be attributed to a Mrs Wheeler, nee Miss Stone, and authoress of some book called the 'Cotton Lord'. I am only afraid lest you also should be convinced and transact that part of the business which yet remains unaccomplished with her. I do assure you that I am the author ... (L 31, Novr 13/1848)

Three weeks later she received a cheque for £50 from her publisher Edward Chapman. When she gets one for £20 for 'Lizzie Leigh' she ponders whether she is 'swindling them but I suppose I am not', adding wryly 'Wm has composedly buttoned it (the cheque) up in his pocket'. (L 70, Apr 26 1850). *Ruth*, 'a prohibited book in *this* as in many other households' (L 148 27 Jan 1853) provides anguish rather than humour, but even here Mrs Gaskell sees the funny

side. She tells her dear friend Tottie Fox of two men who burnt the book and of a third forbidding his wife to read it - 'they sit next to us in chapel, and you can't think how "improper" I feel under their eyes' (L 150 Feb 1853). And she repeats what Sir Francis Doyle had said to her as she fretted about people looking at her as if she were the author of *Ruth*, 'Can't you tell them, my dear, that you're Ruthless?' (L 211, Oct 1854).

Working on *North and South* enabled her to indulge that tone of self-mockery which is one of her warmest and most endearing qualities. Look at the repetitive and deliberately mechanistic nature of the prose here as she writes to Emily Shaen about the novel:

> I've got to go (with Margaret - I'm off at her now following your letter) when they've quarrelled silently, after the lie, and she knows she loves him, and he is trying not to love her; and Frederick is gone back to Spain and Mrs Hale is dead and Mr Bell has come to stay with the Hales, and Mr Thornton ought to be developing himself - and Mr Hale ought to die - and if I could get over the next piece I could swim through the London life beautifully into the sunset glory of the last scene. (L 218, Oct 1854)

This laconic affectation of writer's block, a quiet laugh at work in anything but progress, is supplemented by her remarks on the same novel to Dickens: 'I think a better title would have been "Deaths and Variations". There are five deaths, each beautifully suited to the character of the individual.' (L 220, Dec 1854). But sometimes the humour at her own frustration has an edge of rejection. This was written while she was at work on *Wives and Daughters*:

> I hate intellect and literature and fine arts and mathematics! I begin to think Heaven will be a place where books and newspapers will be prohibited by St Peter: and the amusement will be driving in an open carriage to Harrow, and eating strawberries and cream for ever. (L 561, Feb 20 1865)

Mrs Gaskell is richly curious, and the mystery of George Eliot becomes something of an obsession with her. She is lyrical about *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* ('Janet's Repentance' is her favourite) and full of praise for the new writer. But the author as woman ('Madam Adam' she calls her later) is what really intrigues her. Writing to Mr 'Gilbert Elliot' in June 1859, she observes:

> Since I came up from Manchester to London I have had the greatest compliment paid me I ever had in my life. I have been suspected of having written 'Adam Bede'. I have hitherto denied it; but really I think if you want to keep your real name a secret, it would be very pleasant for me to blush acquiescence. Will you give me leave? ... After all it is a pity so much hearty admiration should go unappropriated through the world. So, although to my friends I am known under the name of Mrs Gaskell, to you I will confess that I *am* the author of Adam Bede, and remain very respectfully and gratefully,
>
> Yours,
>
> Gilbert Elliot (L 431, June 3)

It is humour which doesn't quite come off, and with Josiah Liggins claiming the authorship of the novel, as well as of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, it is arguably in bad taste. Mrs Gaskell supported the Liggins' rumour for some time, but was generous enough to admit her error and heap further praise on her competitor in a letter from Whitby to George Eliot some five months later. She says, however, not without a certain sardonic humour, 'I should not be quite true in my ending, if I did not say before I concluded that I wish you *were* Mrs Lewes.' (L 449, Nov 10 1859).

There are other instances of her sense of fun in the literary and artistic areas. Consider her remark to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth that she feels that the difference between herself and Charlotte Brontë is that ' she puts all her naughtiness into her books, and I put all my goodness (into mine) ... my books are so far better than I am that I often feel ashamed of having written them and as if I were a hypocrite.' (L 154,, Apr 1853). She notes when she visits

Mr Brontë ' this little deadly pistol sitting down to breakfast with us, kneeling down to prayers at night, to say nothing of the loaded gun hanging up on high, ready to pop off on the slightest emergency.' (L 166 Sept 1853). She visits Wordsworth's widow, and recounts how 'shortly after her confinement when quiet had been particularly enjoined', Coleridge roused the house 'about one in the morning ... to ask for eggs and bacon, and similar vagaries.' (L 139, 28 Oct 1852). And there is the wonderful account of her meeting Rossetti a few times and always getting his attention until ladies with beautiful hair appeared:

> It did not signify what we were talking about or how agreeable I was; if a particular kind of reddish brown crepe wavy hair came in, he was away in a moment struggling for an introduction to the owner of the said head of hair. He is not as made as a March hare, but hair-mad. (L 444, Oct 25 and 30 1859)

We have noted her generosity over George Eliot, and it is seen too in her praise of *Framley Parsonage*. Like everyone else she is dreading the final part of the serial publication of the novel, and she cannot repress a little joke about one of Trollope's least likeable characters, the archdeacon's eldest daughter, saying 'I hope he will make the jilting of Griselda a long while a-doing.' (L 456, Mar 1860).

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The Royal Literary Fund

by J A V Chapple

Despite my lucky identification of the Boddingtons, I believe the surest way to make discoveries is to keep following up some of the hundreds of clues that exist rather than rely on chance. Thus, in Letter 180 to James Crossley, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote that she had applied to the Literary Fund on behalf of a poor inhabitant of Knutsford and her two widowed daughters. Through the courtesy of Dr Christopher Fletcher, Curator of Literary Manuscripts at the British Library, I was shown Case File No. 1247, which contains a number of applications made to the Literary Fund of behalf of Mrs Selina Davenport of Knutsford.

There are six sets, which happen to contain no less than four unknown letters by Mrs Gaskell. The constant appearance of new letters in salerooms and elsewhere presents a time-consuming editorial task of some magnitude, which causes me to welcome the decision of Manchester University Press to reissue the 1966 edition of the *Letters* in paperback during the summer, together with a preliminary list of corrections and amendments. The 1850 date of Mrs Gaskell's first letter to the Literary Fund, for example, now enables her missive to Crossley to be firmly assigned to 1852 - a suggestion first made by Geoffrey Sharps.

The very definite concern for individuals that is manifest in these documents is consistent with Elizabeth Gaskell's position in her famous 'quarrel' with Florence Nightingale, who was 'too much for institutions, sisterhoods and associations', though with the typically charitable proviso that 'anything like a judgment' of such an extraordinary being must be 'presumptuous' (Letter 217).

The first form of application, dated 10 May 1850, was made out by Elizabeth herself, stating that Mrs Davenport was 71 years old and kept a very small shop in Knutsford. The most she gained from this was one shilling a day, and frequently nothing. She had no other income apart from £10 a year allowed to her by a relation, out of which she had to

maintain herself and the two penniless, middle-aged daughters who lived with her. Eleven three- or four-decker books had been published by Mrs Davenport, with titles like *The Queen's Page; Italian Vengeance, & English Forbearance;* and *The Daughters of the Viscount and the Sons of the Earl.* It sounds as if they were all in the best possible taste, of the time. Mrs Davenport's three recommendations were signed by Mrs Gaskell, the Vicar of Bowdon and Mary Holland.

It turns out that Mr R A Davenport, himself an author, had been a pensioner of the Literary Fund for some years but had claimed to be a widower. They had evidently been separated and on the worst of terms for many years. His letter of self-exculpation to the authorities is in the files, claiming that he wished to conceal the 'disgrace of being allied to such a character'. It is accompanied by a brief covering letter that dryly suggests 'faults on both sides'.

In the event, Mrs Davenport was successful and on the 12 June T Crofton Croker noted that she was granted £30, sent to her through Mary Holland. In April 1852, another application was made, backed this time by Lucy Holland, Susan Deane (née Holland) and the Vicar of Knutsford. £20 was voted. The next application, in April 1853, is unusual. Miss Holland, apparently, would not sign again, so the request is backed by Mrs Davenport's landlord Henry Barber, chemist, Thomas Gallimore, draper, and Thomas Howarth, book and print-seller, all of Knutsford. No grant was made then, but similar small sums were in later years.

Elizabeth Gaskell's letters of support seem to have been sparked off by her Knutsford cousins Mary and Lucy. If so, they were also successful in enlisting the aid of Emily Leycester of Toft Hall, Knutsford tradespeople, various vicars, a surgeon, a solicitor and the chaplain of Knutsford's House of Correction.

This contrasts with what we find in Case File No. 652, which adds to the little we know of Mrs Catherine Stevenson, Widow of Mr William Stevenson, of the Record Office. In April 1829, £40 was voted to her. Her case was

made in a letter to the relevant committee by the inhabitant of Grove House, Brompton, whose signature is quite illegible. An addendum slip advises delay in payment until Dr A T Thomson had settled his brother-in-law's estate: any grant 'might be interfered with' by William Stevenson's creditors.

So far, so good. The Payment was made eventually, Katharine Thomson signing for her husband. But a few years later came a desperate letter from Mrs Stevenson, dated 18 January 1833 from 57 Albany Street, presumably the one at the Calton Hill end of Edinburgh's New Town. She says that her husband's death had left herself and her children 'perfectly destitute', that she had tried to run a boarding house without success and contracted debts. 'However small a sum', she cried, 'it will be most thankfully received'. It is a very sad letter, but quite unaccompanied by other recommendations or letters of support. Nor was she, like Mrs Davenport, an author. There is a bald annotation, 'Already relieved as a Widow'.

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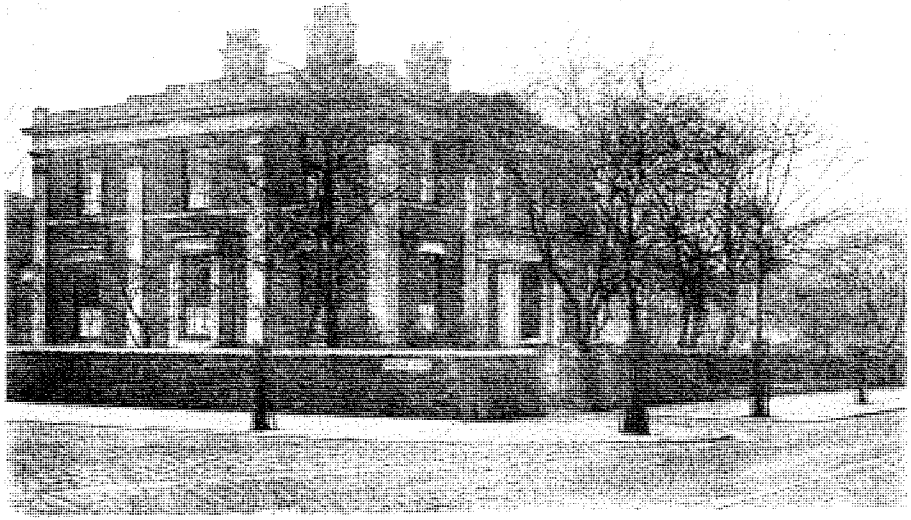
84 Plymouth Grove in 1910
(see article on page 14)



Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

Victorian love stories: an Oxford anthology; edited by Kate Flint. Oxford University Press, 1996. £17.99

An extensive anthology of thirty short stories covering the whole of Victoria's reign including authors not normally associated with the period such as Somerset Maugham. Gaskell's *Right at last* is one of the earliest stories in the collection which also includes such familiar names as Trollope, Hardy, Henry James, Wilkie Collins, Kipling and Wilde alongside less familiar ones such as Nora Vynne, Ella Dickens, George Egerton, and Flora Henniker. The latter is the 'little mite - Flora Milne' whose birth is recorded in Mrs Gaskell's letter to her father Richard Monckton Milne in 1855. She grew up to become a close friend of Hardy.
A general introduction and very brief biographical notes are provided.

Talking classics: the world's great novels on CD or cassette. Vol 67 - Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. An Orbis classics collection. 1996. £3.99
A fortnightly publication consisting of a recording (compact disc or tape) read by Maggie Ollerenshaw and a 12-page glossy pamphlet (recommended to be read after listening to the tape). The booklet is interesting for its unusual illustrations taken from a 1964 BBC television production of *Mary Barton*. *North and South* was issued as part 53 in this series.

Anna Unsworth, *Elizabeth Gaskell: An Independent Woman*, London: Minerva Press, pp.244, ISBN 1 86106 179X 1996, paperback, £12.99
This book seeks to further our understanding of Elizabeth Gaskell, the woman and writer. Anna Unsworth's knowledge of the Unitarian Church and Christian Socialism is particularly valuable. The book is an illuminating treatise that draws our attention to many of the ideas that informed Elizabeth Gaskell's writing. At the same time we are given a clear understanding of a woman who really could not "be bound by another's rules".
(Full review will appear in the Journal) Irene Wiltshire
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84 Plymouth Grove

The future of Elizabeth Gaskell's Plymouth Grove house continues to concern us. Back in December 1994, the Vice-Chancellor of Manchester University wrote that it had in fact assumed ownership in 1973 but that it was concerned about 'the apparent cost of repairing' the house 'relative to the property's value'. (Very considerable sums have been estimated to put right structural and other defects.) Also, he stated that the University now wished to relocate the International Society in a better place.

The Gaskell Society Committee and a number of individual members have therefore kept this matter under constant review. A great deal of quiet work has gone on behind the scenes, both with the University and more generally. In particular, it has seemed valuable to investigate the history of the house, not only in Elizabeth Gaskell's time but thereafter. Her husband and daughters played a part in the public life of Manchester after 1865 that adds considerably to its significance in the City's history.

The Plymouth Grove house was again carefully discussed at the Gaskell Society Committee's February meeting. Although the University will have no future use for the house, it has not yet identified funds for the transfer of the International Society to a more central location in its campus, nor has it yet found premises requiring little or no adaptation. We are also told that it is 'highly improbable that 84 Plymouth Grove will become vacant before the summer of 1998 at the earliest' and that any discussions concerning its eventual sale are at present 'premature'.

The Committee does not believe that the Society could assume such a major responsibility alone, but recommends that we associate ourselves with other groups possessing a strong interest in Manchester's heritage. City improvements of many kinds are in hand or under consideration. It is thought that at this stage the establishment with others of a charitable association, The Friends of 84 Plymouth Grove might be the most effective way of proceeding.

J A V Chapple & Joan Leach

Programme for London & South East Group

Saturday 26 April
2 pm at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF
'Marriage in the Life and Work of Elizabeth Gaskell' - Sylvia Burch

Saturday 13 September
2 pm at Pimlico School, Lupus Street, London SW1V 3AT
''*Wives and Daughters*' and *'Middlemarch'* as Provincial Novels'- Dr Graham Handley, Vice-President of the George Eliot Fellowship

Saturday 8 November
2 pm - venue to be arranged
'The Early Years of Elizabeth Gaskell' - Professor John Chapple, Chairman of the Gaskell Society and author of *'Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years'* to be published in April

Tuesday 16 December
6.30 pm (doors open at 6 pm) at Swedenborg Hall, Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1 (entrance in Barter Street)
'Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and the French Revolution' - Howard F Gregg.
This will be a joint meeting with the Dickens Fellowship.

Further information from Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

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University of Leeds Day School - Saturday 26 April
Although this is the same day as the Manchester Day which we are sharing with The Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, some members may be interested.
For information send SAE to: Marilyn Moreland, School of Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT
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Forthcoming Events

22nd March: MANCHESTER MEETING at the Freemasons Hall

10.30 Coffee and biscuits

11.00 Professor Peter Skrine, Professor of German at University of Bristol will speak on Elizabeth Gaskell's German Stories

J Geoffrey and Heather Sharps will speak on The Gaskells and Uhland

The meeting will finish about 1.00 pm. We are disappointed that the Palace production of Hard Times is not on until the next week, 24-29th.

Transport from Knutsford can only be arranged if a minimum of 15 book. We would return at 3.00 pm from Manchester to allow time for shopping, etc. PLEASE ENCLOSE SAE IF YOU HOPE we will transport you and REPLY PROMPTLY.

You will see from the map that the venue is only a short walk from the Metro at St Peter's Square.

19th April: Alliance of Literary Societies AGM in Birmingham, hosted by the Mary Webb Society

26th April: Day School jointly with Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. You should have booked for this by now.

Monday 19th May: This is the last date of the season of monthly classes; we intend to meet from 10.45-12 noon then have a coach to travel to Cholmondley Castle Gardens for lunch etc. If you are not a class member but would like to join us please let me know.

Sunday 29th June: A trip to Wycoller, an idyllic and historic village, the hall in ruins is reputedly the model for Mr Rochester's house Ferndean Manor.

We intend to leave Knutsford at 9.45 and stop in Haworth for lunch. At Wycoller in the afternoon the senior ranger of Wycoller Country Park will give us a short slide talk on its history, followed by a guided walk.

Booking form for the Wycoller trip and another (date to be arranged) to Arnold Bennett Country, will be sent with the Journal in April.

Joan Leach

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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The Gaskell Society

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1997 NO. 24

Editor's Letter

We have had such a busy year so there is scarcely room in this newsletter to bring you up to date. Major events were the trip to Germany in May, a most enjoyable experience, which will be fully reported in the next Journal, and the weekend conference at Chester in August.

By the time members in the UK read this they may have forgotten the August heat weave in which I am now writing, but delegates found North Wales sweltering and only found relief in Samuel Holland's slate mine! Again you will find more on this event and some of the papers read at Chester in the 1998 Journal.

Alan Shelston has done sterling service in editing our Journal since its launch and he feels it is time to step aside, especially as he will be busy working with John Chapple in editing Gaskell letters. Jo Pryke, having served as associate editor will now take over from Alan as editor.

We will be working on a collection of items from Newsletters which we hope to publish in 1998.

Did you miss early volumes of Journals and Newsletters?

We have reprinted Journals 1-3 (£4 each) and Newsletters 1-7 (£1 each).

Subscriptions

In future our Society year will begin on 1 January. You will receive a reminder in December. Fees are now £8 per annum, or £12 for joint, overseas and corporate membership. We are encouraging members to pay by banker's order where possible, as it makes less work for all concerned. Our account is at TSB Princess Street, Knutsford (sort code 77-48-04), the account number being 07633660.

I can now be reached on e-mail at
JoanLeach@aol.com
and will soon be au fait with the internet, I hope!

Our Treasurer, Brian Williams, is at
BDandEMW@aol.com

Lucy Magruder our US hon. sec. is at
lagruder@aol.com

If you have an e-mail number and would like to be on our mailing list, please send details.
The Society is deeply indebted to Mitsuhara Matsuoka for all the work he has done in establishing our home page on the internet
http://lang.nagoya-ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html

I hope to manage this soon. He has also entered E-texts of Gaskell novels and most short stories. Mitsu has been over here in Manchester studying but has now returned to Japan, an ambassador between our Societies.

Future Plans
A four or five day trip to Paris is being planned for 1998, most likely for the second or third weekend in September, but possible between about 20 and 25 May. Any ideas on travel or accommodation welcome.

Our next conference will be in LONDON in 1999. Suggestions for venue will be welcome. Although our experience of college accommodation is mixed, it still seems the most reasonable in cost, especially as most of our members need single rooms. Our lecturers and teacher members are free in the summer vacation, but we will consider other options for dates if members make their wishes known.

2000 Millennium Year
Plans are afoot to celebrate this in Knutsford with a LITERARY AND ARTS FESTIVAL. This would be during the last week in September to coincide with our AGM and Elizabeth Gaskell's birthday on 29 September.

The Well of Penmorfa
by Dewi Williams

Sometime during 1917, a translation of this tale by Elizabeth Gaskell was published in "Yr Herald Gymraeg" (Welsh Herald) a Caernarfon based weekly with a wide local circulation. The translator was Edward Davies, the postmaster of Penmorfa between 1904-20, best known for his "Janes Porthmadog" (History of Porthmadog) 1913, which is still highly regarded by local historians and very well written.

I came across Edward Davies' fair copy of his translation amongst his papers in the possession of one of the family. He had seen the "Household Words" version and had no idea as to the identity of the author. Ironically, his local history contains a biography of Samuel Holland; little did he suspect that Holland's cousin was the mystery author. Edward Davies died, aged 82, in 1959.

A further item of interest among the papers is the response of another local historian to the tale which Edward Davies drew his attention to. Robert Isaac Jones was the Tremadog-based pharmacist and printer and a well-known minor literary figure. He also published an important volume on local history in 1892, entitled "Gestiana" (Gleanings from the Gêst area). Robert Isaac died in 1905, therefore Edward Davies must have long mulled over the identity of the author before the publication of his translation.

R I Jones states that he has no idea about the identity of the principal characters, namely *Eleanor Gwynn*, *Nest* her daughter and *Edward Williams* of Penamser farm (The End of Time). A possible explanation, he suggests, might lie in the testimony of the Reverend Jeffrey Holland (no relation of Samuel) as written on the flyleaf of the 1799 Penmorfa register:

> "There has been a most shameful neglect for 20 years in this parish without any account of burials, marriages and christenings owning to a drunken curate, Mr Davies, lately dead."

Robert Isaac Jones identifies the following minor characters in the story:

1 John Griffith of Tu hwnt i'r bwlch - alive during the second half of the 17th century. *Edward Williams* suggests that only such a man of means could marry the crippled *Nest*. John Griffith pre-dates the other characters.

2 John Griffith, who first cared for the lunatic Mary Williams. A person of this name was alive in 1761 and was the landlord of Ty Mawr, one of the inns in the village.

3 *Rowland Roberts*, the doctor who treated *Nest Gwynn* after her fall. A Rowland Jones, late 18th century, acted as the village apothecary.

4 *Mrs Thomas*, the innkeeper - a Robert Thomas kept Bwlch y Fedwen, the principal inn of the village at this time. In the "Doom of the Griffiths", Martha Thomas is the name of the landlady of the "Goat" inn at Penmorfa.

5 *David Hughes*, the Wesleyan travelling preacher - could have accompanied Wesley when he visited Penmorfa in 1797. Not known to R I Jones.

R I Jones also identifies *Eleanor* and *Nest's* cottage, with its south-facing visage, 'by the roadside on the left hand as you go from Tre-Madoc to Pen Morfa'. He names it as "Pwll goleulas" (Light blue pool) by which name the terraced houses on the spot are still called. Unfortunately, the Tithe map of 1843 places the cottage (of which not a stone remains) on the right of the road rather than the left.

How much credence should be attached to this tale as recounted by Elizabeth Gaskell? It certainly has not survived in folk memory. She might well have known of such a folk tale in Cheshire perhaps and decided to place it in a Welsh context with which she certainly was well acquainted. The preponderance of John Griffiths and Thomases in the area would also make it easy to "identify" characters who could be either fictitious or based on contemporary figures in the Penrhyndeudraeth area whom she knew.

Lastly, what of the well, the focal point of the tragedy? J C Sharps, in a footnote[1], acknowledges the information he received in 1960 from Colonel M I Williams-Ellis, that it was the well of Saint Beuno. Subsequent research has uncovered a more likely identification. Saint Beuno's well can be found on the side of the lane leading to Penmorfa church, much higher than the "Dôl Fawr" location. Robert Isaac Jones locates the well at Ty Cerrig, "sharp down under the rocks" (Mrs Gaskell) and refers to the "slippery stones on the time worn path leading to it". It has long disappeared as has the cottage whose name it bears, a field's length away from the reputed home of Eleanor and Nest. The present owner of the land assures me that the ground suggests the presence of water. A divining rod could well pin-point the site of the well so fateful in the life of *Nest Gwynn* "many, many years back - a lifetime ago".

[1]Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention, J G Sharps (Linden Press 1970), p.99

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Editor's Note: We are very grateful to Dewi for guiding us to the Well of Penmorfa across the fields on our outing on 10 August. This is now more a spring than a well. Nobody slipped on any stones!

Notes on The Moorland Cottage and Other Stories
World's Classics p/b edn 1995
by Muriel Smith

There is an item in the Winter & Spring 1997 joint Newsletter of the Ancient Monuments Society and Friends of Friendless Churches, about two redundant Welsh churches which it is hoped will this year be vested in the Friends, and one of them has something of a Gaskell connection.

> "These are St Beuno, Penmorfa, Gwynedd, and St Ellyw, Llanelieu, in Powys. Both are delightful buildings, two-cell in plan form, Medieval in origin and, for the most part, in fabric."

St Beuno is not mentioned in *The Well of Penmorfa*, but Mrs Gaskell was presumably acquainted with it.

Another story in the volume, *My French Master*, concerns the French emigrant, M de Chalabre:

> "He had a genius for using his fingers. After our lessons were over, he relaxed into the familiar house friend, the merry play-fellow. We lived far from any carpenter or joiner: if a lock was out of order, M de Chalabre made it right for us. If any box was wanted, his ingenious fingers had made it before our lesson day. He turned silk-winders for my mother, made a set of chessmen for my father, carved an elegant watchcase out of a rough beef-bone, dressed up little cork dolls for us - in short, as he said, his heart would have been broken but for his joiner's tools."

That these were typical emigrant activities is confirmed by *Nez de Cuir* (Leathernose), Jean de la Varende's 1937 novel dealing with Normandy of the immediately post-Napoleonic period, and based on his own family traditions:

> "Chess was all the rage in Normandy after the return from emigration and it was from Normandy that the taste invaded Paris and all France. Norman châteaux still possess an astounding number of sets of chessmen. Exile and its dispiriting lack of occupation had something to do with it, but also there was the odd mania among the gentry of the time: turnery. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had advocated craft work, but surely he never envisaged such a craze. Every house had its turnery room, its glory-hole ... And chessmen were the perfect product for this buzzing activity: useful, reasonably difficult to make and suitable as gifts ... Just the job for emigrants, for the impoverished gentleman with his borrowed lathes who, holding his breath and bowed over the object between the centres, tries to forget it all."

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84 Plymouth Grove

The University now plans to move the International Society from Mrs Gaskell's house during 1998. In conjunction with the Manchester Civic Society we are setting up a steering group to study options for the future of the house - possibly a combination of exhibition space and residential units. When plans are a little further advanced, we hope to set up a charity and The Friends of Plymouth Grove.

Meanwhile we are anxious to trace the original contents of the house, both those sold at auction after Meta's death and other items which were moved from the house before 1914. Any leads will be gratefully received! Please get in touch with Janet Allen, 10 Dale Road, New Mills, High Peak SK22 4NW (phone/fax 01663 744233).

The Recording of Mrs Gaskell's North & South
BBC Radio 4
by Delia Corrie

In April, I went to BBC Manchester to record Elizabeth Gaskell's *North & South* for Radio 4. I was playing Mrs Hale and Aunt Shaw, not to mention various other very minor rôles in crowd scenes, and it proved a most enjoyable job.

The book had been adapted for radio most beautifully by Charlotte Keatley, and with Emily Mortimer cast as Margaret and David Threlfall as Mr Thornton, I felt it really couldn't fail.

The actors' part of it took six days in all. The book had been divided into three hour-long episodes, so we spent two days on each episode. On the first day, the whole cast met and read through the script before going into the studio. This is obviously a very important stage, seeing how the whole story comes together in radio terms and hearing everyone's character, but it is also great fun and breaks the ice.

Once in the studio, we 'rehearse/record', which means that each scene is read through in front of the microphone before actually recording. Modern microphones are so sensitive that the actors don't just stand in front of them as they used to a few years ago. We move around, sit down, lie in bed - I did quite a lot of that as Mrs Hale! - and whatever else the director wants us to do. In some cases you even wear long skirts to give a period feel and sound. Sometimes you feel you could do with another pair of hands to hold the script and, for example, drink from a cup.

This particular production had a very happy team of actors. I had worked with several of them before so there

was a lot of social catching-up to do in the Green Room. Some knew Elizabeth Gaskell already, as I did, but several didn't and went out to buy copies of the book. All of them loved it.

When the actors' work is done, it is over to the director, in this case Michael Fox, and the technicians. They spend several more days editing it all down and adding the music and sound effects which give so much of the atmosphere in radio plays.

I thought the finished result was wonderful. Even knowing how it all happens, I was still transported with Margaret and the other characters, bringing to life Elizabeth Gaskell's words. What a great book it is.

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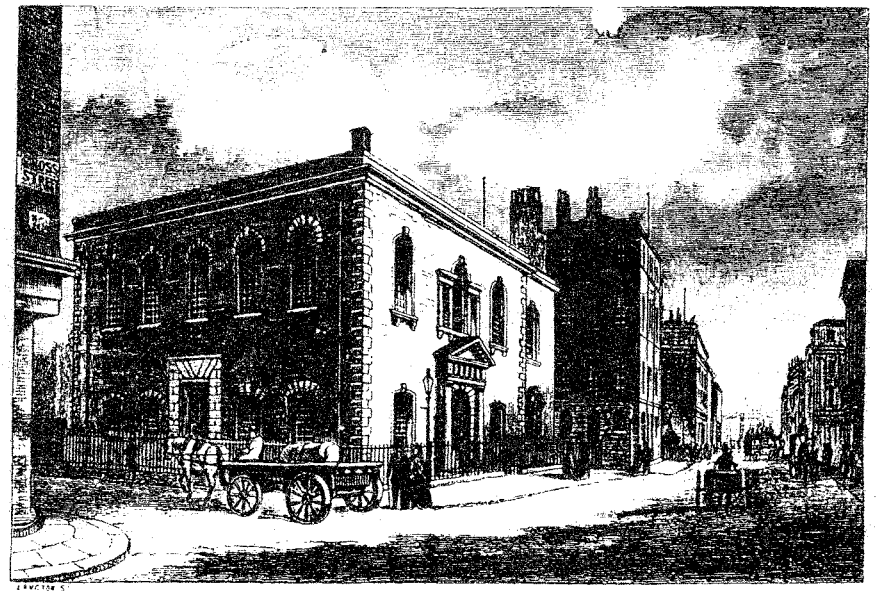

Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, in 1856

Cross Street Chapel

by Geoffrey Head
Chairman of Trustees

The building on the historic Plungen's Meadow site of "The Observatory", of which the new Cross Street Chapel will form the ground and mezzanine floors, proceeds apace. The Chapel premises is scheduled to be delivered to its Trustees in late September this year and, after internal fitting out, should be ready to open in November.

Provision has been made for a concourse surrounding a circular Chapel seating about 180, an office, a resources centre, a choir vestry and a divisible community suite with associated kitchen facilities. This community facility will seat up to 100 for meetings and will be named the "Percival" suite after Thomas Percival FRS (1740-1804), a Chapel Trustee, largely responsible for the founding of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and the Manchester Academy. The mezzanine floor provides for a high quality panelled board room (the Gaskell Room), the Minister's Vestry, a congregational room, a plant room and a Chapelkeeper's flat.

There will be provision for disabled access (including lift and toilet accommodation), a loop hearing system in the Chapel, audio visual and information technology equipment.

The Elizabeth Gaskell memorial tablet, salvaged from the 1694 building after the World War II bombing, will be located in the concourse, and the red circular plaque from the exterior of the 1959 building will be reinstated. Chapel archives will be housed in bookcases in the Gaskell Room. It is hoped that the Gaskell Society will feel able to make use of the premises from time to time for committee or general meetings: it will have a warm welcome.

Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

The Victorian social-problem novel; the market, the individual and the communal, by Josephine Guy, 1996. £45 (paperback available)
A comprehensive study of a sub-genre consisting of *Hard Times, Mary Barton, North and South, Felix Holt, Alton Locke,* and *Sybil* which is designed to redress the large body of literary criticism produced over the last forty years deemed by the author to be 'negative'. It aims to provide new insights into literary history and gives a survey of literary critics as well as an understanding of the novels. It challenges Gaskell's assertion that 'I knowing nothing of Political Economy' and argues to the contrary that her knowledge becomes almost an obsession.

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The Letters of Matthew Arnold, edited by Cecil Y Lang; vol 1 1829-1859. Charlottesville and London: The University of Virginia Press, 1996. £53.50
- contains one letter of Elizabeth Gaskell complimenting him on his *'Haworth Churchyard'* and two of his in reply. Arnold was not an intimate acquaintance but Mrs Gaskell knew him in Oxford and was friendly with his mother and her circle of friends in Ambleside and Grasmere which included Mrs Eliza Fletcher, her daughter Mrs Davy and Harriet Martineau.

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The English Novel in History 1840-1895, by Elizabeth Deedes Ermarth. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997. £40
One of three books discussing in detail the role of the novel in the treatment of history and its use in highlighting social problems. (There are companion volumes for the twentieth century.) Gaskell is treated in passing in the discussion of the economic and social order.

Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years, by John Chapple, Manchester University Press 1997, pp. xviii+492, £25.00
Alan Shelston writes: Like many members of the Gaskell

Society I am currently enjoying our chairman's masterly account of Elizabeth Gaskell's early life, *Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years.* As Professor Chapple will willingly concede, this is as much a study in detail of the contexts, social, cultural and intellectual, that shaped the novelist's formative experience as it is of the life itself: indeed, four chapters pass before the infant Elizabeth appears upon the scene. But what riches are here revealed to us by such dedicated and affectionate research. Every conceivable source that might have a bearing upon Elizabeth Gaskell's upbringing is investigated: her father's origins and wayward career, the Unitarian and family networks of north-west England, the cultural and intellectual resources of Knutsford, the ever-flourishing Holland connections, education at Stratford, the loss of a brother and the winning of a husband. George Eliot, in a famous passage in *Middlemarch*, refers to 'the subtle movement ... and also those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse' that took place 'in old provincial society' at exactly this point in time. Rarely can these have been so expertly exemplified as in this remarkable book.

Editor's note: there will be a full review of this book in the next Journal. We can supply copies to UK members, also the paperback reprint of the Collected Letters, at £1 off the retail price by post, or £4 off if collected at meetings.

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The Halbe Mond or Half Moon Inn c.1900

ONE DAY IN HEPPENHEIM

by Joan Leach

It was an early start for members travelling to Germany on 6th May for, by 11.30 am, from Manchester, Birmingham, London Heathrow and Gatwick, we met at Frankfurt airport where we were joined by members from Japan and USA to make a total of forty-three ready to travel in Gaskell footsteps.

Moswin Tours had arranged for us to stay at Mannheim, only a short distance from Heidelberg and provided us with the services of our tour manager, Carolyn Jack, who efficiently smoothed our way.

Our programme had been checked by Peter Skrine and Celia, who will give a more detailed report in our next Journal, and John and Kate Chapple had also checked some of our venues.

After spending a fascinating day and a half exploring Heidelberg on the third day we headed for Heppenheim, still a wine town as it had been in Elizabeth Gaskell's day. The vineyards along our route covered areas of all sizes; the rows of vines showing various states of cultivation, some well pruned and weeded, others less so. Vines and other crops, such as asparagus, seemed to belong to small family groups or small-holdings. We thought of the wine trade as Elizabeth Gaskell had observed it and later we learnt more when we visited a winery where the vintage is pressed and matured for the growers.

Town Hall and Market Place at Heppenheim

We assembled in the attractive market square of Heppenheim, with its decorative timer-framed buildings and fountain (we became connoisseurs of fountains as we saw them in almost every village, though Mannheim's at night with a display of water patterns and changing colours was the most splendid spectacle). Peter in his preliminary tour

a few weeks earlier had called at the town hall where it had been arranged that the Burgermeister would receive us. As we waited for this honour, it began to drizzle but the busy scene around us kept us amused for it was Friday, the day for civil weddings to be registered in the town hall, and groups of flower-carrying guests jumped out of cars and disappeared inside while we waited.
We became a little anxious as this was not our only appointment - we were due at Halbe Monde or Half Moon Inn, the setting for the story *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* and, though our places had been booked, we were told that the self-service lunch was so popular that the best food would be gone if we were late! Peter hurried into the Town Hall to check what the delay was and returned somewhat crestfallen; our appointment was not registered in the Burgermeister's diary and he was not there at all! The ladies in the TIC knew we were coming but not the town hall.
A little further delay before a young man presented himself to us as the town's archivist, apologising profusely for the mix-up, and escorted us to the museum and up two or three flights of stairs, a few members opting for early lunch rather than the climb. We found ourselves in an unusual painted hall but no-one seemed ready, willing or able to tell us about it or anything else.
We decided we must make our exit and find our lunch at the Half Moon, then with most of our group departed, two young ladies entered bearing trays of wine in glasses. We who were left drank gratefully and willingly but made little impression on the trays before we thanked our hostesses and followed the rest of our group to lunch.
The Half Moon was indeed popular, with a wide choice of dishes and one's own appetite set the only limit. Soon we noticed the eager young archivist had rejoined our group and was talking to Peter. In his hands he bore several copies of an attractively produced German edition of *Six Weeks in Heppenheim* which he presented to us. In return we gave him the mounted print of Elizabeth Gaskell which had been intended for the Mayor. The book also tells the history of The Half Moon Inn, the innkeeper and family of Mrs Gaskell's time and her contribution to the history of the wine trade by her careful observation woven into the

story.
The present innkeeper of The Half Moon was also pleased to welcome us, to have our signatures in his visitors' book and to accept our print of Elizabeth Gaskell.
John Chapple later exchanged further information with the archivist, Harald E Jost, and Peter received 'sincerest apologies' from Herr Obermayr, the Mayor, who had been making a long-planned visit to their twin town in the South Tyrol area of Italy 'but would certainly have appointed a deputy to represent me had I known about your visit ... Please accept my thanks for your portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell which has found a place worthy of it in my office'.
And so Elizabeth Gaskell returns to Heppenheim.

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SUMMER OUTINGS

by Joan Leach

Trip to Pendle and Wycoller

On Sunday 29th June we arrived at Pendle Heritage Centre in time for an excellent value lunch. Gaskell must have known Pendle as *The Heart of John Middleton* is set there, and I am sure the story of the Pendle Witches must have intrigued her. When she started writing her pseudonym was 'Cotton Mather Mills'; the New England theologian Cotton Mather had been involved in the Salem witch trails and may have turned Gaskell thoughts to the theme of *Lois the Witch*.

The Pendle Heritage Centre had exhibitions including one about the witches of c.1612. It also had a pleasant garden and a tithe barn which, among other things, housed two enormous, somnolent, pot-bellied pigs!

We spent the afternoon in Wycoller where the wardens of the country park met us and gave us an illustrated talk, then a walk around the village - a haven of rural peace with a tinkling stream crossed by packhorse and clapper bridges. The rose-covered, stone-built houses had mellow charm but the hollow shell of a large house had an air of mystery and one wondered who had sat around the wide,

open fireplace. Charlotte Brontë portrayed it as Ferndean Manor in *Jane Eyre*. We regretted not having more time to explore the Brontë way.

Trip to Rivington 16th July 1997

"Oh. Rivington is such a very, pretty place, & so thoroughly country", wrote Elizabeth Gaskell in 1838 (GL9)

On that occasion she and Marianne had travelled by train to Bolton, then were met by a gig to take them on to Rivington. 'The next morning a most charming drive, in the evening up the Pike ... Sunday to chapel in the morning, two walks in the afternoon ... Yesterday morning I sketched and Wm came; in the afternoon we both rode on horseback up and down the country - then a walk after tea'. They were visiting the Darbishire family.

On the centenary of Elizabeth's death a Bolton (?) Evening News article claimed that she wrote *Cranford* while staying at Rivington, as a guest of Charles James Darbishire of Vale Bank, who was first mayor of Bolton and brother of Samuel Dukinfield Darbishire, whose uneven relationship with the Gaskells, perhaps partly due to his wife's character, may be deciphered from Gaskell letters.

We were welcomed by the lay leader, Judith Crompton, and members of the chapel congregation to the delightfully situated chapel, built in 1703; the old box pews, the canopied Willoughby family pew and the memorials on the walls all evoked times and people long gone, but are eloquent reminders to the inheritors of the dissenting tradition. We were grateful to Martin Brownlow for preparing an exhibition for us; Judith related the chapel's history and, with her husband Dennis, who is the chapel secretary, entertained us with Gaskell readings.

We enjoyed walking in the garden of remembrance and studying the plants in the physic garden, then exploring the village and tithe barn. It was not difficult to image the Gaskell family enjoying their visits to Rivington.

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

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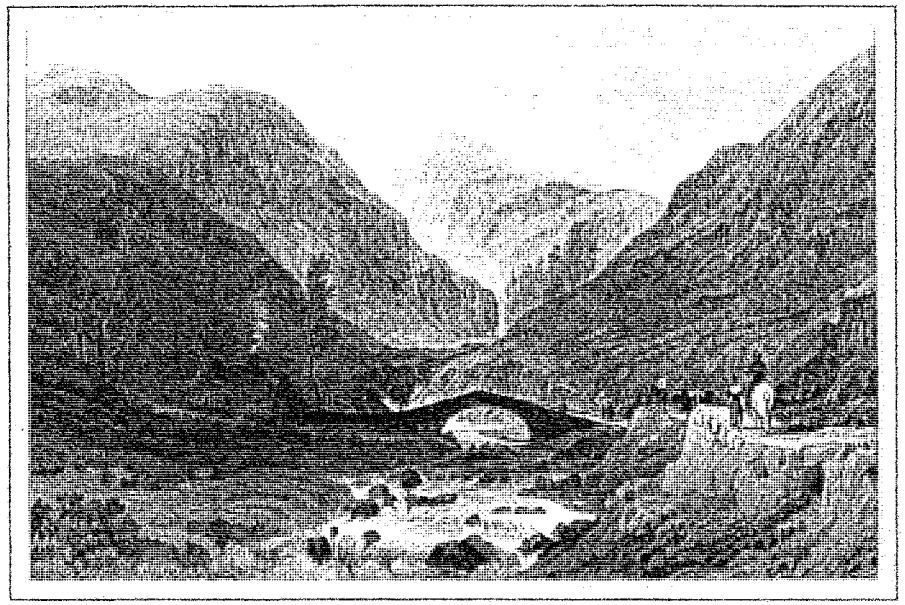
The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1998 NO. 25

Editor's Letter

When I look back to 1985 when our Society was launched I am amazed at the progress that has been made in Gaskell studies, and I like to think that our Society and Journal has played a major part in this. If I thought about it at all in 1985, my horizons for linking up Gaskell enthusiasts certainly did not stretch around the world and I expected to find members mainly in the North West of England. Our monthly *Lunch and Literature* meetings here in Knutsford are well attended and the London/South East group grows steadily, but members continue to join us from around the world and most exciting is the work being done in the translation of Gaskell works, to reach a wider audience.

The publication of Sylvia's Lovers in Japanese is a major event in Gaskell history and we congratulate Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno; you can read in this newsletter how he has achieved this.

Swiftly following this news, we learn that Professor Li Fang in South Korea is translating North and South into Chinese. He has to cope with chapter headings such as 'Haste to the Wedding: wooed and married and a' (Chapter One) and puzzles such as what was a 'chip' bonnet? With computer contacts he is now able to use the Gaskell correspondence link to seek help with such queries. 'Haste to the wedding' was a country dance fiddle tune, by the way.

Bϕrge Skråmestϕ in Oslo regrets the lack of Norwegian translations and would like to work on Cranford but notes that only one Austen title has been translated. A Spanish translation of Wives and Daughters is likely; perhaps in time for the BBC production!?

We are looking forward to our Spring meeting on 4th April at the new Cross Street Chapel and hope many of you will be able to join us. Professor Arthur Pollard, who was our first President, will speak on Gaskell Letters, and Margaret Smith on Brontë Letters. This will be a full day's meeting with lunch.

"Sylvia's Lovers": The First Japanese Translation by Tatsuhiro Ohno

The first Japanese translation of Sylvia's Lovers became available on 25 December 1997. This novel is the one I discussed in my BA thesis. The book was so moving (probably, Philip Hepburn was what I was then) as to make me feel like translating it into Japanese. I started the work in 1989, completed the first draft in 1994 and the second in 1996, and began to search for a publisher in January 1997. I received an agreement from Sairyu-sha in April, and published it on the date above.

I shall never forget the warm encouragement given by two people during my struggle: Mrs Joan Leach, Honorary Secretary of the Gaskell Society, and Professor Andrew Sanders of Durham University.

One of the difficulties I encountered was how to deal with the Yorkshire dialect. I consulted some experts ;and guidebooks for advice. The most persuasive suggestion was that I should choose the dialect of a Japanese region whose climate was similar to Yorkshire's, in short, Tohoku or Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan. But I have little knowledge about those dialects spoken in these areas, because I was born and grew up in Kumamoto, one of Japan's south-west provinces. After long deliberation, I resolved to use my native dialect which I had no difficulty in handling.

Another problem cropped up here: conversations in the genuine Kumamoto dialect would be incomprehensible even to the Japanese. I was forced to modify many dialogues into those similar in style to the standard Japanese although the speakers were talking in the genuine Yorkshire dialect (I could guess they were mostly by

spellings). As a result, my Sylvia has come to speak a standardized version of the Kumamoto dialect. Some have already criticized my device by saying it will cause great damage to Sylvia because it is quite disappointing for a beautiful heroine to speak a local dialect. But, let me remind you that, however beautiful she may be, Sylvia is an uneducated country girl.

The book is 737 pages long, including the text (594 pp), a Gaskell chronology (88 pp) and the translator's commentary. The following remarks I wrote in the afterword might be helpful for understanding what this novel is about.

> "What is true love?" Various answers would be offered to this question, because we are living in the age of various values. What the novel aims at is, in a word, to suggest an answer to this question.
> The story develops mainly in the 1790s in Monkshaven, a fictional whaling town of the north-east coast of England. The protagonists are four: Sylvia Robson, the 16-year-old daughter of a dairy farmer; Philip Hepburn, the 21-year-old shop assistant and her devoted lover; Charley Kinraid, the brave harpooner who wins her heart; and Hester Rose, Philip's co-worker whose selfless devotion to him is never rewarded.
> In those days, Britain was at war with France, and the press-gangs were active to press robust men into the British military forces. When Charley is caught by them a few days after pledging himself to marry Sylvia, he entreats Philip, the only witness to the scene, to tell her what he saw and that Charley would surely come back. However, Philip thinks that Charley is fickle: he has loved many girls and finally forsaken them. Sylvia would no doubt meet the same fate as such pitiful girls. So thinking, Philip determines to ignore Charley's message. His decision becomes the pivot on which her fortune begins to decline.
> Has Philip made the right choice? Will Sylvia understand the depth of his love lying behind his

falsehood? What fate is waiting for Hester, who endures the pain of unrewarded love?
I would like this book to be read by those who are groping for the reliable answer to the question of what is true love, especially by those who are being tormented by the pangs of unrequited affection.

I sincerely hope my translation will be of some use in creating Gaskell fans in Japan. Further information is available on my web page:

"http://www.let.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/eng/ohno_e.htm/."

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Pen y Bryn

Elizabeth and William Gaskell's Honeymoon in Aber, September 1832

by Jean Lindsay

The Gaskells spent two weeks of their honeymoon in Aber in September 1832. Elizabeth had visited the village at an earlier date and had fond memories of the area. The pretty wooded village, which is five miles east of Bangor, is near the Menai Straits and has a river, waterfalls and mountains. The Aber Falls can be reached after a two-mile walk through a wooded valley and the two falls, a quarter of a mile apart, are a spectacular sight as the water descends from the precipice. There is also a walk through the Anafon Valley and it is small wonder that Elizabeth preferred the wildness of Aber to Beaumauris.[1]

It is, however, impossible to say where the Gaskells stayed in Aber.[2] It could have been at any of the numerous inns of the village. The Census of 1851 includes the Bull, the Prince Llywelyn and Crosskeys. The Tithe Map of 1848 names the Bulkeley Arms Inn, and on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1888, this has become the Bulkeley Arms Hotel. In 1919, this hotel has been renamed the Aber Hotel, a name it still retains. The Aber Hotel is near the railway station, which is now closed, and in the Gaskells' day there was no railway, as the line from Chester to Bangor was opened in 1848. One hotel in Aber can be ruled out, as this, the Aber Falls Hotel, only appears on the map in 1912. One house of note is Pen y Bryn, built in 1580 by Sir William Thomas, although his family no longer owned the house in 1832. He was one of the benefactors of the village, and Lord Bulkeley of Baron Hill, Beaumaris, at one time Lord of the Manor of Aber, was another.[3] It is possible that Pen y Bryn, with its small tower, could have been the Gaskells' lodging-place.

A picture of the village from 1820 to 1827, just before the Gaskells' visit, is found in the Aber Vestry records.[4] They give an account of the management of the needs of the poor by the Overseer and the Churchwardens under the Old Poor Law. Even after the setting up of the Union Workhouses by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, Aber

still had its almshouses, built by Lord Bulkeley in 1811, and its charities included a Rabbit Club, which in the 1880s and 1890s distributed one rabbit a week to some of the 'deserving poor'.[5]

It seems likely that the Gaskells were aware of Aber's distinguished medieval history. It was one of the main courts of the princes of Gwynedd in the thirteenth century and Llywelyn Faw (Llywelyn the Great) was said to prefer the court at Aber to the others. He married Joan, daughter of King John, and she died at Aber in 1237. Her body was taken across the sands to be buried at Llanfaes and her stone coffin is in the porch of St Mary's Church, Beaumaris. Dafydd, the son of Llywelyn Fawr and Joan, died at Aber in 1246, six years after his father's death. The Court was also a royal manor and was within a fortified enclosure, containing halls, stables, kitchens, chapels, bakery and a brewery. Its exact location is a matter of controversy. It is said to be either in the area near the Mound (Mwd), an almost circular shape, built either by the Normans or by the Welsh princes in the style

Aber, Caernarvonshire

of the Norman castles, or in the region of Pen y Bryn, which is situated on a nearby hill.[6]

The village has a church which was rebuilt in 1876, so the Gaskells would see the 'ancient edifice with a square tower'. The rectory, now called the Old Rectory, is near the church. A ferry across the Lavan Sands to Beaumaris would be in operation, the distance at low tide being four miles, although the sands frequently shift. In foggy weather, a bell in Aber church, presented by Lord Bulkeley in 1817, was rung to direct travellers.[7] The village, at the entrance to a romantic glen, with its sparkling river, nearby sea and mountains, provides an idyllic setting for a honeymoon, even though the Gaskells have managed to keep their exact abode a secret.

NOTES

1 The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, ed J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard (1966), letters 2 and 9
2 After the Conference at Chester, Professor Chapple asked me if I knew where the Gaskells stayed in Aber. This short article is an unsuccessful attempt to answer his question.
3 A Short History of Aber Manor, Parish and Village, T J Owen (1966)
4 Gwynedd Archives Service, Pa 134
5 Gwynedd Archives Service, XPE/56/116
6 Llwelyn Ap Gruffydd, A D Carr (1982)
7 Black's Picturesque Guide to North Wales (1866)

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Stop Press on 84 Plymouth Grove

Manchester Civic Trust is forming a Building Preservation Trust for action on buildings at risk; their first project is the Gaskell home at 84 Plymouth Grove.

Manchester University has offered the Trust an option on the house and assistance with a feasibility study.

Elizabeth Gaskell's First Music Book*

by J A V Chapple

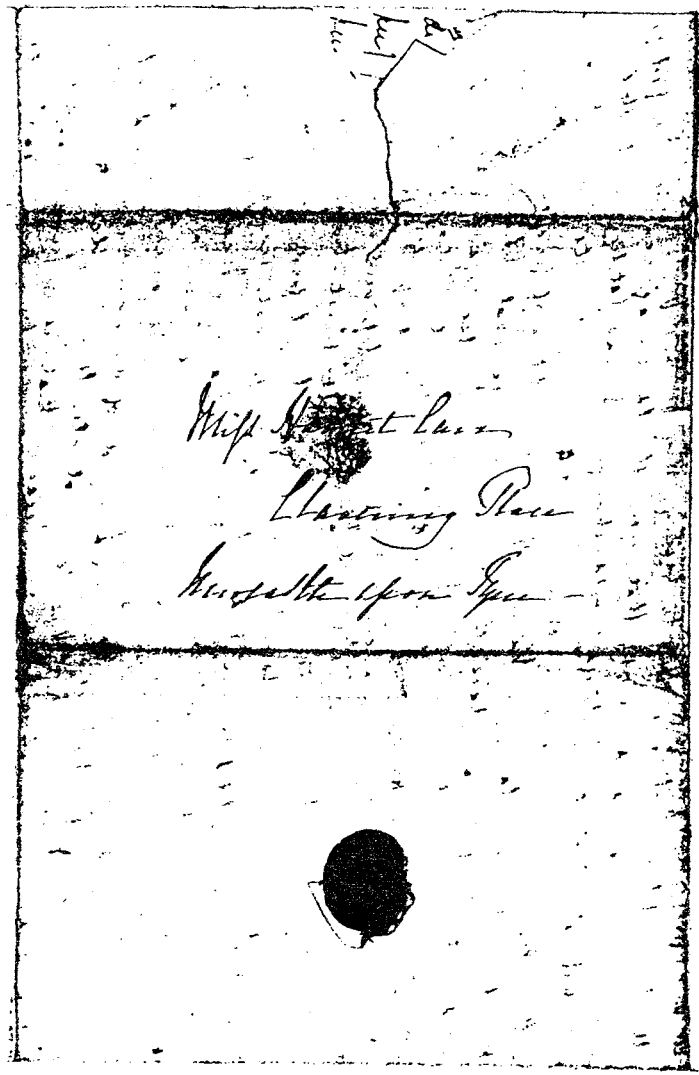
When she was young, Elizabeth Gaskells' penmanship was varied. Two very different hands appear in the letters she sent to Harriet Carr during 1831–32. The first three were written in a small, upright scribble, the last two in a bold cursive sloping to the right (illustrated on the cover of *Gaskell Society Journal* 4). We cannot infer a simple chronological sequence, however, because the addresses of all five letters were written in the larger sloping hand (example A).

Her earliest music book of 1825, too, begins with the sloping cursive, but is followed on later pages by a smaller upright hand. Also, the names of her schoolfellows are pencilled on a number of pages of the music book. Were is not for the Carr letters, we might even have assumed that many of these pages were written by somebody other than Elizabeth. Though I believe that she actually wrote down most of the words and music, there is evidence that at least two other people were involved.

On page 1, there is a comment correcting one of the bars of music, presumably written by one of her teachers (example B). If we turn to page 19, we discover both words and music in a similar hand (example C). Could this have been written by Katharine Thomson, née Byerley? Though she married Anthony Todd Thomson in 1820, before Elizabeth first went to the Byerleys' school, there is good evidence that Katharine maintained her artistic connection with Avonbank. And this hand is more like hers than those of her sisters, as we can see from their many letters in the Wedgwood collection kept in Keele University Library.

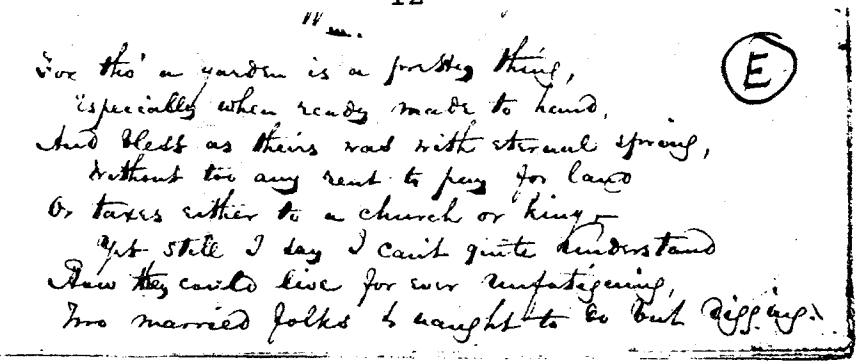
Then, on page 32, there are words and music almost certainly written by William Gaskell, presumably several years later on a page that had been left blank (example D). Its handwriting can be compared with that of an early, signed letter of 1841 at Harvard, a poem in the

(A)




C
Wait oh my soul. Thy Makers will, tu-multuous pas-sions all be still! Nor let a
murmuring thought a-rise, His ways are just, his ways are just, his ways are
just his counsels wise
repeat 8 bars
D.C.8


D
Where are the Dead? the friends friends! Who walked this world in
Their toils are done. Their crown is won. And they are blest, the Spirit saith



For tho' a garden is a pretty thing,
Especially when ready made to hand,
And blest as theirs was with abundant spring,
Without the any rent to pay for land
Or taxes either to a church or king —
Yet still I say I can't quite understand
How they could live for ever unfatiguing,
Two married folks to naught to do but sing.

(E)

545 L. M. W. GASKELL.*

Where are the dead?

(F)

1 WHERE are the dead, the pious dead,
Who walked this world in christian faith?
Their toils are done, their crown is won,
And they are blessed, the Spirit saith.

2 They feel no more temptation's power,
They've found the land where trials cease;
Where every tear is wiped away,
And all is sweet and holy peace.

3 They're gone beyond the reach of pain,
And all that speaks of dark decay;
There beams in glory on their souls
The light of an immortal day.

4 Why sadly mourn we, then, for those
Whose lives had made them meet for death?
Their toils are done, their crown is won,
And they are blessed, the Spirit saith.

Sharps Collection (example E) and some pages found behind the bookshelves in his study (illustrated in my *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Portrait in Letters*).

Moreover, the text of this particular hymn is printed as his in his colleague John Relly Beard's Unitarian hymns, *A Collection of Hymns for Private and Public Worship*, 1837 (example F), something I had not realised when Julian Savory gave his splendid performance of music associated with Elizabeth Gaskell at the 1997 AGM.

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*I owe thanks to Helen Burton, Christine Lingard and Geoffrey Sharps for their help with this note.

Charades and Amateur Theatricals
by Barbara Brill

As a devotee of Robert Louis Stevenson as well as of Elizabeth Gaskell, I am always delighted when I come across some link between them. I have already written in a previous Newsletter about Stevenson's connections with Fleeming Jenkin, the young student engineer whom she befriended and his wife, the former Annie Austin, friend of Meta. I was pleased to read more details of the Jenkins in a book I have recently acquired "I Remember Robert Louis Stevenson" edited by Rosaline Masson, published in 1922. On reading it, I was struck by the many complimentary and affectionate references to the Jenkins.

When Fleeming was made Professor of Engineering at Edinburgh University, where Robert Louis Stevenson was his student, he and his wife moved to Stuart Street, Edinburgh, a house that became the pivot of the city's literary life and bore many resemblances to the Gaskells' home at Plymouth Grove. It was John Chapple's reference in his recent book, "Early Years", to Elizabeth as a contriver of a charade (see page 413) that sent me back to her letter No.92 (in the Collected Letters) in which she described in some detail the charade "got up" by Anne Austin and enacted "in the outer lobby, under the gas; and we stood on the staircase in the inner hall and the folding doors were thrown open."

In the contribution to Rosaline Masson's book, by Sir William Hardman, he writes at length about the excellent amateur theatricals "got up" at the Jenkins' home. These were on a more ambitious scale than the Plymouth Grove charades, as a fully rehearsed play was performed annually and three performances given, one for friends and two for servants and dependants, the dramas ranging from Greek to Shakespearean plays. There was a boys' playroom (they had three sons) leading off the dining room that formed the stage and the dining room the auditorium.

"The central figure" wrote Hardman, "of the plays was

Mrs Fleeming, whose genius was their motive and justification ... Had she sought fame on the professional stage she would have found it given without stint. She was delightful in comedy but in the single cumulative tragedy of the Greeks she was at her greatest." Fleeming's contribution to the success of the plays was as stage manager and costume designer. He studied sculptures in the British Museum to perfect the tailoring and folding, experimenting with sheets and shawls.

Stevenson sometimes took part but he had no skills as an actor, though he sparkled in the after-dinner speeches at the meal held at the end of the show. Annie's mother, Mrs Alfred Austin, also took part and "her refined dignity showed to advantage in elderly parts". Another performer was the poet, W E Henley, at whose wedding in 1878 Annie Jenkin was one of the witnesses.

Fleeming was interested in the development of the phonograph and had an instrument made, using it to record his lecturettes. Mrs Jenkin spoke into it when the machine was used to raise money at bazaars. If only those recordings had been kept Mrs Jenkin's voice could have been heard long after her death in 1921 at the age of 83. "She maintained her love of truth, beauty and goodness", qualities that perhaps were instilled into her by her friendship with the Gaskells. Fleeming was spoken of as "the best talker in London but he was content to suppress himself and be a foil to his wife". How proud Mrs Gaskell would have been to have heard these tributes paid to her protegées by Robert Louis Stevenson.

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Trip to Hay-on-Wye (book town), Ludlow and Hereford
15th-16th June
and
Paris Trip
17th-22nd September

These are almost fully booked.
Please send SAE if you need information.

Book Notes
by Christine Lingard

"Some appointed work to do": women and vocation in the fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell, by Robin B Colby. Contribution to Women's studies. Number 150, Greenwood Press, £30.95.
Defends Elizabeth Gaskell against a century of under estimation. It claims that her works are extremely radical because they challenge the widely held assumptions about the nature of women. The work consists of chapters on her contemporaries, *Mary Barton, North and South, Cranford, Wives and Daughters* and more unusually *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The book provides a detailed analysis of previous critics and has a copious bibliography.

Writing and Victorianism, edited by J B Bullen. Longman, £17.99.
A general collection of essays on Victorian literature which touches briefly on an unusual aspect of Gaskell's *Mary Barton* in the essay *The opium eater as criminal in Victorian writing* by Julia North.

The Brontës: a life in letters, edited by Juliet Barker. Viking, £20.
Dr Barker follows up her acclaimed but provocative biography of the Brontës with this book which allows the story to be told by participants themselves by means of their letters and other contemporary writings, though the editor's hand is still in evidence as this is only a selection and far from comprehensive. Most of the letters but by no means all were written by Charlotte. There are only a few by Elizabeth Gaskell plus some extracts from the *Life*. What is most useful is the number of letters addressed to her, which are collected for the first time, including letters from Charlotte's friend Mary Taylor.

Membership Renewals

This is the first year we have collected Membership Renewals in January. In the past the due date was the day of the AGM, but with the growth of membership a much smaller proportion of members are now able to attend Knutsford events. We hope that members are finding the new arrangements convenient.

If you have not already paid your subscription for 1998, you may send a cheque, payable to GASKELL SOCIETY to our Membership Secretary, Mrs I Wiltshire, 21 Crescent Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9NB (e-mail: wiltshires@aol.com). Current rates for the UK are as follows: Individual £8.00; Joint £12.00; Institution £12.00. You will in due course receive a revised membership card and receipt. Overseas Members who do not have their own Membership Secretary may follow the above procedure. The rates are £12.00 for all overseas members.

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The London and South East Group meeting dates for 1998 are 25th April and 12th September, with the Annual Meeting on 7th November. Further information from Hon Secretary - Mr Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727).

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US Hon Secretary - Mrs Lucy Magruder, Box 5424, Fullerton CA 92838 (e-mail: lmagruder@aol.com). Annual subscription $20.

Gaskell Home Page on Internet -
http://lang.nagoya-ac.jp/~matsuoka/Gaskell.html

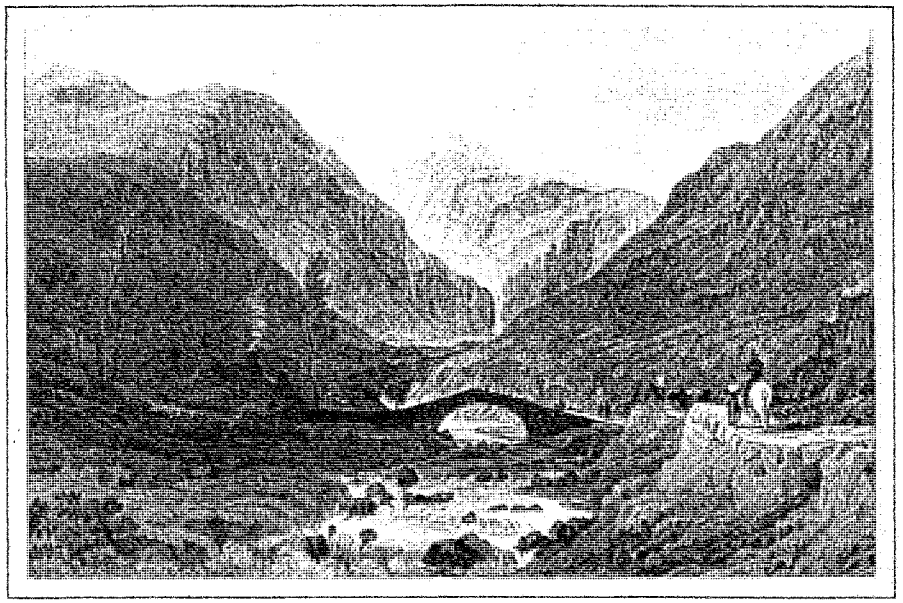
Joan Leach's e-mail - JoanLeach@aol.com

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1998 NO. 26

EDITOR'S LETTER

Firstly we must congratulate our Joint Vice-President, Jenny Uglow on being made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and our other Vice-President, Professor Francesco Marroni on being made Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Languages of Pescara University. We hope that our Journal and Newsletters make you feel in touch with our various activities, even if you cannot attend them in person.

Most recently we enjoyed a visit to the Brontë birthplace at Thornton, and Haworth, of which our member Bernard Mayston tells you more in this issue.

Some of us went book-hunting at Hay-on-Wye, enjoying the lovely scenery in Shropshire and being entertained to lunch by member Veronica Thackeray in her charming thatched cottage at Hopton Castle. After an overnight stop in historic Hereford we paused at Clyro to pay tribute to Rev. Francis Kilvert , the lyric diarist.

Members in the North West gather for regular meetings, and there is a report of our monthly meetings in this issue; our London and South East group enjoys four or five meetings a year. We would be pleased to see you at any of these meetings and, of course, our AGM on 10th October, when we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Mary Barton.*

Please make a note in your diary of the dates for our LONDON CONFERENCE, 24th-27th July 1999. The theme will be *Victorian Publishers and Publishing.* See the enclosed form for more details.

Wish us well as some fifty of us make our way to Paris in September to follow Gaskell footsteps, so you may look forward to hearing about this. Au revoir!

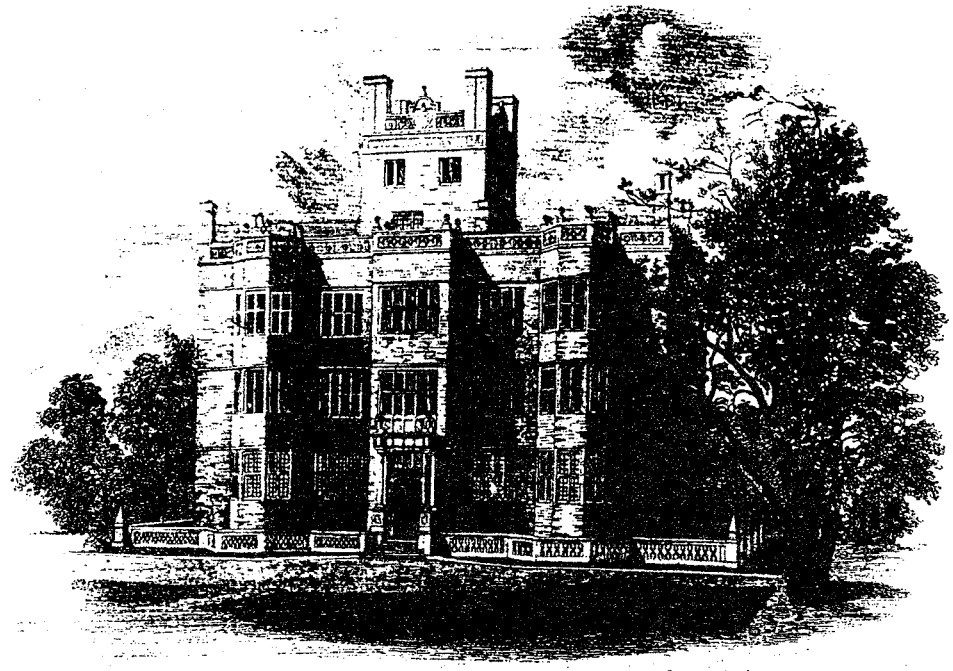
GAWTHORPE HALL AND THE GASKELL CONNECTION

by Heather Sharps

Gaskell Society members may have visited Gawthorpe Hall between April and October 1997 for its Exhibition – 'A Novel Acquaintance' – and/or for the associated lectures which linked Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth and Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell, it being through the Kay-Shuttleworths that Miss Brontë met her future biographer. Prominent members of the Brontë and the Gaskell Societies gave well-received talks on aspects of these relationships: in 'batting order' came Mr Dudley Green, Professor John Chapple, Mrs Heather Sharps, Dr Robert Barnard and Mrs Joan Leach. During the Exhibition guided tours occurred every Sunday, supplemented by improvisations in which 'Charlotte Brontë', 'Mrs Gaskell', and the Kay-Shuttleworths' took part. Those who enjoyed it will also recall the Society's successful September 1996 excursion to Gawthorpe.

For putting together the Exhibition at the Hall, thanks are due to Mr David Chadwick (Curator), to Mr Martin Dowland-Robinson (who assisted him), to Mr Mike Hill (Director, Brontë Parsonage Museum), and to his staff, Ms Kathryn White (Librarian) and Mrs Ann Dinsdale (Assistant Librarian). General advice came from representatives of the Brontë and the Gaskell Societies, especially from Mrs Audrey Hall and also from myself. On display were a picture (owned by Lord Shuttleworth) of – as she became – Lady Janet Kay-Shuttleworth and the (National Portrait Gallery) drawings by George Richmond of Charlotte Brontë and of Elizabeth Gaskell; other items included (from the Brontë Parsonage) Charlotte's hats, shoes, gloves and dresses; and (from the Manchester Museum) Elizabeth Gaskell's escritoire; and (from my own collection) books by Sir James, notably his novels, Scarsdale and Ribblesdale.

Gawthorpe Hall, with its pleasant grounds and walks, was in 1970 given by the fourth Lord Shuttleworth – whose son, the present Baron, opened the Exhibition – to the National Trust, with a



GAWTHORPE HALL.

long-term maintenance lease to Lancashire County Council. This recently-renovated fine Elizabethan building, which had undergone a major restoration by Sir James Barry in the mid-nineteenth century, has attracted many visitors from home and abroad; it is a powerful reminder of the wealthy and aristocratic environment into which Dr James Kay entered on his marriage to the heiress, Janet Shuttleworth (whose surname was then added to his), and from which he sought to influence the educational, social and political issues of his age. Gaskell and Brontë enthusiasts can see the drawing room where the Kay-Shuttleworths and Charlotte could engage in literary discussion and view other parts (like the newly-renovated kitchen) of a stately home still strongly evocative of

Victorian times and of the lifestyles depicted in Jane Eyre and in various Gaskell fiction.

An impressive exhibition room contains the needlework of, and that collected by, the Hon Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth (a grand-daughter of Sir James), a distinguished and altruistic lady who realised the therapeutic benefits for all classes to be gained from such an art. Displayed, too, are examples of handicrafts from all parts of the world. Surely Elizabeth Gaskell would have admired her independence of mind and spirit as well as her altruism. In addition, one finds a welcome restaurant and shop, situated in the old stable-block. Here may be purchased such publications as the current National Trust Guide (1996), Michael Conroy's updated Backcloth to Gawthorpe (1996) and booklets on Rachel and on her cousin, Angela – women of whom their grandfather would have been proud and of whom Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell would have approved.

For those unfamiliar with the locality, a visit to the Hall will be an event to remember: the house and grounds are open every afternoon (except Mondays and Fridays) 1 pm to 5 pm, from April until the end of September. Gawthorpe, moreover, provides a cultural centre for the area, with its exhibitions of paintings, its musical concerts and its performances of plays (especially Shakespeare's).

* * * * * * * *

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please do not forget that the renewal date for subscriptions is now the first working day of the New Year and NOT 1st SEPTEMBER. At £8.00 per annum or £12.00 ($20) for overseas and corporate members, this is excellent value.
Reminders will be sent out in early December by our membership secretary.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BRONTES

by Bernard C Mayston

I should be interested to know whether Mrs Gaskell ever visited Thornton. It is certainly mentioned in her Life of Charlotte Brontë, where she writes: "altogether not so pleasant a place as Hartshead" ... (and adds) ... "In 1815 he (Patrick Brontë removed to Thornton near Bradford, where his younger children, Charlotte, Patrick, Branwell, Emily, Jane and Anne were born."

In 1817, Patrick wrote in a terrier[1] a description of their birthplace "... this chapel is endowed with a parsonage, consisting of six rooms, three on the ground floor, and three bedchambers, having a stand for a cow and a horse at one end, and a cottage at the other ..."

By 1820 he was the perpetual curate of Howarth.

Barbara Whitehead and I went together to see the Brontë birthplace at Thornton for the first time on Tuesday 29 April 1997 and by Thursday 1 May I was making all sorts of notes about it which I have kept in a file opened on Friday 9 May 1997. I hope the file grows and grows to tell a happy story.

Thornton is a West Yorkshire village perched on a hillside amidst attractive countryside yet but four miles from the centre of Bradford. I had never been to Bradford, so we drove in a huge complicated circle from York to get to our destination. I did not get my first sight of Bradford until we departed Thornton in possession of a detailed route mapped out for us by an obliging butcher from whom we had purchased some sausages. I had thought to ask him what was wrong with Thornton. I wondered whether there was something awful about the house, but fearing we might be warned off, I did not say much.

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[1] 'terrier' is a document enumerating boundaries, acreage and the conditions of tenure

Anyway, I wrote after seeing the Brontë birthplace from outside that I could not live there myself but I would love to visit the area for a while. I did add that seeing the inside of the house might make a difference. I even wrote that I had some capital to invest so why not in this? National Savings Bonds are all very cosy and safe but where's the adventure?

Later, I was reading a book containing the poems of the Brontë sisters, one by Charlotte (Stanzas) I quite adored. However, it was a remark about Howarth that really got to me – the dreariness of it etc, the drabness that people sometimes feel in the countryside of North and West Yorkshire, but the utter joy that can be found in heather-clad moors when August arrives and the wondrous colours of late summer are beheld!

Could this be the key to the mystery? It is the contrast between joy and sorrow, the dread mix of it all that alarms and attracts us so! The Brontë story grabs at our heartstrings because of the sheer desperation of it: the flat gravestones, the persistent illnesses, the constant lack of money, the ultimate fear for Patrick that he may die and leave his poor weak children destitute. How does the spark of genius ignite? Ability often lies dormant. It can be argued that we all have it, if only something or someone would set us on fire! Yet it is in truth a golden commodity like the double rainbow that rarely adorns the sky and never in threes. Yet it did happen and it started in Market Street in Thornton.

My dear wife, Kate, had a spark of genius which was ignited by Elizabeth Gaskell about whom she knew so much. Kate had that rare quality of serious scholarship blended with humour. It is revealed in an entertaining talk that she gave to the Gaskell Society in 1991. They did not know that it was the only lecture that she ever gave to anyone, barring the several that she gave to me; and I deserved them all!

When I was asked to write an article for the Newsletter I felt quite flattered since I have never been asked to contribute to a literary magazine. Although determined to produce something, I have to confess to the egoistic sense it produced - I suppose a short of selfishness.

When we get on in years we start to analyse what we have done in life and it sometimes seems not to add up to much. Then, if we count our blessings, it turns out to be a great deal. I suppose I had two achievements in the work sense. One was remarkably easy and the other almost painfully hard. It took me less than a year to become a Sergeant RE (1945/46) and a quarter of a century to become one of HM Inspectors of Taxes (1943/68). If the dates are puzzling I would explain that on leaving school, at sixteen, I started work in the Inland Revenue as a Temporary Clerk Grade III, was called up whilst the war was still on (3 April 1945), whereupon Hitler committed suicide. I was then trained to fight the Japanese who surrendered as I prepared to embark for the Pacific!

Instead I was sent to Egypt, where the most significant thing to happen, undoubtedly the most magical thing in my life, was that I met Kate, later to be my wife, at the Pyramids at Giza just outside Cairo. Believe it or not there was, that night, an eclipse of the moon. Some forty years later we became members of the Gaskell Society, following Kate's 'on location' research of Sylvia's Lovers and some correspondence and meetings with Joan Leach. Since, in the interim, I had, to Kate's delight, been transferred from Bromley in Kent to Middlesbrough in Cleveland, we were by then living in Danby on the North Yorkshire Moors not far from Whitby, the location of the Gaskell novel. We had visited Howarth several times staying once, on a wedding anniversary, at the Black Bull.

Kate was a very methodical person. She was a Sergeant in ATS Signals when 21 and later worked as a Secretary/PA to several successful professional men over the years. If the boss had died she could have done the work herself in half the time.

On our visits to Howarth Kate, as many people do, purchased books and postcards, using the latter as bookmarks in appropriate volumes. She often wrote C Mayston in a book and the date, and sometimes the place of purchase on a postcard. So it is hardly remarkable that I have five postcards purchased at Howarth and dated June 1978. Three are portraits of the Brontë sisters – Charlotte (by J M Thompson), Emily (by Branwell Brontë) and Anne (by Charlotte Brontë) – also two depicting the Brontë Country, perhaps best described as illustrated maps of the Brontë world. At the very centre is Thornton with a sketch of the house where all four of the famous Brontë children were born. I am pretty sure that we both thought of the map as an easy guide since I have recollections of going round some of the places and passing the house at Thronton, with its butcher's shop-front. It struck me that it would be fun to stay at the house for a week and visit all the Brontë sites depicted on the postcard. Well, wouldn't you like to?

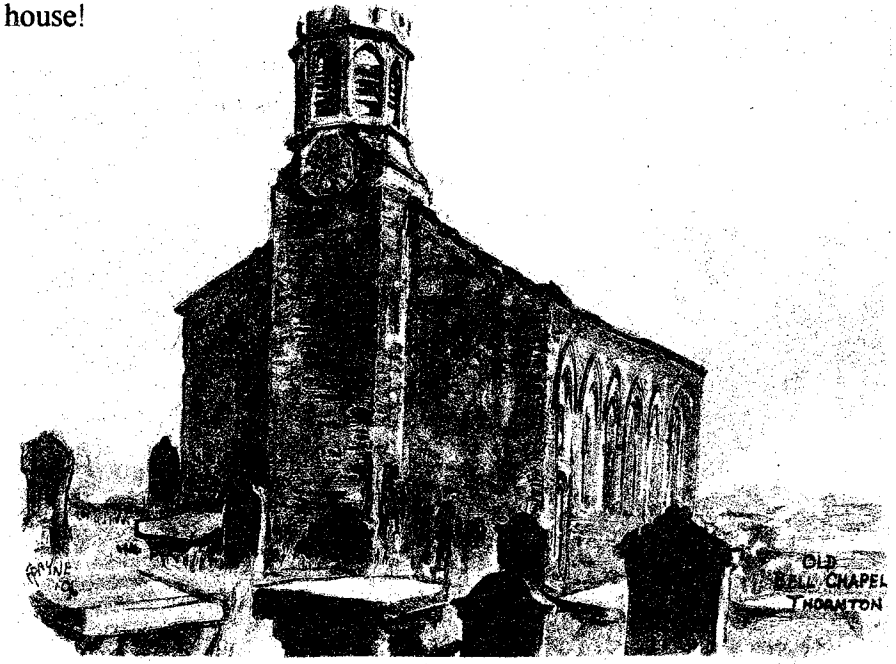
Kate died in April 1995 and I could hear her saying "Go for it!" when the opportunity of buying the Brontë birthplace was drawn to my attention by novelist Barbara Whitehead in 1997.

According to Elizabeth Gaskell, self-development is "unholy" if it is only selfish, but if we can "find out what we are sent into the world to do, and define it and make it clear to ourselves (that's the difficult part)", then it becomes a duty to "forget ourselves in our work".

Whatever am I getting at? Well, at a recent meeting of the Brontë Birthplace Trust with some invited guests Barbara Whitehead gave a little talk about our purchase of the Brontë birthplace. The Trust had tried hard (albeit in vain) to acquire this property after enlisting the aid of MPs (both National and European), Councillors, museums, libraries, foundations and even the National Lottery! Suddenly, because Barbara mentioned that without my help and encouragement her involvement would not have been possible, all eyes were turned toward me. All I could think to say was "'Tis a far better thing I do now than I have ever done!"

Perhaps it is true because by buying these properties we are preserving part of the national heritage. The danger of its being sold in two parts was that it might never be put together again as one house. It is our intention to get back much of the flavour of the Regency days when it was the birthplace of genius, and we are taking the necessary steps in Codicils to our Wills to ensure, as best we can, that our wishes are respected and it always remains as one house.

I started by posing the question as to whether Elizabeth Gaskell visited the parsonage at Thornton. I hope someone will tell me. Perhaps another question can be answered. When was Charlotte Brontë born? Gaskell says 21 April 1816, but this is not always the date given. In a copy of the diary kept by Elizabeth Firth (one of the ladies Patrick Brontë proposed to after the death of his wife) the date is given as Sunday 12 April 1816. I now think this is a misprint. But we do know WHERE she was born – here in Thornton at our house!



(All that remains now is the ornamental top of the tower standing in the old graveyard opposite the present church)

'CURIOUS, IF TRUE': LE PETIT POUCET AND TOM THUMB. A case of mistaken identity?

by Irene Wiltshire

The Gaskell Society Journal, volume 12, 1998, contains two articles on *Curious, If True* in Cousin Phillis and Other Tales, ed A Easson, World's Classics, Oxford, 1981. By chance, I have recently studied this text in preparation for a lecture which I gave in Knutsford as part of the Society's 1997 to 1998 series of Literature and Lunch events. The explanatory notes on page 361 of Cousin Phillis and Other Tales include a reference to Iona and Peter Opie, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, 1974.

This book gives interesting and detailed background to the tales and characters represented in *Curious, If True*. One of the most interesting facts to emerge is the clear distinction between *Le petit Poucet and Tom Thumb. Le petit Poucet* was translated from Perrault's text into English by Robert Samber appearing as *Little Poucet* in 1729. The tale became known as *Little Thumb* in 1764. It was not until the 19th century that it was known as *Hop o' My Thumb*, a title provided by William Godwin. There is no evidence in *The Classic Fairy Tales* to suggest that *Le petit Poucet* ever acquired the title of *Tom Thumb*. In fact Opie states that Little Poucet's story "is not really analogous to that of the British Tom Thumb".

The tale of *Tom Thumb* has quite different origins. Opie states that *Tom Thumb* was first recorded in print in 1621; by a Londoner of the name Richard Johnson. Although *Tom Thumb* has European counterparts, such as *Hop o' My Thumb*, the cultural background and adventures of the two characters are quite different. Tom Thumb lived in the age of King Arthur and was conceived after his mother, at that time barren, had visited Merlin. His very small size led him into a series of adventures that included being swallowed by a red cow, a raven, an ogre and a fish. When the fish was presented to King Arthur's table Tom Thumb was rescued and became a courtier.

The Little Poucet is the youngest of seven children in a poor woodcutter's family. His greater wisdom compensates for his smallness of size. After the children are abandoned by their parents, he finds a variety of means to save his life and the lives of his brothers. After being threatened and pursued by an ogre, Poucet steals the magic "boots of seven leagues" from the sleeping giant.

In his article in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Dr Stiles says, "Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Puss in Boots, Tom Thumb and Beauty and the Beast are there, to name but a few". On page 18 he goes on to say, "So many of the characters in this story are troubled by and unable to escape from the events of their former lives as depicted in the respective fairytales from which they have been taken". Poucet is undoubtedly haunted by events in his former life; he continually touches his throat that was threatened by the ogre and retraces his footsteps as he did when trying to return to the family home in the original tale. But these are the experiences of Poucet and not Tom Thumb.

Dr Kirkland, in her article on page 21 in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, quotes Coral Lansbury who wrote in 1981, referring to *Curious, If True*, that 'a figure of fairy tale himself, dreams of, or perhaps actually attends, a ball where Blue Beard matches wit with Tom Thumb'. But quoting directly from *Curious, If True*, Dr Kirkland writes, on page 22 of *The Gaskell Society Journal*, "Near her is a tiny fellow, 'the least little man I had ever seen' with an elfin look and much-mended boots whom others call Monsieur Poucet". In her following paragraph, top of page 23 in *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Dr Kirkland states that Cinderella, Tom Thumb, and Puss in Boots are the English translations of *Cendrillon, Petit Poucet* and *Le Chat Botte*. In *The Classic Fairy Tales*, however, Poucet is not Tom Thumb and in Gaskell's *Curious, If True* the little man, or dwarf, is referred to as Poucet.

In the third paragraph of Dr Kirkland's article, on page 21 of *The Gaskell Society Journal*, quoting from Patsy Stoneman (1987) she

reminds us that Elizabeth Gaskell was familiar with all the standard fairy tale collections. Would "Mistress Gaskell" herself have been aware of the distinction between Tom Thumb and Monsieur Poucet? Given her knowledge of fairy tales, and her customary attention to detail, it is almost certain that she would have been acquainted with the personal history of each of these two characters. Furthermore, it is clear that she chose Poucet and not Tom Thumb for *Curious, If True*.

NOTES

1. *Calvin's Encounter with Cinderella: vital antinomies in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Curious, If True' (1860)* PETER STILES, in The Gaskell Society Journal, Volume 12, 1998.

2. *'Curious, If True': suggesting more* JANICE KIRKLAND, in The Gaskell Society Journal, Volume 12, 1998.

3. *Curious, If True* in Cousin Phillis and Other Tales, ed A Easson, World's Classics, Oxford 1981.

4. *The Classic Fairy Tales*, Iona and Peter Opie, O.U.P., 1974 and 1992.

* * * * * * * * *

THE GASKELL SOCIETY OF JAPAN

The AGM of the Gaskell Society of Japan is on 10th October, the same date as ours in the UK. They are celebrating their 10th anniversary.
Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno will read a paper on Mary Barton, with Mitsuhara Matsuoka being moderator.
Mitsu is our technical expert, now busy putting Gaskell on to CD-ROM.

BOOK NOTES

by Christine Lingard

Victorian Renovations of the Novel: narrative annexes and the boundaries of representation, by Suzanne Keen, Department of English, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia. Cambridge University Press. £35
In this extensive study of the social problem novel dealing principally with among others Brontë, Disraeli and Kingsley, there is surprisingly only occasional references to Gaskell, but it does offer a detailed study of the contemporary literary scene and its treatment of various social issues which concerned Gaskell. It deals in particular with contemporary reaction to these works.

The Life of Charlotte Brontë in the Penguin edition continues this publisher's programme of updating its list of Gaskell editions as noted by Shirley Foster in the 1997 volume of *The Gaskell Society Journal*. It is now edited by Elisabeth Jay and replaces the Alan Shelston edition of 1975. In her substantial introduction she makes references to recent biographies by Jenny Uglow, Rebecca Fraser and Lyndall Gordon, and challenges Juliet Barker's understanding of the nature of myth in her controversial biography of Charlotte Brontë.
The text is that of the first edition with a few typographical corrections. Changes made for the third edition are included in an appendix.

Some other books to look out for:
Dissembling fictions: Elizabeth Gaskell and the Victorian Social Text by Deirdre D'Albertis. Macmillan, £30.
Metaphors of Change in the Language of Nineteenth Century Fiction by Megan Perigoe Stitt. Scott, £35.

And of historical interest, two biographies of Gaskell friends and contemporaries:
Reverend William Turner: Dissent and Reform in Georgian Newcastle-upon-Tune by Stephen Harbottle. Northern Universities Press, £20. (Biography of the Unitarian minister of Newcastle, the close family friend who is described in Ruth)
Barbara Bodichon: a Life by Pamela Hirsch. Chatto, £20. (The nineteenth century feminist and friend of George Eliot whom Gaskell admired but didn't like)

FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF GASKELL

by Christine Lingard

Two small volumes in the Manchester Central Library show her interest in things French and help put us in the mood for our trip to Paris.

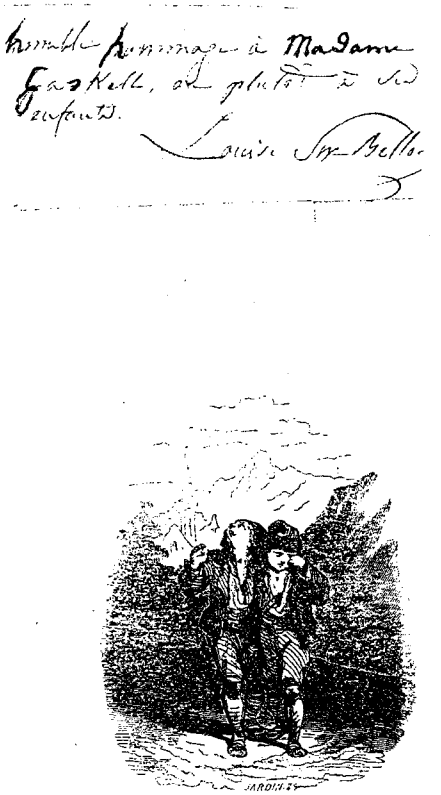
First a tiny volume entitled *Pierre et Pierrette* by Louise Swanton Belloc. The volume is inscribed "homble homage a Madame Gaskell, ou plutot a ses enfants, Louise Sw Belloc".

Louise was an Irish woman married to a French man, and a friend of Maria Edgeworth who had read Mary Barton but was unaware that the author was the cousin of her friend Mary Holland, and encouraged Louise to translate it into French. They evidently struck up a friendship and she presented one of her own books to Mrs Gaskell.

It also includes a French translation of the poem *Casa Bianca*!
Much later Louise's son was to marry another friend of Mrs Gaskell, the feminist Bessie Rayner Parkes. Her son was Hilaire Belloc.
A second item is Meta's Christmas present to her mother for 1849 a copy in translation of George Sand's *Little Fadette.*[1]

Editor's Note: In November 1855 Mme Mohl wrote to Elizabeth Gaskell:
'I saw Mme Belloc two days ago. She has finished 'Cranford' and is correcting proofs. I wonder whether you will be able to judge which of your works will suit the French. I should think well. They are a queer people and as unlike the English as if they lived at the Antipodes.'[1]
Louise Swanton Belloc also translated Maria Edgeworth's works, many of Dickens' novels and *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

[1] *Letters and Recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl* edited by M C M Simpson 1887



PIERRE
ET
PIERRETTE,
PAR
LOUISE SW. BELLOC,
Ouvrage auquel l'Académie a décerné un prix Montyon.
QUATRIÈME ÉDITION.
Paris,
JULES RENOUARD ET COMPe.
Editeurs de l'Éducation familière, des Jeunes Industriels, etc.
RUE DE TOURNON, 6.
1849

CROSS STREET CHAPEL

by Joan Leach

Grim and grey Manchester certainly was on the night of Friday 6th March, though not smoky, for a steady rain fell as I made my way to Cross Street Chapel to attend the re-dedication ceremony. However all was bright inside.

Janet Allan and myself, representing the Society, were honoured to be among the invited guests and representatives of other denominations: including the Bishop and Dean of Manchester; the Rev Clifford Reed, President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches; Dr David Wykes, tutor at Harris Manchester College, Oxford and the Rev Leonard Smith, principal of the Unitarian College. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Manchester were resplendent in their regalia, and the representative ministers in their various clerical robes added dignity and a fine sense of occasion. I recalled Elizabeth Gaskell's meeting and opinion on the Bishop of her day and felt I was representing her, too, at this occasion, though I would not be admitted to the present Bishop's study to judge him by his pictures! (GL.70)

The Chapel's minister, the Rev John Midgley, welcomed the congregation. Dr Geoffrey Head, Chairman of the Trustees, accepting a symbolic presentation key, spoke of the historic traditions of this city centre chapel, damaged by a Jacobite attack in 1745 and by the 1940 blitz, rebuilt in 1959, and now this latest rebuilding linked the past with the future.

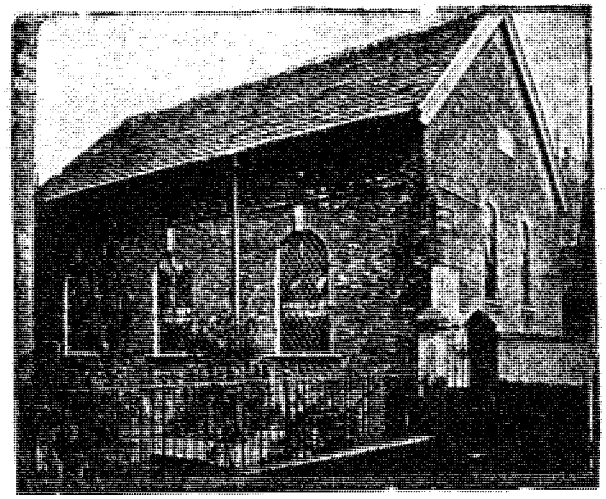
The Rev. Arthur Long in his address reminded the congregation of the celebrated institutions which owed their origin to Cross Street Chapel: Manchester College, Oxford, Unitarian College, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and The Manchester Guardian. He spoke of the progress of the congregation through five homes, quoting from Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Chambered Nautilus:*

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll
Leave thy low vaulted past!
Let each new Temple, nobler than the last
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thy outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

The Chapel treasures its links with the Gaskells and has included a Gaskell Room in its design, incorporated an earlier memorial in the walls of the vestibule and a plaque on the outside wall.

The whole building is light and airy, with rooms for various uses on two floors. Rents from the offices on floors above will provide an income for the Chapel.

The circular Chapel, with its light woodwork, has excellent acoustics and an air of peace. By ringing the bell outside, visitors will be welcomed during usual office hours to be shown the building or just to enjoy the oasis of calm. There is a half-hour service on Wednesdays at 1 pm.



I thought I had discovered an unknown photograph of a previous Cross Street Chapel, but Geoffrey Head tells me it is almost certainly that of Chapel Road, Sale, which was previously known as Cross Street. He adds: 'The old chapel was built in 1739 and was the place of worship for the Presbyterian/Unitarian congregation until 1876, when a splendid new church was built by Rev J Relly Beard, the friend and contemporary of William Gaskell'; when the former died in the late 1870's his funeral address was given by William Gaskell.

Geoffrey Head adds that he saw the Chapel in the 1960's just before demolition. The site is occupied by three town houses, with the young saplings in this photograph now grown to massive, mature trees.

CIRCULAR NOTES

by Muriel Smith

I came upon the phrase "circular notes" in the new 1997 Mandolin edition by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard of The Letters of Mrs Gaskell. The definition in the OED reads: "a letter of credit addressed by a banker (eg in London) to several bankers in other countries in favour of a certain person named therein, usually a person on a tour". The supporting quotation, dated 1850, is from Thackeray's Kicklebury's: "My lady K. walked over to the money changers, where she changed a couple of circular notes".

In her letter to her publisher George Smith of 4 February 1857 (No.338) Mrs Gaskell says that she is going to Rome and asks him for an advance payment on The Life of Charlotte Brontë: "It would be a very great convenience if you would kindly let me have 250£. It would also be an additional favour if you would obtain 150£ of this for me in Coutts Circular Notes ... The notes I believe can be had of 5£ each, and if so, I should be glad to have them all of that amount." Then on 8 February (No.341) she tells him that Mr Gaskell thinks he can get Circular Notes through his own bank, and next day (No.343) that he is not to worry about the Circular Notes, which can definitely be had locally through Mr Gaskell's bankers, Sir Benjamin Heywood & Co of Manchester.

The OED definition gives the impression of a letter carefully written out by the originating bankers for an individual, but this is clearly misleading. Both Thackeray and Mrs Gaskell made it plain that you obtained a bunch of printed forms in the general style of modern travellers' cheques, and, in proportion to the number of travellers, they would seem to have been in equally general use.

* * * * * * * * *

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES AGM

by Kenn Oultram

Your committee members, Doreen Pleydell and Christine Lingard, represented the Society at the AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies in Birmingham on 25th April. Representatives of twenty-three of the seventy-seven affiliated literary societies attended.

There was much discussion on the subject of Public Liability Insurance and the ALS legal adviser, David Leigh-Hunt, said Norwich Union had been approached and their block policy scheme for an overall premium of £2,600 could be managed by Medical Money Management (Manchester), thus releasing the ALS from administrative responsibilities. Working on the assumption that every society participated, the resultant premium would be approximately £35 per annum. The feeling of the meeting was that the scheme should be accepted in principle and that an Extraordinary General Meeting could confirm the arrangement in the near future.

The retiring secretary, Bill Adams (George Eliot Fellowship), became one of five new members to serve on the committee, the others being Linda Hart (Friends of the Dymock Poets), Margaret McCarthy (Edith Nesbit Society), Stephen Loftus (Brontë Society) and Ms M Ayres (Francis Brett Young Society). The new secretary of the ALS is Rosemary Culley, 22 Belmont Grove, Havant, Hampshire PO9 3PU (Tel: 01705 475855) who is membership secretary of the Jane Austen Society.

It is likely that the 1999 AGM will present speakers from the Thomas Lovell Beddoes and the H G Wells Societies, and the fixed date is Saturday 24th April.

Kenn Oultram, who introduced speakers from the Daresbury and London-based Lewis Carroll Societies in this centenary year of Carroll's death, again produced and edited the ALS fanzine 'Chapter One' and this was circulated at the above meeting. In it he carries news of a new literary society to Adrian Bell (1901-1980), the father of the Tatton Member of Parliament Mr Martin Bell, who commented: "After the last war my father received letters from soldiers who had read his books while waiting for battle to say they had been comforted by his word-pictures of a world at peace. I have addressed the Suffolk Book League about his work and was

astonished to see an audience of more than two hundred!". The MP did, of course, address members of our own Society in Knutsford on 17th January. Finally: Congratulations to our member, Olive Ambrose, whose dedicated work for the Romany Society has resulted in her becoming the Society's first Member of the Year. She received a sculpture of the head of Comma, the horse which faithfully drew the caravan of the celebrated nature writer and broadcaster ... and so called because it rarely came to a full stop!

* * * * * * *

THE GASKELL SOCIETY'S MONTHLY MEETINGS

For those members living within a travelling distance of Knutsford (we have people travelling from as far as Clitheroe and Liverpool) we recommend our monthly Monday meetings held between October and May inclusive. Attendances are regularly between thirty and forty people, all of whom have a desire to extend their knowledge of Gaskell writings. At these meetings friendships are strengthened and newcomers are warmly welcomed.

After a very pleasant lunch we are treated by Irene Wiltshire MA to a detailed and well-researched paper which raises points for discussion. This season we have studied the World's Classics edition of Cousin Phillis and Other Tales. We have enjoyed being led by Irene in the discussion of themes, characters, narrative style and the use of language and setting in such a diverse selection of short stories.

Next season we will be looking at The Letters of Mrs Gaskell edited by J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard. Join us if you can for what should be quite a challenging and wide ranging theme.

Irene Hassall (Bolton)
Hilda Holmes (Hazel Grove)

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST GROUP

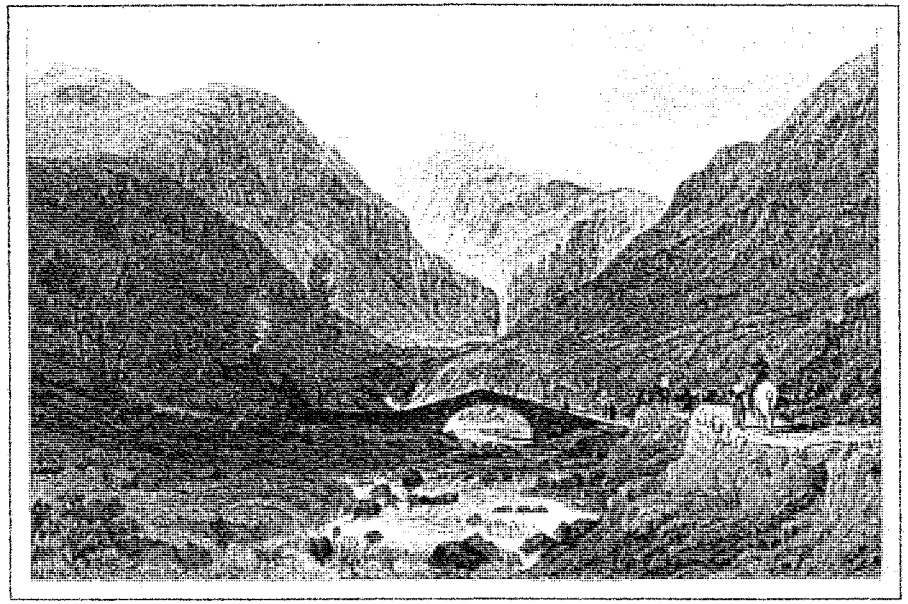
Members living within reach of London continue to meet four times each year in central London. So far during 1998, two meetings have been held at the Francis Holland School, near Sloane Square, where Jane Wilson was previously deputy head. At the first Howard F Gregg spoke about 'Lois the Witch' and at the second Siv Jansson spoke on 'Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot: Re-evaluating the Victorian Mother'.

Professor Andrew Sanders will address the next meeting which is to be held on Saturday, 12th September, in room 10 at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ commencing at 2 pm. His subject is "Gaskell's Serials – Working with Dickens". Friends House is immediately opposite Euston Station. Please enter through the garden at the side of the building.

The final meeting for 1998 will be held at 2 pm on Saturday, 7th November, at the Francis Holland School with Muriel Easter and Alice Reddihough as speakers on the subject "Writing the Life of a Friend: Mrs Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë.

All are welcome and further details may be obtained from Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (tel: 0181 874 7727).

The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1999 **NO. 27**

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

Editor's Letter

We send you all best wishes for 1999. We hope you will enjoy our meetings and publications. In this Newsletter we share with you our French experiences and member, Dr Andrew Sanders, writes of his visit to Japan where he enjoyed meeting our Japanese members; our AGM in Knutsford took place on the same day, 10th October.

We look forward to our London Conference in July and send you further details on a separate sheet. A weekend in the Lake District will soon be on offer.

Our trips to Heidelberg and Paris have been much enjoyed, so we are thinking about the possibility of Rome in 2000. The Gaskells were there in Easter week, but that would be too hectic for us, nor could we emulate them in a tour including Siena, Pisa, Florence and Venice! Our members are very good company travelling together and at meetings. Here in Knutsford our monthly meetings go from strength to strength and the South East/London group have an interesting programme planned, and now we plan to form a South West Branch which Rosemary Marshall reports on in this issue.

Professor John Chapple, our Chairman, has been appointed Honorary Professor of English Literature at Manchester University; meanwhile, with Alan Shelston, the work continues on the unpublished Gaskell letters.

I understand that the Millennium Dome will not devote any space to Literature, so Knutsford Literary Festival will have to fill that gap!

Thank you to those who have enrolled as Friends.

Joan Leach

Gawthorpe Hall Exhibition (Brontë-Gaskell-Kay-Shuttleworth)

Appreciative comments continue concerning the 1997 Exhibition and related events, which I reported in Newsletter No.26. However, apologies are due to Mr Martin Dowland-Robinson for my not having sufficiently stressed his major contribution to the success of the undertaking. He tells me that it is hoped the drawing room will stay looking as it was when Charlotte Brontë visited the Kay-Shuttleworths, with an indication that she graced it with her presence.

Heather Sharps

Elizabeth Gaskell à Paris

by Peter Skrine

Elizabeth Gaskell went to France nine times, and seven of these trips involved a visit to Paris. The first of her visits was to prove of crucial importance. Accompanied by her husband, William, and her eldest daughter, Meta, she spent the last week of May 1853 in the French capital. On this first visit she stayed with relatives of her Manchester German friends, the Salis-Schwabes, and during it she made the acquaintance of Mme Mohl. It was to prove a lasting friendship and it gave her an entrée into French intellectual and literary society unparalleled amongst her mid-Victorian literary contemporaries. On 17 May 1853 Mary Mohl described her impressions of Elizabeth in a letter to Mrs Reid, who had founded Bedford College in 1849:

> I am so fond of her that I invited her to come and stay [...] To my taste she is the most agreeable literary lady I have yet seen. She has a great quantum of good sound common sense and discrimination – a great addition to talent, and by no means a necessary accompaniment —and no vanity. She was staying with Mrs Schwabe, who had the measles and could show her absolutely nothing, which was an absolute piece of good fortune to me, as it made me see so much of her.

Within half a year she was back in Paris. In January 1854 she spent two weeks there with her daughter Marianne, again staying with the Schwabes. Two years later, she was back again for her third visit: she spent the period from 12 February to 3 April 1955 in Paris, staying this time at Mme Mohl's. She made another brief stop there in 1857 on her way to and from Italy, and did so again on her way back from Heidelberg in 1858.

In May 1862 she spent one week in Paris with Meta and her friend, Isabel Thompson, during which they visited St Germain, prior to her fact-finding expedition lasting ten days to Brittany and Normandy via Chartres. This was in effect a pilgrimage to Les Rochers, the country home of Mme de Sévigné, on whom she was gathering material with a view to writing a book, and to her town-house in nearby Vitré, which had been turned into an hotel. She returned to England on 3 June via Le Havre.

A longer stay in Paris took place in 1862, when she spent much of February and March (five weeks in all) in Paris on the way to Italy with her daughters Florence and Meta, and stopped there again on the way back. This time, too, she stayed 'chez Mme Mohl'. It was after this visit that she wrote and published her principal work on France: 'French Life' appeared anonymously in Fraser's Magazine in April-June 1864.

In 1865 she was back in Paris again, and staying again with her friend, Mme Mohl. Lasting from 12 March to 20 April, it was the longest of all her visits. Six months later she was dead. The sad news was broken to Mme Mohl, who wrote to a friend:

> I am sure you will feel for me when I tell you that I have lost my dear Mrs Gaskell, the best friend I had in England, perhaps anywhere. I learnt it this morning from her poor daughter. She seemed perfectly well, and was talking, when her head suddenly lowered, and life fled. It must have been heart complaint. To say what I have lost would be impossible. My spirits are so low that, as you are so kind as to speak of my nieces' visit to Versailles, I will profit by your kind memory to send them on Friday, if the weather is good. I don't say fine; that may not be expected. I am glad to send them somewhere without me; I had promised to take them out to-night; but I could not. I *can* take them to the Flute Enchantée Thursday, as I need not speak there; and I had taken the places, and can't bear to disappoint them. I had rather sit and mope than anything; but it's hard upon them [...] and youth has as good a right to pleasure as childhood has to play.
> Oh, dear! My heart feels like a lump of lead in me. If you had known what a heart *she* had! But no one did.

Elizabeth was able to enjoy Paris and make the most of her stays there thanks to her French. In this respect her education at Avonbank had served her well. It was very good (and a good deal better than her German), as can be seen from a letter she wrote in March 1854 to a French writer she had met at Mme Mohl's earlier that year. His name was Emil Souvestre, and he was the author of *Le Pasteur*, the play on which Verdi's recently 'rediscovered' opera, *Stiffelio* (1850), is based. Anyone who knows the opera will immediately sense why Elizabeth could relate to Souvestre and write a letter of recommendation to him on behalf of a literary friend:

Dear Sir,
As I know you can not read English, and as I am sorry to say I can not write good and grammatical French I send you a letter [...] to forewarn you of a liberty which I have taken, and to beg you to excuse it. Presuming upon the recollection of my agreeable conversation with you at the house of Madame Mohl, and remembering the kindness with which Madame Souvestre listened to my imperfect French [...] I have given a letter of introduction to a gentleman, an old friend of mine, who is going to Paris in a few days, and is most anxious to make your acquaintance. [..] I pray you to make him a little welcome for my sake. [...] Just now he has been reviewing your 'Philosophe sous les toits', and it is from admiration of this, and other works of yours, that he is led to wish to become acquainted with you. Pardon my vanity in saying that I knew you, and would venture to give him an introduction to you. And now you see I am turned coward, and fear, that on the presentation of my letter, you may turn it over and say ' Madame Gaskell! Madame Gaskell! Mais, Monsieur, je ne connais pas cette dame'. Je vous prie, cher Monsieur Souvestre, de vous souvenir de moi, car je me souviens très bien de vous; et veuillez bien accueillir Monsier William Greg, car je vous assure qu'il est homme d'esprit, et digne de votre connaissance. Assurez vous Monsieur de mes sentimens de despect; et croyez que je suis

Yours truly
Elizabeth Gaskell

The Paris Elizabeth Gaskell knew was the Paris of the Second Empire. All nine of her visits to France took place during the reign of Napoleon III, during which the French capital underwent far-reaching changes. She was well aware of these, as she shows in *French Life*, her major literary work about Paris as she experienced it. Here we find the chronicler of Manchester's urban development in the mid-nineteenth century applying her powers of observation to a city which for her generation was synonymous with modern economic, social and political change:

> It is becoming intolerably hot in Paris. I almost wish the builders would strike [...] for the carriages scarcely cease rumbling past my open windows before two; and at five the men are clapping and hammering at the buildings of the new boulevard opposite. I

> have had to go into the narrow streets of the older parts of Paris lately; and the smells there are insufferable – a mixture of drains and cookery, which makes one loathe one's food. Yet how interesting these old streets are! And the people inhabiting them are quite different to those of the more fashionable quarters: they have so much more originality of character about them; and yet one sees that they are the descendants of the Dames de la Halle, who went out to Versailles on the memorable fifth of October. (*French Life*, 1864)

The boulevard in question here is the Boulevard de Sébastopol, linking the Gares du Nord and de l'Est with the Boulevard St Michel, and named after the recent Franco-British victory in the Crimean War. This was the period when the city's vast network of boulevards was being laid out by Baron Haussmann in an unprecedented display of large-scale modernisation. The preceding paragraph recounted a discussion about Victor Hugo's recently-published novel *Les Misérables* (1862), and a prosperous merchant's object to its socialist tendency. This had led to talk of an imminent strike in Paris. No wonder the author of *North and South* pricked up her ears! The socio-political subtext of the passage is reinforced by her allusion to the events of 5 October 1789, when the common people of Paris marched out to Versailles and demanded that the King, Louise XVI, should return to his palace in Paris. Little did she know that that palace, the Tuileries (situated between the Louvre and the Place de la Concorde) would be burnt down during the Commune in 1871. What she did see, however, was the construction of Les Halles, the vast new covered market being built between 1854 and 1866; this was removed in 1969.

The interplay of past and present in Paris, and of beauty and ugliness, fascinated Elizabeth Gaskell. This comes out in a letter she is thought to have addressed to Catherine Winkworth after her return from Paris in 1862:

> Paris altogether was abominable; noisy, hot close, smelling of drains – *and* – perpetual cooking &c; and we were none of us well there. I however laid a good foundation for future work at Mme de Sévigné, saw M. Hachette [the publisher} about it, got all manner of introductions to the private part of public collections of MSS, books, portraits &c; went to every old house in Paris that she lived in, & got a list of books 'pour servir', & a splendid

collection of all the portraits of herself, family and contemporaries. I could have done much more if I had not found that Meta was becoming absolutely *ill* with unappetizing food, noisy nights, close air. (Letter 509b)

Marianne was put in the picture by her sister, Meta, and her mother in a joint letter sent from Paris in 1855:

My darling Marianne –
Mamma says you are to write by return of post a long & full account of how Papa is. You are to give every particular, and above all to send your letter off by return of post. We are just going out to see about your gown. We shall *possibly* send you patterns of some, for you to choose from. There is going to be a dance here tonight – everything is in confusion – the great red cushions of the salon being beaten & shaken till the room is clouded with dust. They have been polishing the dining-room-floor, till I anticipate a fall in every waltz. It is so funny the way in wh. Mme Mohl has asked people to come in my name – Mrs Holld (whom I have never seen) was invited 'because it wd give Miss Gaskell so much pleasure' – and Mlle Gaskell has a prominent part in most of the invitation-notes. [...] Tomorrow we dine at the Scheffers', to meet Mme Viardot, & Mrs Hollond - & afterward go on to the Geoffroi St. Hilaires' – where I am afraid we shall have to talk zoologically - & be kissed. (Letter 229)

The most vivid of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters from Paris is dated 27 March 1863, and written from 120 Rue du Bac, the home of Mary Mohl, née Clarke, to Emily Shaen, née Winkworth:

I think you will like to hear how I am going on in Paris. It is a very amusing life; and I'll try and describe a day to you. Mme. Mohl lives on the fourth and fifth stories of a great large hotel built about 150 years ago, entre cour et jardin. "cour" opening into the narrow busy rue du Bac, "jardin" has a very large (10 acres) plot of ground given by Cardinal Richelieu to the Missions Etrangères – and so not built upon, but surrounded by great houses like this. It is as stiffly laid out in kitchen garden, square walks, etc., as possible; but there are great trees in it, and altogether it is really very pretty. That's at the back of the house and some of the rooms

look on to it. On the fourth story are four lowish sitting rooms and Mme. Mohl's bedroom. On the fifth slopes in the roof, kitchen, grenier, servant's bedrooms, my bedroom, work-room, etc.; all brick floors, which is cold to the feet. My bedroom is very pretty and picturesque. I like sloping roofs and plenty of windows stuffed into their roof anyhow; and in every corner of this room (and it's the same all over the house) French and English books are crammed. I have no watch, there is no clock in the house, and so I have to guess the time by the monks' singing and bells ringing (all night long but) especially in the morning. So I get up and come down into the smallest and shabbiest of the sitting-rooms, in which we live and eat all day long, and find that M. Mohl has had his breakfast of chocolate in his room (library) at half past 6, and Mme Mohl hers of tea at 7, and I am late having not come down (to coffee) till a little past 8. However I take it coolly and M. and Mme. Come in a talk to me; she in dressing gown and curlpapers, very, very amusing, he very sensible and agreeable, and full of humour too.
Then, after my breakfast, which lingers long because of all this talk, I get my writing "Wives and Daughters" and write, as well as I can for Mme. Mohl's talking, till "second breakfast" around 11. Cold meat, bread, wine and water and sometimes an omelette – what we should call lunch, in fact, only it comes too soon after my breakfast, and too long before dinner for my English habits. After breakfast no. 2 I try to write again; and very often callers come; always on Wednesdays on which day Mme. Mohl receives. I go out a walk by myself in the afternoons; and when we dine at home it is at six sharp. No dressing required. Soup, meat, one dish of vegetables and roasted apples are what we have in general. After dinner M. and Mme. Mohl go to sleep: and I have fallen into this habit; and at eight exactly M. Mohl wakes up and makes a cup of very weak tea for Mme. Mohl and me, nothing to eat after dinner; not even if we have been to the play. Then Mme. Mohl rouses herself up and is very amusing and brilliant; stops up till one, and would stop up later if encouraged by listeners. She has not been well, but for all that she has seen a good number of people since I came; she has generally a dinner-party of 10 to 12 every Friday, when we spread out into all the rooms (and I am so glad, for continual living and eating in this room and no open windows makes it very stuffy) and "receive" in the evening. (Letter 564)

Mme Mohl had learnt how to 'receive' from Mme Récamier, whose salon had been a centre of fashion and intellectual life since 1815, and where in her younger years as Mary Clarke she had been a guest. Amongst the people Elizabeth Gaskell met at Mme Mohl's parties in her home at 112 (later 120) Rue du Bac, were:

> Ary Scheffer, the painter, and his wife
> Mme Pauline Viardot, the great singer
> The politician and historian François Guizot
> Montalembert, the leading liberal Catholic thinker
> The philosopher Victor Cousin
> Prosper Mérimée, the author of *Carmen*
> Ernest Renan, author of *The Life of Jesus*
> The historian Jean-Jacques Ampère
> Alexis de Tocqueville, the political writer

Such stimulating company enabled her to get more out of her visits to Paris than most English or American tourists, as she herself realised:

> Staying here in a French family, I get glimpses of life for which I am not prepared by any previous reading of French romances, or even by former visits to Paris, when I remained in an hotel frequented by English, and close to the street which seems to belong almost exclusively to them. The prevalent English idea of French society is that it is very brilliant, thoughtless, and dissipated; that family life and domestic affections are almost unknown, and that the sense of religion is confined to mere formalities. Now I will give you two glimpses which I have had: one into the more serious side of Protestant, the other into the under-current of Roman Catholic life. *(French Life)*

Elizabeth Gaskell visited some of the sights around Paris, too, for instance St Germain, where the exiled James II and his Catholic son, the Old Pretender, held their court. St Germain, where Debussy was born in August 1862, inspired her to one of her finest word-paintings in that same year:

> Nothing could be more desolate-looking than the château; the dull-red bricks of which it is built are painted dark lead colour round the many tiers of windows, the glass in which is broken in

> numerous places, its place being here and there supplied by iron bars. Somehow, the epithet that rose to our lips on first seeing the colouring of the whole place, was 'livid'. Nor is the present occupation of the grim old château one to suggest cheerful thoughts. After being a palace, it was degraded to a caserne, or barracks, and from that it has come down to be a penitentiary. All round the building there is a deep dry area, railed round; and now I have said all I can against St Germain and recorded a faithful impression at first sight. But, two minutes afterwards, there came a lovely slant of sun-light; the sun had been behind a fine thunderous cloud, and emerged just at the right moment, causing all the projections of the château to throw deep shadows, brightening the tints in all the other parts, calling out the vivid colours in the flower-beds that surround the railing on the park side of the château, and half-compelling us with its hot brilliancy, half luring us by the full fresh green it gave to the foliage, to seek the shelter of the woods not two hundred yards beyond the entrance to the park.
> We did not know where we were going to. We only knew that it was shadowed ground; while the 'English garden' we passed over was all one blaze of sunlight and scarlet geraniums, and intensely blue lobelias, yellow calceolarias, and other hot-looking flowers. The space below the ancient mighty oaks and chestnut-trees was gravelled over, and given up to nursery-maids and children, with here and there an invalid sitting on the benches. [...] We wandered on to find the impossible point of view which is to combine all the excellencies. So we loitered over another hundred yards in the cool shade of the trees. And suddenly we were on the terrace, looking down over a place steeped in sunlight, and extending for twenty miles and more. We all exclaimed with delight at its unexpectedness; and yet we had heard of the terrace of St Germain and associated it with James II and Maria d'Este all our lives. The terrace is a walk as broad as a street, on the edge of the bluff overhanging the silver tortuous Seine. It is bounded by a wall just the right height for one to lean upon and gaze and muse over the landscape below. The mellow mist of a lovely day enveloped the more distant objects then; but we came again in the evening, when all the gay world of St Germain was out and abroad on the terrace listening to the music of the band. *(French Life)*

Elizabeth Gaskell's verdict on Chartres, which she also visited during this last visit to France, says it all:

> This morning we went to see the cathedral. It is so wonderfully beautiful that no words can describe it. I am thoroughly glad we came by Chartres.

* * * * * * * *

Elizabeth Gaskell's 'French' works

Elizabeth Gaskell wrote several works set in or partly in France, or concerned with French manners and history. Like her visits to France, these are also nine in number:

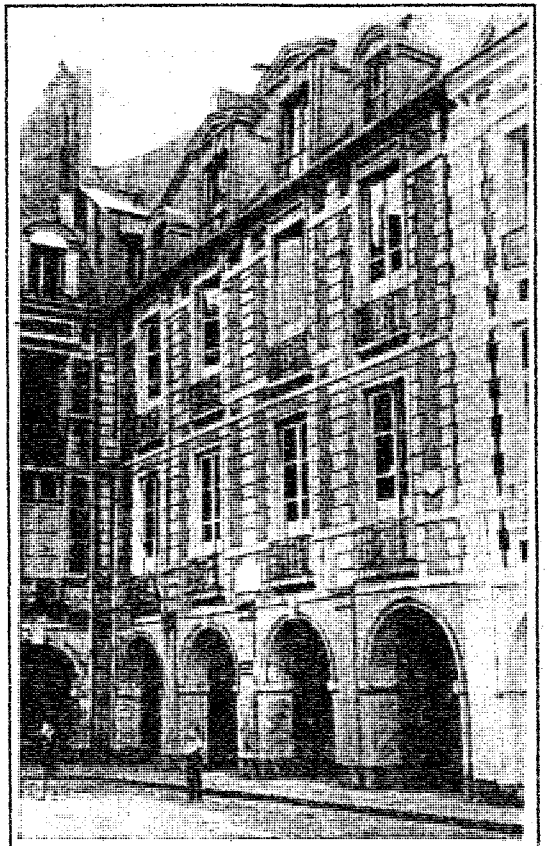
1. ***Traits and Stories of the Huguenots*** (December 1853, in *Household Words*)
2. ***My French Master*** (December 1853 in *Household Words*)
3. ***Company Manners*** (May 1854 in *Household Words*)
4. ***An Accursed Race*** (1855 in *Household Words*, 1859 in *Round the Sofa*): on the 'Cagots', a gypsy-like race treated as outcasts by French country-folk
5. ***My Lady Ludlow*** (1855 in *Household Words*). Set partly in revolutionary France
6. ***Curious if True*** (1860), her first contribution to *The Cornhill Magazine*
7. ***The Grey Woman*** (January 1861 in *All the Year Round*). Set partly in France
8. ***Crowley Castle*** (Version 1, in *All the Year Round*, , Christmas 1863; version 2 in Ward's edition, 1904). Set partly in France
9. ***French Life*** (April-June 1864, in *Fraser's Magazine*)

10. A tenth 'French' work, on which she is known to have been working towards the end of her life, has never come to light. This was to have been a study of the great seventeenth-century letter-writer, Mme de Sévigné, who makes her appearance in *Company Manners* and in *French Life*.

In The Footsteps of Elizabeth Gaskell

PARIS: 17-22 September 1998

by Dudley Green



Place des Vosges. This house, built in 1605 was the home of Victor Hugo from 1833-48, now a museum. Mme de Sévigné also lived in this square and the Gaskells looked at an apartment.

We left a cloudy Manchester on Thursday 17 September aboard the 9.15 am Air France flight and were greeted by warm sunshine as we arrived in Paris at Charles de Gaulle airport. We were then whisked away by coach for our first taste of French cuisine before visiting the remarkable Père Lachaise Cemetery. Our object was to mark the opening stage of our pilgrimage by visiting the grave of Madame Mohl. Before reaching our objective we walked what felt like miles through this low-rise city of the dead. Here in an area covering 106 acres are buried many of the famous figures from France's artistic life: Balzac, Molière, Proust, La Fontaine, Colette, Daudet, Bizet. Here too one may find the tombs of famous foreigners who died in Paris, including Chopin, Oscar Wilde and most recently Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors. After paying due homage to Madame Mohl with a short reading beside the grave, Brian Heckle and I wandered off to find the Epstein memorial to Oscar Wilde with its strange Egyptian motif, and then came upon the small, almost insignificant tomb of Edith Piaf. Chopin's grave was decked with flowers and a Polish national banner – we

were told that, as on most days, a party of Poles had just been there to pay homage. But for me the most moving memorial was that of A Nicoud, a nine year old boy who died in 1912, who is depicted seated on a chair with his dog nuzzling up to him. *(Ed. Some of us also saw the grave of Emil Souvestre, mentioned on p.3)*

After rejoining our coach we were taken to the Orleans Palace Hotel on the Boulevard Brune, our home for the next five days. That night, after a communal dinner at a nearby brasserie, there was much discussion over how to travel on the Metro. I decided to take the bull by the horns and slipped out to the nearby Porte d'Orleans station and bought my carnet de dix tickets and observed the method of passing through the automatic barriers. Here I met a fellow member of our party and together we returned to the hotel with a feeling of modest pride at having made appropriate preparations for the morrow.

The next day we carefully obeyed our instructions, travelling to Chatelet and then changing to Line 1 to get off at St Paul. Here we were given a guided tour of the Marais and the Place des Vosges area. In the church of St Paul-St Louis, a Jesuit church built in 1641 for Cardinal Richelieu, we admired the magnificent furnishings and Delacroix's masterpiece, *Christ in the Garden of Olives*. We saw the impressive courtyard in the Place des Vosges where Elizabeth Gaskell thought of renting an apartment, and we went into the Hotel Carnavalet, home of Madame de Sévigné. Nearby we were regaled with the story of the famous lady poisoner who managed to rid herself of her husband and of most of the rest of her family before succumbing to her inevitable downfall. A group of us then found a delectable spot for an outdoor lunch in the corner of a quiet square.

In the afternoon we were taken by coach through the Bois de Boulogne to St Germain-en-Laye. After visiting Le Musée des Antiquities Nationales in the château, the birthplace of many French kings including Louis XIV, we followed in Elizabeth Gaskell's steps through the park to the peaceful English garden. On the terrace above the Seine we shared her delight at the magnificent view back to Paris 'extending for twenty miles and more'. That night we enjoyed a second communal dinner in a restaurant near our hotel.

After breakfast on Saturday, feeling old hands on the Metro by now, we travelled to the Odeon and made our way to La Sorbonne. Here we had the privilege of a stimulating intellectual morning with a lecture on *French Literary Ladies* by Professor Alain Jumeau. This was followed by contributions on Madame de Sévigné, Elizabeth Gaskell and Madame Mohl by Peter Skrine and Alan Shelston. It was a pleasure to meet up

again with Professor Pierre and Madame Caroline Arnaud. We were also delighted that Véronique Baudouin, a former student of Professor Arnaud at La Sorbonne, temporarily freed from her primary school teaching duties, was able to join us together with her cousin Isabelle. Some of us went to the Musée Cluny where Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne had 'staid as long as [they] could' in 1855 *(G.L.230)*. She didn't mention the wonderful medieval tapestries of the Lady and the Unicorn which we saw. Several of us then adjourned to the Luxembourg Gardens for a pleasant lunch in the sun. This provided an opportunity to visit the nearby church of St Sulpice, with its magnificent Delacroix murals. The party then regrouped at the Jardin de Missions Etrangères to see the outside of Madame Mohl's home at 120 rue de Bac where she extended hospitality to Mrs Gaskell. After dinner we were given the wonderful treat of a night boat trip down the Seine. All the famous buildings of Paris were floodlit, including the Eiffel Tower, with its illuminated reminder of 469 days 'avant l'an 2000'. This was sheer magic and by happy coincidence w were also treated to a fabulous firework display.

On Sunday morning we met at the Place de la Concorde and, under the expert guidance of Mary Debrabant and Véronique Baudouin and Madeleine Lê Van, we visited the Louvre area and walked down the Avenue des Champs Elysees. We were fortunate that this was a European Heritage day on which many buildings not normally accessible to the public were open. The party I was with, guided by Véronique and her cousin Isabelle, visited le Ministére de la Marine, the French equivalent of the Admiralty, with its many naval treasures. We also went to the Palais de Justice, the lawcourts which occupy the entire width of the Ile de la Cité. We were fortunate to gain admittance to the Première Chambre de la Court d'Appel with its magnificently gilded ceiling and wonderfully coloured murals. We then visited the upper and lower chapels of the adjoining Sainte Chapelle, surely rightly hailed as one of the greatest architectural masterpieces of the Western world. The sun was streaming in through the 15 magnificent stained glass windows creating a wonderful blaze of light. And then to Notre Dame. There were large crowds waiting to go in, but by the ingenuity of our French guides we swiftly gained entry by the simple means of using the exit! There were large crowds inside and a service was imminent, but we had time to admire the magnificent rose windows before leaving to enjoy a sunlight stroll beside the Seine. Then, after saying farewell to Véronique and Isabelle, we made our way back to the Metro. On our return journey we noticed that each Metro station had its own colour scheme for chairs and advertisement surrounds – green,

white, blue, red and so on. These were in no apparent order, and to the amazement of our fellow travellers the air was rent with cries of 'blue', 'purple', 'white', as we attempted to predict the colour scheme of the next station! That evening some of us enjoyed a second meal at the Italian restaurant just round the corner from the hotel, where the waiter showed his appreciation of our continued custom by his extravagantly amorous advances to Joan and the other lady members of our party.

Immediately after breakfast on Monday we set out by coach for Chartres. The weather, as on every day of our stay, was gloriously sunny. On arrival several of us went for a ride in Le Petit Train de Chartre, otherwise known as the Dotto train. This took us past the cathedral and through the narrow streets down to the historic lower town bordering the picturesque River Eure. We later strolled through these streets admiring the wonderfully preserved old buildings, many half-timbered dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries. Brian Hechle and I then enjoyed a delightful outdoor lunch with fine views of the cathedral at a riverside restaurant. The highlight of the afternoon was a tour of the cathedral with special emphasis on its unique 12th and 13th century stained glass. Our tour was conducted by Mr Malcolm Miller, an Englishman domiciled in Chartres and the author of the cathedral guide. Then after a coffee in the sun at one of the many outdoor cafés in the cathedral square, we made our way back to Paris.

That night after dinner there was a gathering at the hotel where a presentation was made to Joan in gratitude for her outstanding efforts in making our visit such a success. Celia Skrine entertained us with lively readings from the inimitable Mme de Sévigné's letters; Joan added letters from Mme Mohl. This was followed by an impressive cabaret duo as John and Kate Chapple read from a recently discovered and highly amusing Gaskell fragment mocking the pretensions of an opinionated lady critic.

On Tuesday morning some of us accompanied Joan back to the Place des Vosges where we visited the Maison de Victor Hugo at No.6. This was full of mementoes of the writer and his family. We were greatly struck by the similarity between one of our party and the dignified portrait of Madame Hugo. On returning to the hotel we sat on benches outside enjoying a sandwich in the sun. Then, having said goodbye to our Eurostar companions, it was off to Charles de Gaulle airport once again. True to form Manchester was veiled in cloud as we landed, but nothing could dim the memory of the wonderful time we had had together. Our pilgrimage in the steps of Elizabeth Gaskell had been highly interesting and great fun, and I had enjoyed every minute of it. Here's to Rome in 2000!

The Tenth Annual Gaskell Society Meeting in Tokyo: From a Speaker's Viewpoint

by Professor Andrew Sanders

I was extremely privileged this autumn to be invited to lecture in Japan. Over a period of two weeks I lectured ten times, both to academic institutions and to societies. My visit had in fact been framed around two especially pleasant invitations. The first was to speak to the September meeting of the Japan Dickens Fellowship; the second, the climax of my trip in every sense, was to address the Gaskell Society in Tokyo at their tenth anniversary meeting on Saturday 10 October.

I arrived back in Tokyo from Kobe (where I had been speaking in the university) on one of the famous Japanese *shinkansen* trains. These trains are the envy of the world – clean, swift and meticulously timed. A traveller even knows exactly where the door of his or her carriage will end up on the platform, for these are marked out for the convenience of both the traveller and those awaiting the traveller. I was duly met, and warmly welcomed, at Tokyo Station by members of the Gaskell Society, who, despite the considerable weight of my luggage (I was leaving for London on the next day) gamely assisted me onto two other local trains in order to get to the out-of-town campus where the day conference was being held. Only those who have visited Japan can conceive of the physical sprawl of Tokyo, and travelling across the city, as with London, can take a good hour and a half (which it did on this occasion). Nevertheless, once we arrived at the conference my second welcome was heartfelt.

It was wonderful to meet so many old friends, some of whom had merely been correspondents before. Professor Tatsuhiro Ohno of Kumamoto University (the translator into Japanese of *Sylvia's Lovers*) was perhaps the most notable of these friendly correspondents made flesh.

My lecture went well, I think, despite the fact that I was the last feature of the day and a certain exhaustion always creeps over audiences in the mid-afternoon (I speak from experience as a lecturer and as an enforced listener to lectures). I was wafted with delightful scents as I spoke, thanks to a wonderful bouquet of flowers sent by the Gaskell Society UK to the Japan branch, and much appreciated by them. Equally pleasant was a warm message of congratulations to the branch from the British Council representative in Tokyo, himself a graduate of the University of Durham where I now teach.

The lecture was followed by a fine reception and the opportunity to talk to many of the members who had travelled to Tokyo from all over Japan. This was, in turn, followed by a truly memorable dinner, taken in traditional Japanese style, high up in a Tokyo hotel with spectacular views over the city. It was a perfect Japanese mixture of the traditional and the innovative, enlivened both by good company and excellent *sake*.
It was, as I said earlier, the climax to my visit, and a particularly happy one. My thanks to my hosts in the Gaskell Society of Japan and especially to their efficient, generous and tireless secretary, Mrs Tanaka. I am most grateful.

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South West of England Branch Report

by Rosemary Marshall

An informal meeting was held at 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT, on Monday 16th November 1998. Nine people came in response to a notice in the library and a mention in the Bath Chronicle.
It was agreed that a South West group of the Gaskell Society should be formed and that meetings should take place two or three times a year.
Professor Peter Skrine, Professor of German at Bristol University, agreed to be the Chairman, and is to give a lecture entitled "Mrs Gaskell Re-discovered" under the combined auspices of the Bath Royal Institution of Science and Literature and the Gaskell Society, and this will be held on 6th May, 7 for 7.30 pm at 18 Queen's Square, Bath. All are welcome.
If anyone would like to be informed about events, please get in touch with Mrs Rosemary Marshall at 138 Fairfield Park Road.
The Autumn meeting will include a talk by Mrs Kay Millard on Unitarianism as a social force in the nineteenth century.
Those present included: Professor Skrine, Mrs Rosemary Marshall (agreed to act as secretary), Mrs Ruth Gwynn and Mrs Joy Waterman (both members of the Society who had never made contact with other members), Ms Beverley Grey (very interested in Josephine Butler), Miss Sindell Wright (a retired academic), Mrs Kay Millard (President of the Bath and District Unitarians), Miss Kathy Kelly (an OU student). Apologies were sent by Celia Skrine and Jean Jamison.
Everyone spoke with great enthusiasm of their own interest in Mrs Gaskell and her writing – it was a lovely evening

A (not) Imaginary Conversation Between a 'Lady of Quality' & Mrs Gaskell

by John Chapple

Lady J.H. I have so often heard of you from my friend Lady A.B. I am *so delighted* to make your acquaintance. You knew Lady E. too, did you not? A clever woman, but not religious, I fear?

Mrs Gaskell She was very clever certainly, but I never knew enough of her to speak of her as either religious or not religious.

Lady J.H. Ah! You enjoyed her talent, very natural, – you sought her for her cleverness. - She did collect very clever people. I dare say you often went to her soirées – Monday, I think?

Mrs Gaskell Yes! I liked going very much. One was sure to meet some one distinguished or remarkable. – Rio, La Martine &c &c.

Lady J.H. So *you got your change out of her*. (Mrs Gaskell is struck with this new bit of slang, & determined to appropriate it on the first occasion.) That is always satisfactory – But Lady E. was not religious, I assure you. By the way may I ask if you have written anything since your charming book Mary Powell?

Mrs Gaskell (slightly miffed) I did not write Mary Powell, - the name of my work is Mary *Barton*.

Lady J.H. Mary *Barton* – I thought it was Mary Powell. Mary Powell is a very nice book, - all old English & mediaeval, you know. What is Mary Barton about?

Mrs Gaskell Oh – a – a – It's a story about Manchester and – a – a – there is something about a strike.

Lady J.H. A strike! How very interesting! Just what people are talking about now. It is so silly of the working people to throw themselves out of work and starve – don't you think so?
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Mrs Gaskell There is more to be said on both sides of the question than comes before the public in general, - but of course a strike is generally so conducted as to be a blunder.

Lady J.H. How charming to hear you talk about it so & how could not you say a few words to these poor misguided people telling them – a – a, - giving them good advice, I mean, - and that would put a stop to it all, and save an immensity of distress.

Mrs Gaskell (rather dismayed) Oh no, I cannot speak to people, and besides they would not listen – I don't know half enough about the matter.

Lady J.H. Well now I am sure I should have thought you did, your book is so sensible. Miss Marsh does – the lady who wrote that book you know – I can't remember the exact name, and the other book you know – about the man who was killed in the Crimea – I know Miss Marsh - & I once went with her when she went to speak to the men, - navigators, you know, - and she made quite a sensation, - quite impressed them, - she was very handsomely dressed, & that tells on that sort of people, - and tall – and a high forehead – you have a high forehead Mrs Gaskell, - but she makes hers a little higher by shaving her hair off —Now don't you think you could do something of the sort, - collect a body of working men, and tell them how foolishly they are acting? – I assure you Miss Marsh made quite an impression.

Mrs Gaskell I am afraid not. Our Lancashire people are a very stubborn set, not to be talked over in that way.

Lady J.H. Ah yes, the North Country people are peculiar. What a remarkable book Jane Eyre is? And that was written by a North Country person, you know. Did you ever meet her, - the authoress of Jane Eyre, I mean?

Mrs Gaskell Yes, I have met her –

Lady J.H. Oh! Do tell me something about her. I have always had such an interest in her – (very unhappy, I am sure she must have been!) I have asked so many people if they can tell me anything about her, - some one said she was a clergyman's daughter – How charming (coming a little nearer to Mrs Gaskell) to meet someone who really knows her – knew her

I suppose I should say, for she is dead, is not she? Papa, (loud) Papa (across a great circle of people) do come here! Mrs Gaskell is going to tell me something about the person who wrote Jane Eyre – so interesting – She knew her, and she was a clergyman's daughter and she is dead. – (Papa comes, and Lady J.H. says in a *very* audible whisper) Mrs Gaskell, you know, papa – the authoress – wrote Mary Powell and a great deal about strikes – Mrs Gaskell, will you allow me to introduce my father to you?

Marquess of … I am sure I have great pleasure in making the acquaintance of a lady whose writings are so well known and so highly valued by every one.

Mrs Gaskell (doing her best to blush) Oh! My lord …

Bona fide

This lightly edited text is taken from the original manuscript, in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Written on very thin, dark blue paper, it is undoubtedly in Elizabeth Gaskell's hand, and was bequeathed to the library with a number of Gaskell letters by the late Professor Gordon Ray, the distinguished American scholar-collector. Once again I am happy to acknowledge typically courteous assistance from American curators, in this instance Robert E Parks and Christine Nelson.

The reference to the death of Charlotte Brontë means that this little skit cannot have been written before 1855, which is consistent with the fact that Elizabeth Gaskell was occasionally using blue paper from about August 1856. It might even have been written before February 1857, when *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* was published. But can Lady J.H., daughter of a Marquess, be identified? Though one could trawl through mid-century Marquesses and their daughters, I suspect that the initials are false, designed to put us off the scent.

It seems likely, too, that the very clever but irreligious Lady E. was not a noblewoman at all but Elizabeth Gaskell's great friend Madame Mohl. In Margaret Lesser's fascinating *Clarkey: A Portrait in Letters of Mary Clarke Mohl 1793-1883*, it is made clear that Mary Clarke had been brought up unconventionally, without the powerful faith that sustained and afflicted so many of her contemporaries. Victorian poetry of faith and doubt, for instance, is only matched by the Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. The religious poetry of Tennyson, Browning and

Hopkins is often as thrilling as that by Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Traherne.
Like John Stuart Mill, Mary Clarke was an oddity in a religious age. She was original in other ways, too. The liveliest of beings, she abounded in racy comments and startling opinions. Alexis François Rio and Alphonse de Lamartine could well have been amongst the men of wit and accomplishment who frequented her Paris salon, which Elizabeth Gaskell knew from 1853. A translation of Rio's work had appeared in Britain as *The Poetry of Christian Art* (1854); by the 1860s he must have been working on his *Shakespeare* (Paris, 1864). The famous Romantic poet Lamartine had not been in favour with Madame Mohl when he became a member of the revolutionary provisional government of 1848: 'Lamartine is a puppy', she wrote sourly at the time, '... a vain fool who thought of nothing but showing off his miserable self'. However, the poet turned politician must eventually have been forgiven by the volatile hostess, a parallel to her relations with Louise Swanton Belloc.

To mistake *Mary Powell* for *Mary Barton* is a nice satiric touch. Anne Manning's long popular pastiche 'diary' of John Milton's first wife, entitled *The Maiden and Married Life of Anne Powell, afterwards Mistress Milton*, first appeared in 1849. Written in an antique style ('methinks Mr. *Milton* presumeth somewhat too much on his marital Authoritie, writing in this Strayn'), reprinted in old-fashioned layout and type, it could hardly have been more unlike Mrs Gaskell's up-to-date industrial novel. And if 'Miss Marsh' was Anne Marsh Caldwell, Dr Henry Holland's sister-in-law, not only had she been widowed in 1849, she had seven children to support by her prolific novel-writing. Had she the time to address public meetings of working men like Lady Astor in the Plymouth of my youth?

Some of this dialogue, especially towards the end, betrays Elizabeth Gaskell's deep annoyance with the kind of insensitivity she must often have encountered as an author in society. Nevertheless, the side of her mind that made her fasten on a new piece of slang and determine to use it herself at the first opportunity is just as characteristic. Mary Clarke Mohl discovered the same delight in vivid turns of phrase. Margaret Lesser quotes her claiming the 'valuable historical recollection' that her Scottish grandmother had once called her 'as impudent as a highwayman's horse'. This would do for Lady J.H., ultimately as ignorantly innocent as the friendly horse poking 'his head into the carriage, not knowing, poor fellow! How ill he was looked upon'.

Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

War, the Army and Victorian Literature by John Pack. Macmillan, £42.50.

A general discussion of the changing attitudes to the army in the Victorian era. Though there are chapters on the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, it is the use of the military at home and in particular in confrontation with strikers in *North and South* that concerns the author. There is also a chapter on the novel *Oakfield* by Matthew Arnold's brother William whose early death is described in GL242a.

Mistress of the House: Women of Property in the Victorian Novel by Tim Dolin. Ashgate, £37.25.

Argues that the married women's property laws are fundamental to our understanding of the mid-Victorian novel, in particular *Shirley, Villette, Cranford, The Moonstone, The Woodlanders* and *Diana of the Crossways*. Appendices include Barbara Bodichon's pamphlet *A Brief Summary of the Laws Concerning Women* (1854) and an account of the Caroline Norton divorce case.

Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House edited by Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock. Macmillan, £42.50.

Aims to approach an overworked theme from a differing angle – the effect on religious women of this stereotyping. The choice of authors discussed is unusual and Gaskell does not warrant a chapter of her own but is mentioned by Siv Jansson in *'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: rejecting the angel's influence'*, and by Peter Marchant in *Double Blessedeness: Anna Kingsford and 'Beatrice'*.

Nineteenth-century Short Stories by Women: A Routledge Anthology edited by Harriet Devine Jump. Routledge, £14.99.

A bumper anthology of 19th century short stories, chronologically arranged – from Maria Edgeworth's *The Limerick Gloves* (1804) to Margaret Oliphant's *A Story of a Wedding Tour* (1898), and including *The Manchester Marriage*. None of those who might be considered part of Gaskell's literary circle are represented indicating how unique she was in

the development of the shorter literary form. There is a general introduction with some interesting comments on the fees paid to women authors, bibliographical and biographical notes.

Women's Voices: Their Lives and Loves Through Two Thousand Years of Letters edited by Olga Kenyon. Constable, £18.95.

A narrative text quoting from over 2000 years of women's letters from Ancient Egypt to the present, from queens and saints to wives and governesses, reflecting on childhood, courtship, motherhood, divorce and widowhood. Gaskell, George Eliot and Florence Nightingale are well represented as is her 17th century heroine Mme de Sévigné.

Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens Vol.10, 1862-1864 edited by Graham Storey. Clarendon Press, £65.

Covers the publication of *A Dark Night's Work* and *Crowley Castle*. His relationship with Gaskell had cooled by this time and there is no actual correspondence between them, though there is a letter of 1862 to William Gaskell.

Metaphors of Change in the Language of Nineteenth-century Fiction: Scott, Gaskell and Kingsley by Megan Perigoe Stitt. Clarendon Press, £35. (Oxford English monographs)

A discussion of novelists' use of language in particular dialect with ample reference to William Gaskell.

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Preliminary Notice

At MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL on 6 May

A Gaskell evening of two lectures and readings by the Rev Frank Wright, Trevor Johnson and Delia Corrie

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South of England Branch
1999 Programme

SATURDAY 30 JANUARY – 2 pm – Francis Holland School
'The Comic Art of 'Wives and Daughters' – Graham Handley

SATURDAY 15 MAY – 2 pm – Francis Holland School
'Mrs Gaskell and Gardens' – Jane Wilson

SATURDAY 28 AUGUST – 2 pm – venue to be decided
'Mrs Gaskell and her Christian Socialists' – Brenda Colloms

SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER – 2 pm – Francis Holland School
'Crime and Mrs Gaskell' – Hill Slavid

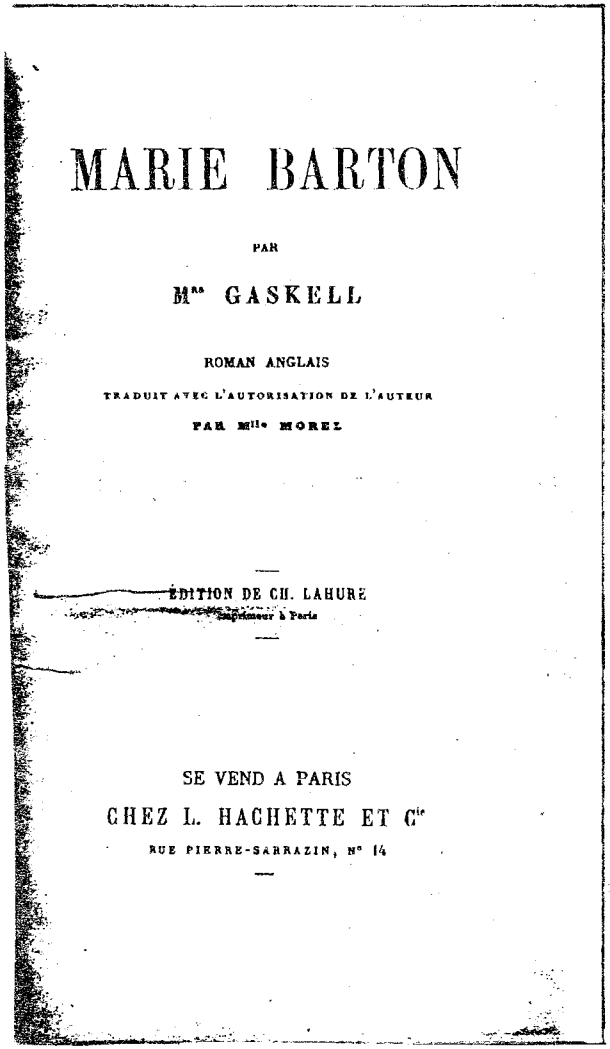
Please put these dates in your diary NOW. Please note that the second meeting of the year will be held on 15 May, not on 24 April as originally planned.

Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF is a few minutes' walk from Sloane Square Underground Station (Circle and District lines).

When meetings are held at the Francis Holland School those of us who wish to do so meet at 12 noon at the entrance to Sloane Square Underground Station for a light lunch together. In the past we have had lunch at the Royal Court Tavern. However, recently the Tavern has become crowded and noisy. I suggest that in future we might have lunch in the cafeteria on the fifth floor of Peter Jones, which is on the side of Sloane Square opposite the Underground Station. If anyone is not able to be at the station by 12 noon, please will they make their own way to the cafeteria in Peter Jones. Prices at Peter Jones are very similar to those at the Royal Court Tavern.

If further information is required, please contact Dudley J Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (0181 874 7727)

GL.328 to George Smith, Dec 29 1856:



MARIE BARTON

PAR

Mme GASKELL

ROMAN ANGLAIS

TRADUIT AVEC L'AUTORISATION DE L'AUTEUR

PAR Mlle MOREL

ÉDITION DE CH. LAHURE

Imprimeur à Paris

SE VEND A PARIS

CHEZ L. HACHETTE ET Cie

RUE PIERRE-SARRAZIN, N° 14

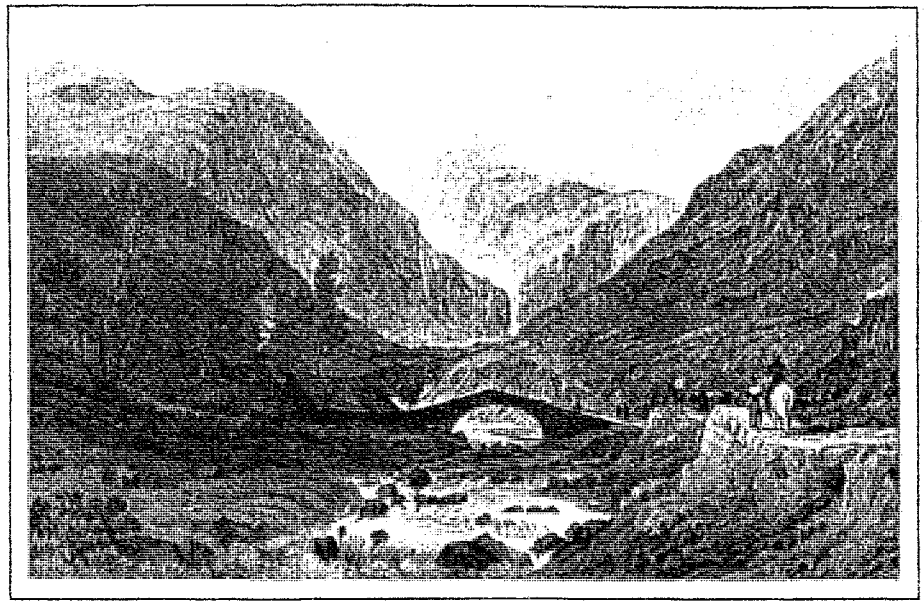
This title page from Marie Barton has been reduced to ¾ of its original size

'I am pledged by a French law-deed (*such* a long one!) to put on my works that I reserve the right of translation; and to send a copy of each of them as it is published to M.Hachette, 14 Rue Pierre-Sarragin. He sees if he cares to translate them within a certain time; if he does he pays me a franc and a half a page; if not done within a twelve month, they become my own property again [...] neither Mary Barton nor Ruth were protected*, but he has translated them, paid me ½ a franc per page; and stopped one or two other translations.'

*International law on copyright was just being established

M. Hachette

The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1999 **NO. 28**

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

Editor's Letter

Much has been happening in the Gaskell world recently. Firstly we have just held our sixth conference, in London, with over a hundred members attending: the programme was much enjoyed and we hope members will share this by reading the report written by Maureen Horner and Barbara Miller in this Newsletter, and in the next Journal there will be more details and some of the conference papers. We are grateful to all our excellent speakers, also to Janet and Robin Allan who manned the book table and Jean Alston who sat at the receipt of custom, our London members, especially Jane Wilson who planned the London coach tour, and to all who participated.

In the week before the conference a group of about ten members were enlisted by the BBC to assist in making an Omnibus film about Elizabeth Gaskell's work. I think most of you know that BBC are filming *Wives and Daughters:* this is to be shown in four seventy-five minute episodes towards the end of the year. The production team also worked on *Pride and Prejudice*: they have enjoyed making the Gaskell film and are impressed with her writing, but many questions have arisen and it is clear that there is a need to tell people about Elizabeth Gaskell's life and writing. Tim Dunn who works on the *One Foot in the Past* series is directing the Omnibus programme to do just this; he is a Gaskell enthusiast, a recent convert.

We have filmed in Knutsford, Manchester, North Wales and the Lake District and still have a session to look forward to in Rome. We now view TV programmes differently and wonder how many 'takes' there have been to each scene and we are somewhat nervous about our screen personas! We jump to the 'Action!' command and then stand by patiently ready to repeat for camera angles. We hope you will enjoy both film experiences later in the year.

Robert Craig of Sandafayre, a stamp dealing firm in Knutsford who sell mainly via the internet, was surprised to see the signature E C Gaskell in a batch of letters he had bought in Scotland. He invited me to read them. There are six addressed to Miss Fergusson between 1845 and 48: she was governess to the Gaskell children. The last in the series is written from Plas yn Penryn just as *Mary Barton* was published. It is fortunate that Robert Craig recognised their importance and has agreed to sell them to

our Society for £2,000, though they would probably have brought much more by selling them on the internet. We intend to deposit them in John Rylands Library, Manchester. Their discovery is particularly timely for inclusion in the new edition of Gaskell letters being prepared by John Chapple and Alan Shelston, soon to go to press. We are happy to be in a position to make this purchase mainly because of the legacy left to us by Daphne Carrick of Norwich. We plan to show the letters at the AGM meeting on 25th September.

The Gaskell Society Conference: The London Experience
23 July – 26 July 1999
by Maureen Horner and Barbara Miller

The Gaskell Conference began unexpectedly, and pleasantly, early on the Manchester/Euston train with the serendipitous meeting of other 'Gaskellians'. We had opted for adding a day on at the beginning of the weekend and thoroughly enjoyed the pre-conference chat with Joan and her set of 'groupies' (concessionary ticket holders travelling together).

The conference activities started immediately with amusing anecdotes of the filming process by the BBC who had been filming the society's activities all over the country during the previous week. It was here that the group members had learned the finer techniques of an actor's life such as: how to wear the same clothes for three weeks and walk in single file, although our actors had to make up their own scripts). We imagine this must have caused undue problems for society members!) Joan regaled us with the details in her own inimitable way and we knew our trip was to be filled with the usual mix of Gaskellian revelry and knowledge.

On arrival at the LSE at Bankside the view from our room was impressive, the river running through the city, separating yet linking the areas, an insistent life-force spanning so many centuries with its own part to play in personal histories. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Wordsworth on Westminster Bridge, so much of Dickens' writing tied up in the river, and here we are ready to cross and re-cross the river during our stay.

Having firmly attached ourselves to the 'Virgin groupie party' the unexpected result was a visit to the Savoy Theatre (organised by Jean

Alston) to see Noel Coward's 'Hay Fever' – a hysterical, madcap contrast to Elizabeth Gaskell's world. A thoroughly enjoyable treat in a beautiful little theatre. Despite the unfortunate accident in the back of the taxi on the way back to our temporary residence at Bankside, when Joyce almost knocked herself unconscious, precipitating a night at Guy's Hospital, (the lengths some people will go to get an insider's view of a London hospital) the evening was a great success. We were all very relieved when Joyce was returned to the fold to enjoy the rest of the activities and was found enjoying the grandeur of St Paul's the following day.

Friday was spent in an orientation exercise, this being our first stay this side of the Thames, in Southwark. The day was spent by us in an exploration of St Paul's Cathedral in anticipation of the planned guided walk in the area the next day. It seems certainly the most splendid of Wren's creations, a lifetime in the building, and the repository (in memoriam) of so many eminent people, for instance Sir Philip Sydney. During her research of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell visited the Deanery and almost certainly the Cathedral. If so, we are sure she would have felt a similar sense of the grandeur, and possibly made comparisons with the more simple, plainer churches she would be accustomed to worship in.

Southwark itself is interesting, this being where Chaucer's pilgrims began their pilgrimage to Canterbury, starting from the Tabard Inn. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction with so many writers, Dickens famously, referring to actual areas. Dickens, of course, would have been very familiar with the streets and alleys travelling to and from his lodgings in Lant Street.

The Conference started in earnest at 4.30 prompt on Friday. The beginning was formal and stiff as it often is at these affairs, but very quickly over tea and biscuits the stiff and formal exchanges, the discussions about the journeys, turned to topics of a more congenial nature. The warmth and camaraderie of the delegates soon shone through as friendships were renewed and new ones forged. An air of expectation and excitement reigned when the first speaker began.

Linda Hughes *(see Book Notes)* began the academic part of the programme unexpectedly alone because Michael Lund was prevented from attending by a family crisis. Her lecture was a lively, energetic, stimulating leap into

the conference. She covered her topic with true verve, style and professionalism. A seamless lecture and impossible to tell she had expected to share her spot with her absent colleague.

The evening meal was excellent and the two following talks, although less formal, were nonetheless as stimulating. Firstly, Chiyuki Kanamaru sated our curiosity with the relevance of Gaskell for Japanese readers. She stressed the importance of Elizabeth Gaskell's portrayal of character and exploration of emotions for her students, particularly its contrast to Japanese literature. Her gentle personality and genuine love for Gaskell melted our hearts.

Last but not least, Sylvia Burch gave us a tour de force of Southwark, taking us through a very useful local map of the area suggesting places to visit and things to do. She certainly whetted the appetite for the joys which would greet us on 'the morrow'.

Saturday morning lectures began at 9.15 am with contributions from Larry K Uffelman, Dr Dorothy Collin and Dr Andrew Sanders. A full morning of work.

Professor of English at Mansfield University, Pennsylvania, Larry Uffelman talked to us about the difficulties of the editor/writer relationship between Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. He showed how the demands of the serialization process produced difficulties for both the editor Dickens, who wanted to focus on the economic division between the North and the South, which was the mission statement of his magazine, and the author Elizabeth Gaskell who was far more concerned with the development of her main character, Margaret Hale. As Pope-Hennessy commented, Dickens had his own rules – movement and action was essential in a first instalment, and early introduction of plot was important. She also commented, "Mrs Gaskell never learnt to accept his rulings and was infuriated when *North and South* was cut". The lecture revealed, with the aid of graphs, how Mrs Gaskell reworked her plot moving it from a pastoral/romance to a novel of development and growth in the female character Margaret Hale, and he also showed how she accommodated Dickens' demands with her reworking of the text. It was a stimulating session and for those of us who have yet to experience the pleasure of reading of the novel, it gave us an appetizer. For those who have read the work, the lecture, I am sure, would encourage a re-read.

In contrast, Dr Dorothy Collin, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia who has published papers on *North and South* and *Cranford* in the British Journal Literary Magazine, gave us some insight into the lives and financial difficulties of the Publishers' Readers. She demonstrated how hard it was to survive without the professional status which other professionals such as those in Medicine and the Law enjoyed. She raised some interesting issues about the possibility, or even the probability, of being an objective reader of other people's work when they were writers seeking publication of their own work.

Dr Andrew Sanders took 'the graveyard' slot (his words!). However, nobody slept through his exceptional lecture, where he stimulated and educated his audience about the difficulties writers of the 19th Century had in writing about 'life in earnest'. He enthralled us with snippets of information concerning the 'mission' statement in 'Household Words' which was first published in January 1850. He told us that Dickens was delighted with the story of *Lizzie Leigh* and paid £20 to Elizabeth Gaskell for the work. *Lizzie Leigh* addressed the issue of 'fallen women', a topic of some concern to him and the story conformed to the mission statement of 'Household Words'. Although Elizabeth Gaskell 'enjoyed' a somewhat tempestuous relationship with her publisher, they emerged from their difficulties to advertise *Hard Times* and *North and South* together. Dr Sanders' ideas kept us buzzing throughout lunch.

We opted for the walk on Saturday afternoon around the St Paul's area, and had the most beautiful day for the sightseeing. Our Blue Badge guide, Alison, had noted our particular literary interest and had much to show us. Being Saturday afternoon, and moving within the City 'square mile', the area was actually deserted and perfect for our stop/go movement. There was no fear of bumping into or being bumped by others with more urgent business than ours. We wandered up and down narrow, hidden alleyways to light upon 'Chop Houses', or gems of churches. Wren's architectural style evident time over time, still strong, yet elegant in line. The Cornhill, of course, connects directly with Mrs Gaskell, the Regency houses also reminders of her visits to this metropolis. We found coffee houses – each developing its own specialist coterie – gossip houses – political cliques and so on. The numerous blue plaques are an insistent reminder of the City's literary significance.

Saturday evening was a joy. Jenny Uglow was so interesting, sharing her experience of being an adviser to the BBC on its adaptation of *Wives and Daughters*, this production to reach our television screens around November. Especially interesting was the video Jenny had acquired for us showing extracts from the programme, allowing us a preview of characters, dress, and presentation of plot. Meeting Jenny was a real highlight for us and for many other people. A member from New Zealand, Eileen Turner, said that it had been particularly wonderful meeting Jenny as it had been the reading of the biography of Mrs Gaskell which had motivated her to join the society and added an enjoyable dimension to her life.

Sunday began with Dr Joanne Shattock who highlighted the difficulties some female writers experienced in plying their craft. Mrs Oliphant, for instance, was prolific in output (101 novels) but needed to 'read' other writers to make a living. Clearly, some were not as 'fortunate' as say, Eliot (who lived, Mrs Oliphant remarked, in a 'mental greenhouse') or, indeed, Elizabeth Gaskell. The relationship between those wishing to be published and those in control of publishing was obviously problematical.

Margaret Beetham, in contrast, talked about the reader as opposed to the writer. Her topic was 19th Century women's interest magazines, her analysis of their content, and perhaps their placing of women in particular roles. So women are treated as shoppers, followers of fashion, consumers of print, 'learning' how to control the household and manage the servants. Women then seemed to be caught up in and entrapped within an unstable femininity. Certainly food for thought here.

Howard Gregg gave us, to complete the morning's work, an interesting paper on the serialization of Trollope's *Orley Farm* which firmly established his reputation as a major writer. In this long novel he skilfully interwove several themes such as the position of women in society and the practice of law. His flawed heroine elicited mixed reactions among his readers. Howard's talk gave a useful comparison between contemporary writers and their serial writing and was a stimulus to read more Trollope.

After lunch a quiet hour was spent in dawdling down to the river, finding a seat, and watching its flow, a very pleasant interlude between the morning's lectures and the highlight of the afternoon – seats at the Globe to see *Antony and Cleopatra* performed in true Shakespearean mode, with

an all-male cast. We thoroughly enjoyed the performance and the experience of an authentic re-creation of the play and theatre. Chiyuki Kanamaru summed up the whole experience as embodying "the energy of England".

Sunday evening's dramatic presentation lived up to every expectation. Written by our own matchless Joan and enthusiastically delivered by an all-star cast, the professionalism of the players both educated and amused us with their excellent rendition. They gave life to the professional relationship which existed between George Smith, publisher, and his clients. Well done everyone. A standard has now been set for a Gaskell finale.

Officially the London conference ended on Sunday evening. However, some of us had opted for the Hampshire tour on the Monday. For us the day was pure pleasure, although for some there was work ahead. A group of Gaskellians have been involved, as we know, in the Omnibus programme on Elizabeth Gaskell and were to be filmed at The Lawn, Holybourne, in the house which Elizabeth Gaskell had negotiated to buy as a gift for William. There was a poignancy attached to being at the house which she did not have the opportunity to enjoy. The peace and tranquility was overwhelming. The attraction of the house and area was all too evident.

We moved on to Chawton for lunch and our last visit of the weekend, Jane Austen's home. This was the perfect end to a perfect weekend.

There was so much to do and experience at the London conference that it is impossible to single out particular events and say 'this was special'. For us, and others we know, simple meeting people, sharing the same interest in Elizabeth Gaskell, putting names to faces, and the whole atmosphere, including the choice of location were all important. We parted already looking forward to the next series of meetings beginning in October.

William Gaskell and the Pressures of Work

by Alan Shelston

We hear a lot about the pressures of stress in the contemporary world, and in particular about the problems caused by the often conflicting demands of work and family. An entry in the Minute Book of the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel suggests that this is not an entirely new phenomenon. The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees on 1 May 1854 record the fact that the trustees had received a communication as to 'the desirability of the Revd Wm Gaskell having a respite from his ministerial duties to enable him to recruit his health'. As a consequence it was resolved 'that Messrs Sidney Potter, Vincent Potter and Thomas Bankes be requested to wait upon Mr Gaskell to inform him of the readiness of the Trustees to enter into an arrangement to enable him to absent himself for a time from his ministerial duties, during two Sundays on which they can have the Chapel closed for being beautified – also to inform Mr Gaskell that it is the intention of the Trustees to call the Pewholders together, in a short time, to confer with them.'[1]

As minister, William Gaskell would not have been present at this meeting, and the minute is an interesting indication of where power truly lay at Cross Street. However respected the minister might be, ultimate authority for the Chapel's affairs lay with the Trustees. We do not know what William was suffering from, but there are regular references to her anxieties about her husband's well-being in Mrs Gaskell's letters. 'I wish that Mr Gaskell *looked* stronger, - he never complains or allows that anything is the matter with him ' she writes on one occasion, and on another she tells us that he suffered intermittently from 'spasmodic asthma, for which curiously enough, no air does so well as Manchester smoke' (GL 439a).[2] It seems likely however that William's need for respite from his duties on this occasion was as much as anything the result of a number of pressures which came together at the same time and affected his general well-being.

In 1854 William was technically still the junior minister at Cross Street where, since his appointment in 1828, he had worked in partnership with John Gooch Robberds.[3] Robberds died on 21 April 1854 and was buried five days later: one of the last acts which William performed before taking his leave was to preach his funeral sermon. The fact that the trustees were prepared to grant him leave at this time, effectively leaving the Chapel

without a minister, suggests that the need must have been a serious one. Cross Street was a very demanding post in all sorts of ways, and at the next meeting of the trustees, on 28 June, they set about seeking for a replacement for Robberds, a process completed by the appointment of the Reverend James Panton Ham in September. This is a clear recognition of the urgency of the situation. Robberds' death would seem to have been sudden (the Minute Book pays tribute to 'the efficiency of his ministerial services which he discharged even to the Sunday preceding his decease'), but according to the Minute Book he too had been given 'two or three months' sick leave in 1852: by this time Robberds was over sixty and it seems probable that his partner increasingly took the greater burden of the work.

There was another issue relating to the Chapel which will have intensified the pressure on all concerned. In a letter to Mary Green, wife of the Knutsford minister Henry Green, written in the same May of 1854 Elizabeth writes "We don't know what the 'Chapel' means to do. We hear this is likely to be sold to the Town-Hall and Mr Gaskell says I must not be impatient & ask questions about anything for 'it is considered impertinent in a minister's wife'."[4] There is no record of what this statement refers to but it would seem that the status of Cross Street Chapel itself was not entirely secure during the rapid development of Manchester in the nineteenth century. Geoffrey Head, the current Chairman of Trustees, tells me that the possible sale of the Chapel to the Corporation was a 'recurrent theme' for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Chapel occupied a very desirable site in the centre of the city, abutting onto the old Town Hall at a time when the corporation were looking to extend it. Eventually the decision was taken to build a new Town Hall altogether and thus we have Waterhouse's magnificent neo-Gothic building on Albert Square. But this was more than ten years later and it should be remembered that some of the city fathers were also members of the Cross Street congregation. Not only would William have been anxious about who Robberds' successor might be, it is quite conceivable that he could have taken his leave in the knowledge that the very future of the Chapel of which he was minister was in doubt.

The letter to Mary Green indicates a more immediate cause for anxiety on the domestic front. The Greens were great family friends of the Gaskells, and Mrs Gaskell opens with a matter of concern about her children: "I have been in a great fright this last fortnight about the scarlet fever. It

broke out about 3 weeks ago ... all around us; within 50 yards in one case; and two nurseries were swept bare by the terrible scourge within 300 yards." She cancels a visit by her friend Mrs Shaen, and her infant child, and after much activity "packed Hearn and the children off, clothesless, for all their clothes were at the wash" to Poulton-le-Fylde ("there was no known case of S.F. there"). Scarlet fever, of course, held terror for Victorian parents, and Mrs Gaskell had been susceptible to fears for her children ever since the death of her son Willie, in infancy: William's health problems whatever they were, would have been insignificant compared with this.

William recuperated at the home of a fellow clergyman in Hampstead, returning to Manchester in June. He resumed his duties, only to go down again "with this tiresome influenza" at the end of the year (GL 202, 204, 222). But the appointment of Mr Ham failed to provide a long-term solution. Ham was a controversialist who would seem never to have settled in at Cross Street and early in 1859 he resigned at short notice to take up a post at Essex Street in London. A letter from Mrs Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton records that Ham's new post had first been offered to William, - 'Mr Gaskell has been asked to go to Essex St London' – but that he has turned it down, for 'there must be some much stronger reason other than a mere increase of income before it can be right to pull up the roots of a man of his age.'[5] She goes on to suggest that again her husband's health is threatened, and that history may be about to repeat itself. Once again William is to find himself in sole charge at the Chapel:

> So his colleague Mr Ham goes (... and we women Gaskells are none of us sorry, - oh! For some really spiritual devotional preaching instead of controversy about doctrines, - about whh I am more and more certain *we can never be certain in this world.*) And as he goes off directly Mr Gaskell will have all the work to do for some time, whh I am sorry for as this is the time of year when his digestion always gets wrong. I have been trying to put in the fine edge of a wedge to get him a longer yearly holiday, - if only for once – after thirty-one years of pretty hard work he should have it. The worst is he dislikes change and travel so very much; and if he gets a holiday I am afraid he will spend it in his study, out of which room by his own free will he will never stir. (March 9, 1859; GL 417).

Again the trustees set procedures in motion to select another minister. This time they came up with James Drummond, a young man for whom it was his first appointment, but who was unable to take up the post until June 1860. For the moment then William was once again doing 'all the work', a fact recognised by the trustees when they voted him the sum of £50 'for his additional services during the absence of a colleague and for enabling him to obtain assistance in the discharge of his ministerial duties.' (Minutes, 7 March 1860) Drummond was to prove much more to Mrs Gaskell's liking than his predecessor: in another of the unpublished letters she describes him as, 'a small slight young man with a lovely complexion, beautiful steady looking eyes, and an expression of goodness such as I have seldom seen equalled'. She goes on: 'I think him very sweet and good in private life, but rather feel as if I were his mother, & might advise and order him about; but in the pulpit I feel like a child learning from a disciple' (to Edward Everett Hale, 14 December 1860). This last was high praise from someone who was known not to like sermons, and sadly but appropriately it was Drummond who was to preach her funeral sermon at Knutsford some five years later. For all Mrs Gaskell's concern about William's health, it was hers that was to give out so suddenly. Drummond himself went on to a long and distinguished career of service to the Unitarian ministry, ultimately becoming principal of Manchester College, then established in London.

In Mrs Gaskell's comments we sense, not for the first time, her irritation at the demands made upon her husband by his work at Cross Street, and not for the first time we suspect that he has been caught in the crossfire. If he withdrew into his study it may well have been as a place of sanctuary. But clearly the asthma and the indigestion were, as we would say, stress-related. William, whose unstinting service to Cross Street was only the first amongst his many activities and responsibilities, undoubtedly thrived on a busy and demanding life: his ministry at Cross Street continued until the year of his death in 1884. His physical discomforts were perhaps the price that had to be paid.

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[1] I am indebted to the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel for permission to quote from the Minute Book for the Meetings of Trustees, and to Geoffrey Head, Chairman of Trustees, for information about the Chapel's situation in the nineteenth century.

[2] References, by letter number, to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, Manchester (1966) are identified as GL and included in the text.

[3] The terms 'senior minister' and 'junior minister' were current at the time and have been adopted by Gaskell biographers. But the minutes invariably refer to the Cross Street ministers as 'co-pastors', and it is not clear that any distinction of status, as distinct from chronological seniority, was at issue.

[4] This letter, dated ?17 May 1854, and the letter to Edward Everett Hale cited below, are amongst those currently being prepared for publication by Professor John Chapple and myself in a supplementary volume to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, ed. Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, Manchester (1966).

[5] Ham's appointment to Essex Street is recorded in the Trustees' Minute Book, but there is no mention there of the approach to William Gaskell. The post was a prestigious one, but its appeal to Ham, who would not seem to have been short of ambition, would have been much greater than it was to the older man.

Gaskell Society South-West Group
Report of Meeting on 6 May 1999

Seventy people came to hear Professor Peter Skrine speak on 'Rediscovering Mrs Gaskell' and found his clear enthusiastic scholarly exposition much to their taste. He began with his own discovery of her novels, illustrated her mastery of the art of story-telling by quoting from the opening of four novels and moved on to demonstrate the depth and subtlety of much of her writing. In this way he made it impossible for us to accuse her of being 'sentimental and dated'.

At this point we were led away from a possible view of Mrs Gaskell as a provincial writer only concerned with the industrial miseries of the North-West to be made aware of her large cosmopolitan circle of friends ranging from wealthy German-Jewish industrialists in Manchester to literary salons

in Paris and Rome and the farmers and landed gentry of the Cheshire countryside.

Professor Skrine ended with a summary of her work, quoting from a letter to Marianne in which she stresses the need to 'think eagerly of your story until you see it in action' when 'words, good simple strong words will come'.

The number and variety of the questions from the audience showed their genuine response. Coffee afterwards made it possible for people to stay and chat. They were very interested in the Journals, and the most common response was, 'We had no idea of the academic level of the Society'.

Mrs Irene Wiltshire, the Membership Secretary, gave a short introduction to the Society, and we were very grateful to her and her husband for making the journey.

The meeting was held as a joint lecture with the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution who very kindly hosted it in their lovely building in Queen Square. Mr Victor Suchar, the Convenor of the Literary and Humanities Section of the Institution very kindly chaired the meeting and we owe a great deal to him for his interest. We also enjoyed the visit by Debbie Lee, a BBC researcher beginning to put together ideas for a documentary on Elizabeth Gaskell to coincide with the showing of *Wives and Daughters*. She obviously enjoyed herself as she missed her train back to London and had to stay the night.

Programme for 1999
SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2.30 pm Kay Millard, Secretary of the Bath Unitarian Fellowship, will speak on 'Mrs Gaskell and Religion' at 16-17 Queen Square.
21 NOVEMBER The Bath Unitarian Fellowship is making the theme of its worship 'A Celebration of Elizabeth Gaskell', and we are all welcome to join them.
Hospitality could be offered, or Bath has a wonderful selection of hotels, if you wanted to make a weekend of it and do some Christmas shopping.

For information contact Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT (01225 426732)

Book Notes
by Christine Lingard

Brantlinger, Patrick. The Reading Lesson: the threat of mass literacy in nineteenth century British fiction. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, £15.99 (paperback)
- analyses the fear held by many novelists about the negative causes of reading, the growth of the mass pulp fiction from Horace Walpole to H G Wells, and the Frankenstein theme in fiction (cf Chris Baldick's *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, 1987). Gaskell though only briefly mentioned is considered contradictory in her treatment of the educated working classes in Mary Barton.

Gross, John (editor). The New Oxford Book of English Prose. Oxford University Press, £25.00.
This extensive anthology of English, American and Commonwealth writing ranges from Malory to Kazuo Ishiguru and has six pages devoted to Elizabeth Gaskell (including the Dr Johnson v Boz passage from *Cranford* and Charlotte Brontë's admission to her father that the sisters had a book published). Contemporary selections include Darwin, Dickens, Newman, the Carlyles, Emerson, Trollope, Kingsley, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot and Henry James. The extracts are all from works intended for publication, not letters, but including fiction as well as traditional literary prose and biography.

Mitchell, Charlotte. Caroline Clive. Victorian fiction research guide 28. University of Queensland, 1999.
Anyone interested in the minor characters mentioned in the Gaskell Letters might be interested in the 28 page introduction to this bibliography of Caroline Clive, the author of the sensational best seller *Paul Ferroll* (1857), whom Elizabeth knew from her visits to Ellen Tollet of Betley Hall, Staffordshire, her sister-in-law. She died when her clothing caught fire from a candle in 1873. There is a letter from Mrs Clive to Elizabeth Gaskell in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

For Autumn Release:
By University Press of Virginia: **Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work. Linda K Hughes and Michael Lund**

Links in a Chain that Connect
Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne North
by Barbara Brill

I have recently been reading the journal of Marianne North, *A Vision of Eden*, published by HMSO London in 1950. She is the celebrated painter of flowers who travelled the world between 1847 and 1870 in search of plants, painting them flowering in their natural habitats. These paintings are now displayed in the Marianne North Gallery in a building she had specially designed for this purpose in the grounds of Kew Gardens.

On the first page of the book the name of Gawthorp Hall, home of the Kay-Shuttleworths, caught my eye and I was interested to read that Marianne in her youth spent many summers there. I went on to learn that her father was a descendant of the third Lord North of Kirtling and was MP for Hastings in the 1850s, and her mother was the widow of Robert Shuttleworth of Gawthorp Hall who had been tragically killed in a carriage accident, leaving her with a delicate daughter, Janet, who later became heiress to the Gawthorp estate. Marianne was one of the three children of this marriage, her brother Charley being two years older and her sister Catherine eight years younger. Their step-sister Janet became a dearly-loved member of a united family. Janet spent a lot of time at Capesthorne Hall, home of her cousin Mrs Davenport, Elizabeth Gaskell's friend. It was at Capesthorne that Janet, when she was 24, met Dr Kay, the industrialist, who, after their marriage, added his wife's maiden name to his title when he was made baronet in 1849. He was twelve years Janet's senior, and these were the Kay-Shuttleworths who became friends of Elizabeth Gaskell and introduced her to Charlotte Brontë.

Mrs North died in 1875 and Marianne became the mainstay of the household, much relied upon by her father to whom she was devoted. She encouraged him to travel abroad with the family, firstly on the Continent; it was on these travels that Marianne began painting flowers in water-colours. While they were in Switzerland in 1863 Marianne and her sister, Catherine, met 'two young Oxford lads', and it was this meeting that provides the next link in the chain. One of 'the lads' was John Addington Symonds, who fell in love with and married Catherine. It was shortly after their wedding that Elizabeth Gaskell met them as she tells in her letter to her publisher George Smith (GL 556) of Dec. 6th, 1864:

'Do you know two very clever people just made one ? ... John Addington Symonds ... who took no end of honours at Oxford, & is witty clever, really brilliant – and Catherine North, daughter of the M.P. for Hastings, even more full of genius – well, on their wedding journey they have been writing a paper on Christmas – which looks to me very clever and Mr Symonds wants to know if it can go into The Cornhill for January (her is a writer in The Saturday – a regular writer). I have only got it by this morning's post and will send it on by this evening's; only I knew it was time for 'making-up' the next month's Cornhill – and that not one hour was to be lost, so I write anyhow to catch this morning's post; and will write again on my own business in a day or two.

Yours most truly
E . C. Gaskell

Thoughts on Xmas in Florence 1863
By John Addington Symonds
110 words in a page
32 pages
3,520 words in the whole paper.

Mr Symonds took the Newdegate and a double first. But he might be very dull for all that; only he is not.'

This letter is also contained in J A V Chapple's *A Portrait in Letters* to which Mr Chapple has added the comment:

'We may again suspect that she did not guess what lay behind this particular marriage; If by any chance she did know, the theme of a man struggling to suppress his own homosexuality would undoubtedly have been 'an unfit subject for fiction'.' (p 150)

Knowing that the Symonds were also friends of Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife Fanny, whom they met at Davos, where both men were seeking a cure for tuberculosis, I was pleased to find this interesting passage in *The Violent Friend*, a biography of Fanny Stevenson by Margaret Mackay, published in 1968, in which the biographer writes that Fanny made these comments to Stevenson's friend, Sir Sidney Colvin:

'Louis and Mr Symonds are, so to speak Siamese twins'.

Margaret Mackay continues:

'Symonds was one of the few homosexuals among Stevenson's friends and consorted with Swiss peasants. In time Louis observed to Colvin that to be with him was 'to adventure into a thornbush', but his mind is interesting.'

Fanny might have been expected to hobnob with Mrs Symonds while their husbands were fraternising but the two women disliked each other. Stevenson described the lady thus:

'For Mrs S I have much pity but little sympathy. A stupid woman, married above her , moving daily with people whose talk she doesn't understand.'

What a different opinion from Mrs Gaskell's!

I found a further link in the chain of connections with Marianne North when I read of her meeting with Mr & Mrs Agassiz in America. Louis Agassiz was a Swiss-born American and Professor of Natural History at Harvard and known to Mrs Gaskell's friend, George Allman, Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh and the husband of Elizabeth's old friend, Louisa Shaen, a man who could have been the inspiration for Roger Hamley in *Wives and Daughters*. In February 1864 Elizabeth took an ailing Meta for 'bracing air' in Edinburgh, staying with the Allmans. She appealed to Charles Eliot Norton to assist in a book search:

'Can you get for me VOL 1 of Elliott's Proceedings, - a Charleston book of Science Dr Allman wants *very* much to refer to in finishing some work of his own, - and Trubner cannot get it. Dr Allman is known to Agassiz who would perhaps help in the search.' (GL 546)

Marianne North met Mr and Mrs Agassiz at a picnic in West Manchester, Boston, where they -

'sat and talked for a long while under the shade of a cedar tree. Mrs Agassiz and I agreed that the greatest pleasure we knew was

to see new and wonderful countries' ... 'Mrs A. was a most agreeable women married to the clever old Swiss Professor who was a great pet of the Americans who were then just fitting up a new exploring ship for him to go on a ten-month voyage to Cape Horn and the Straits of Magellan to hunt for pre-historic fish in comfort.

Marianne's comments on the Professor were:

'He spoke funny broken English and looked entirely content with himself and everyone else.'

This is certainly a meeting that Elizabeth Gaskell would have appreciated as her interest in botany and natural history was keen and she was a great admirer of Charles Darwin.

Darwin is the final link in the chain of connections with Marianne North, who wrote in her journal:

'He (Darwin) was in my eyes the greatest man living, the most truthful as well as the most unselfish and modest, always trying to give others the credit of his own great thoughts and work. He seemed to have the power of bringing out other people's best points by mere contact with his own superiority. I was much flattered at his wishing to see me and when he said I ought not to attempt any representation of the vegetation until I had seen the Australian which was so unlike that of any other country, I determined to take it as a royal command.'

Marianne North's journey to Australia was her last. After 1883 she remained at her home in London and faced failing health. In her last years, her niece Janet, daughter of her step-sister, Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, was with Marianne until her death in 1890. Mrs Gaskell mentions Janet in a letter to Lady Shuttleworth (GL 231) and sends her love to her.

It is within the bounds of possibility that Marianne and Elizabeth may have met at Gawthorp or Capesthorne when Janet was small.

South of England Branch

Meetings during the remainder of 1999 are as follows:

SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2 pm Francis Holland School
'Mrs Gaskell and her Christian Socialists' – Brenda Colloms

SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2 pm Francis Holland School
'Crime and Mrs Gaskell' – Hill Slavid

Please note that both these dates have been altered from those originally arranged.

Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF, is a few minutes walk from Sloane Square Underground Station (District Line).

Those who wish to do so meet for lunch together before meetings held at Francis Holland School. Neither the Royal Court Tavern nor Peter Jones cafeteria where we have met in the past have been entirely satisfactory. Brenda Colloms and Howard Gregg have investigated 'The 12 Restaurant', part of the Sloane Square Moathouse (Royal Court Hotel) next to the Royal Court Tavern on Sloane Square and recommend that we try it for lunch before the remaining two meetings this year.

They will need to know in advance the number who will require lunch. It is a very pleasant restaurant. We would have a section reserved for our use and could stay from 12 noon until we leave for the meeting. There are good cloakroom facilities.

If you wish to have lunch there prior to the meeting it is necessary that you should write or telephone to me as follows:

By Saturday 4 September for the meeting on 11 September
By Saturday 13 November for the meeting on 20 November.

Dudley J Barlow

Paper Proposals are Invited

Paper proposals are invited for the 2000 meeting of the Research Society of Victorian Periodicals, "Victorian Encounters: Editors and Readers", to be held in London on 20-22 July 2000. All students, teachers, and scholars interested in publishing history and the Victorian press are invited to participate. Proposals or abstracts (maximum two double-spaced pages) on any topic relating to the Victorian periodical press and a two-page (maximum) C.V. should be sent to:

Julie F Codell, Director, School of Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1505, USA
Fax: 480 965 8338. E-mail: Julie.Codell@asu.edu

The abstract and C.V. may be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed. The deadline for proposals is 15 December 1999 (postmarked or transmitted).

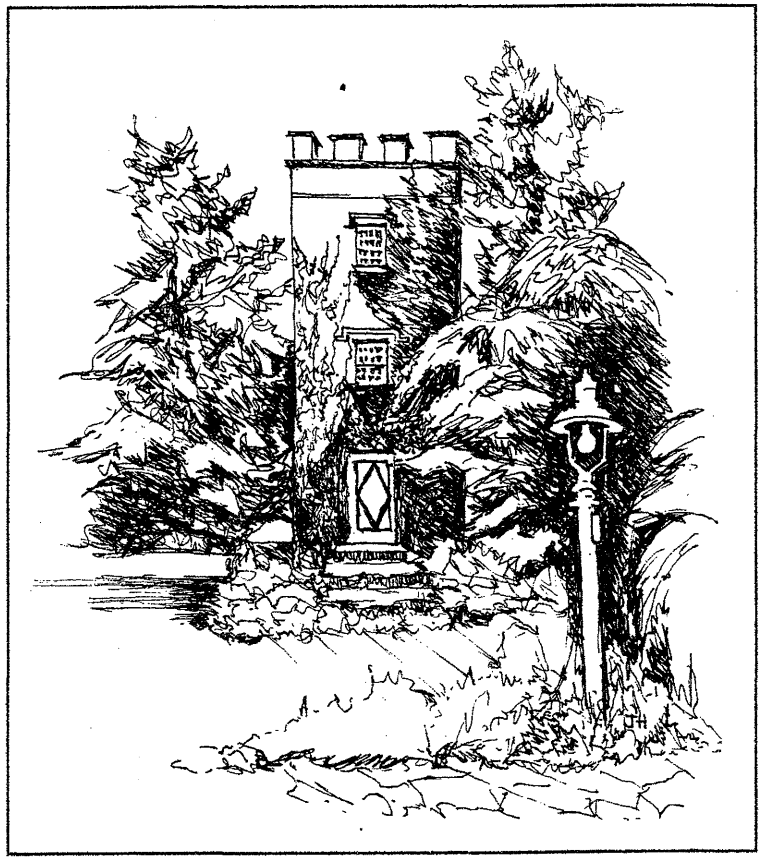
The RSVP London conference fee is £80, which includes teas, coffees, and a business lunch. Cheques should be made out to Birkbeck College. Inquiries and conference fees should be directed to:

Diana Hodgson, Birkbeck College, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ.
Tel: 0171 631 6674. Fax: 0171 631 6688.

The scheduling of the London RSVP conference has been co-ordinated with a conference of related interest, "Feminist Forerunners: The New Woman in the National and International Periodical Press, 1880 to the 1920s", to be held in Manchester from 24-26 July 2000. Inquiries should be forwarded to:

Ann Heilmann, Deparatment of Humanities and Applied Social Studies, Crewe & Alsager Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University, Alsager Campus, Hassall Road, Alsager, Cheshire ST7 2HL.
Fax: 0161 247 6374. E-mail: A.Heilmann@mmu.ac.uk

The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2000 NO.29

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 OHN (Tel: 01565 634668)

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

Membership Secretary: Mrs Irene Wiltshire, 21 Crescent Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9NB (Tel: 0161 928 1404)

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Editor's Letter

I do hope you have enjoyed basking in the reflected glory of being a Gaskell aficionado when so many, according to the media, had not discovered or appreciated Elizabeth Gaskell until BBC introduced them. Those of us who were enlisted to take part in the Omnibus programme shown on 29th November 1999 felt very conscious of our responsibilities in representing the Society. You can read about our adventures in the diary written by Jean Hockenhull, whose drawings captured the scenes, and Sheila Stephenson.

The BBC four-part adaptation of *Wives and Daughters* was well received and inspired people to read the book as Penguin/BBC books sold more than 35,000 copies during the showing. In this Newsletter you can read how Andrew Davies set about his work as an adapter from page to screen. All this media attention kept us busy in many ways: taking part in local radio and TV programmes, supplying journalists with information - which can be a thankless task as seven or eight of us gave up most of one day to a Daily Mail writer but no apology or explanation was made for the article not appearing. We have been requested to supply speakers and have enrolled new members, who we hope will enjoy sharing our various activities.

Regular meetings are held in Knutsford, Manchester (Cross Street Chapel), London (Francis Holland School, Chelsea) and Bath (Royal Literary and Scientific Institute, Queen Square). Details of meetings can be found elsewhere in this issue, with contact addresses. If you are unable to attend at these venues you might think of forming a branch in your area; we could assist in various ways.

The Gaskell/ Fergusson Letters have now been deposited in John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester. You can read how member Dr. Jean Lindsay has discovered some details about Barbara Fergusson's later life. On 2nd February the Brunel University at Uxbridge will have an official opening of their new Arts Faculty which they have named The Gaskell Building. As part of the ceremony there will be the unveiling of a new portrait of Elizabeth Gaskell by Alan Bennett. The Society will be represented by our Chairwoman, Janet Allan. We hope to have postcards of the portrait.

Adapting Wives and Daughters

by Andrew Davies

It was a few years ago, after the successful BBC adaptations of Middlemarch and Pride and Prejudice, that Joan Leach wrote to me from the Gaskell Society, gently suggesting that there were other authors besides JaneAusten that might well deserve a television outing, and she asked if I had ever read *Wives and Daughters*. I hadn't; and I didn't rush to read it, not immediately, that is.

I had read bits of Cranford at School, and heard bits of it on the radio (in the sixties, I think) and while I liked the gentle humour and the sharp little insights, it didn't seem quite meaty enough for prime-time viewing, and it didn't seem quite me, either, somehow. I had also read and indeed taught *North and South*, and while I admired it for its vigour and originality, I had never cared for it all that much. A bit too meaty in some way, unsubtle, "on the nose", plot-driven rather than character-driven, that's what I felt, wrongly no doubt, there it was.

So *Wives and Daughters* came as a complete revelation – it reminded me or George Eliot at her very best, and least tendentious. And like most other readers of the book, I fell in love with Molly pretty well straight away. Very difficult to stand back and see Molly as a literary artefact – I felt about her as a real person, cared about her, wanted to protect her, longed for her happiness in a thoroughly soppy way. And this kind of passionate identification with a leading character is a reliable indicator that the book will work as a television serial – the audience will feel passionately involved and engaged as well (so long as you get the right actress in the part!)

Various BBC executives were becoming aware of *Wives and Daughters* (though I'm pretty sure none of them went to the length of actually reading it). One, who shall be nameless, asked Sue Birtwistle if she thought it could be "done" in two hours. She passed this enquiry on to me; and we agreed that the shortest screen version we could imagine would be four hours long, and even that might not be enough to do anything like justice to Gaskell. (And so it turned out.)

People often ask me how I start one of these big adaptations. The first thing I do is find out if Cover to Cover have taped the complete work – it

has to be unabridged, of course. I much prefer being read to than reading the book myself, especially when Prunella Scales is doing the reading. I loaded up the cassettes, and went for some really long drives in the car, playing the book over and over until I had learnt not only the story but Gaskell's rhythms and speech habits. Then, back home, I went through the book clinically and made a rough decision on where to end each episode. Then I wrote a first draft of Episode One. My first attempt tried to get to the revelation of Osborne's secret marriage in fifty minutes, using it as the denouement of Episode One. It didn't work. The story was all there and it fairly zipped along – but it didn't feel like *Wives and Daughters*, somehow. Together we decided (Sue Birtwistle, Susie Conklin the script editor, and I) that we needed more time to let the characters develop gradually. At one stage Episode One looked like being 90 minutes, but we finally settled on 75, and the BBC agreed. And after three or four drafts, we had something we all felt pretty happy about (it was to go through four or five more drafts in fact) and I went on to write the other three episodes.

We all felt enormously engaged and gripped by the project all the time, and all of us felt that the book spoke directly to us and informed our own experience. We had endless conversations about Mrs Hamley, for example. Sue Birtwistle saw her a moving example of a woman who has sacrificed herself through her love for her husband, subduing her own interests, "killing herself" as Molly so memorably refuses to do. I found myself reacting very strongly against this, seeing a lot of my own mother in her: a woman who has not enough to do, and who puts too heavy an emotional load on to her sons. "Osborne is Mrs Hamley's piece of work" as my own wife grimly remarked.

Osborne, too, engaged a lot of our attention, largely because we all felt he didn't quite work as a character in the book. On first encountering him, I thought "My God, this is the first honest portrait of a gay character in C19 fiction!" – and I was most disappointed (and never wholly convinced) to discover that he was not only "straight", but a husband and father. Was his marriage an act of conscious or unconscious rebellion against his mother, or had she so weakened his sense of his own manhood that he could only contemplate sexual relations with a social inferior (as in She Stoops to Conquer)? It could hardly be an expression of the Romantic spirit pure and simple, or he would have taken pleasure in confronting his father with it, I felt. His quarrels with his father are upsetting, vivid, moving, but frustrating at the same time because he never comes out with the truth. We

soon realised that our arguments about the characters were as often as not arguments about ourselves as sons and daughters, as fathers and mothers, as family members who at different times have sought or evaded confrontation. The thing about Gaskell is that again and again she makes you feel, or remember, what it really means to be alive in the world, to be part of the family, to struggle to live the life that is in us.

Whatever our private thoughts about Osborne, we determined to go for the Romantic interpretation. Whether his poetry was good or bad, our Osborne followed his heart in life. He loved his father and couldn't bear to upset him – and to make this easier to understand, I strengthened the Squire's abhorrence of the French: "French maid? I'd sooner keep snakes in the house!" and so on. But the best thing we did was to include some scenes not in the book, showing Osborne with his young wife – there were hardly any lines in them, but there was no doubt about the passion, tenderness and maturity of their love for each other, and any lingering doubts about Osborne's sexual preferences were banished. Tom Hollander's intense, deeply felt performance was one of the best things in the production for me.

Another area that provoked a lot of discussion and difference was (for me) the most important relationship in the book, Molly's relationship with her father. I tended to take a pretty simple view of this: Molly had been deeply and properly loved by both parents as an infant, thus making her a healthy character who feels worthy of love, even when she doesn't seem to be getting much of it. Her father is strict, can be crusty, and sometimes makes bad decisions, but there's never any doubt in her mind about how much he loves her and values her – fundamentally it's a relationship without problems. (Obviously there's an element of rose-coloured specs in this interpretation, possibly related to my view of my relationship with my own daughter.) All the women involved in the production, including Justine Waddell, I believe, saw the relationship as much more problematic, the age-old struggle of the girl/woman to break free of the father who loves but constricts, and who uses the weapon of withholding his love in order to secure desired behaviours. (I never felt myself that Mr Gibson does that.) Here again, we were bringing all of ourselves to the book, and learning not only from Gaskell but from our arguments. And as draft followed draft, with input from Nick Renton the director, Jenny Uglow the literary and historical adviser, and Jane Tranter the executive producer, we came to something like an agreed view of Molly and her Dad.

But we did very little tinkering with the book – there was no need to. Gaskell's dialogue plays beautifully, sounding in period and modern at the same time – the Observer reviewer picked out some examples of "too-modern" dialogue that made her "blanch" – they happened to be taken directly from the book.

Cynthia is an extraordinarily modern character, with her wry insouciance, and self-knowledge. And what I think is so remarkable is that Gaskell treats her with such insight and sympathy – one can readily imagine how George Eliot would deal with such a character – poor Cynthia would get a fearful drubbing. Yet Gaskell makes us feel her charm, and more than that, feel her inner desperation, her vulnerability and neediness … this was the part that most actresses wanted to play, rather than Molly. Goodness is far more difficult, of course, in performance as in life.

Preston, too, could have been a jolly good stage villain, but again Gaskell chose to do something far more interesting create a fully rounded character. He has great ability, and a keen sense of how social inferiority makes him a servant to genial but stupid Lord Cumnor, and makes him suffer the contempt of his intellectual equal Lady Harriet. She makes us feel his sexual power – like Cynthia, he can have almost anyone he wants. But his love for Cynthia turns into sexual obsession, and he becomes a stalker – how modern that seems! But he is a stalker with a conscience, in the end, and whether through Molly's goodness, or through her threat to tell Lady Harriet, or through his own better nature, he is unable to follow through his unworthy intentions towards Cynthia. What will become of him, as he rides away, straight-backed but desperately wounded in his heart? I imagine that he will have other women, will in the end marry another woman, and make her life hell because she isn't Cynthia.

I hope that Gaskell Society members found the ending acceptable. The proposal scene – two lovers six feet apart in the pouring rain – was one of the few bits that was all mine. And before you ask – the African trousers weren't my idea.

Who was Miss Fergusson?

by Jean Lindsay

The editor's letter in *Newsletter No 28*, August 1999, gave the important information that the Gaskell Society had bought a collection of letters written by Elizabeth Gaskell, found in Scotland, by chance, by Robert Craig of Knutsford, and that six of them were written to Miss Fergusson, nurse and later governess to the Gaskell family, between 1845 and 1848. The letters are to be deposited in John Rylands Library, Manchester, but meanwhile questions, such as the one in my title, have arisen.

Joan Leach, the editor of *Newsletter*, wrote to me asking, as I live near Edinburgh, whether I could find out any more details about Miss Fergusson. Joan provided me with the fact that Miss Fergusson had married the Rev Walter Ross Macleod, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, and that they had lived at 4 Eyre Place, Edinburgh, from about 1855 to 1862, when he might have died. Later, his widow lived at 3 Dundonald Street, Edinburgh, probably about 1891.

Members of the Gaskell Society know, of course, that in July 1845 Miss Fergusson went with Elizabeth and William Gaskell to Ffestiniog in Merioneth as nurse to the two children, Marianne, 10 years old and Willie, 9 months old. After Marianne had recovered from scarlet fever, the household moved to Portmadoc with its sea breezes, but baby Willie caught scarlet fever and died there on 10 August.[1] This tragedy propelled Elizabeth Gaskell to write *Mary Barton* (1848), but despite immersing herself in her writing, she always cared intensely about the welfare of her children. By 1847, two of the four daughters, Marianne, 13 years old and Meta, 10 years old, were receiving lessons from Miss Fergusson, promoted from nurse to governess, but Elizabeth Gaskell concluded that the governess, her 'dear household friend', could not teach and discipline them properly. Miss Fergusson and Elizabeth Gaskell therefore parted amicably and more specialist teachers were brought in for the young girls.[2]

Elizabeth Gaskell was still in touch with Miss Fergusson in 1848 by letter, but what then? The Edinburgh Room in Central Library, Edinburgh, provided access to the annual *Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory* for the years 1854 to 1863. The Rev Walter Ross Macleod was listed only in the year 1861 to 1862, in the street directory, with the address 4 Eyre Place. He was described as a minister of the Free Church but was not

included in any of the lists of ministers and their churches for the years mentioned.

The Annals of the Free Church of Scotland 1843-1900 Vol 1, edited by the Rev William Ewing (1914) gives brief biographies of ministers and missionaries, but there was no record of the Rev Walter Ross Macleod. In the Census of 1861, the Macleods were living at 4 Eyre Place. Walter was head of the household, married, aged 35, and a minister of the Free Church of Scotland. He was born in Coupar, Angus. Barbara, his wife, aged 38, was born in Edinburgh. The household included 10 boarders, of which there were 3 pairs of brothers, all with Scottish surnames, all young scholars and unmarried. They were from a wide geographical area, namely:

Gampbell Mackinnon, 18, born in Clarendon, Jamaica
Dugald Gilchrist, 17, born in Sutherland
John R Gilchrist, 15, born in Sutherland
James W Brodie, 16, born in East Lothian
Philip Fraser, 15, born in Culcutta, India
James Rossack, 16, born in St Georges, Jamaica
David Rossack, 15, born in St Georges, Jamaica
James Kennedy, 10, born in Manchester, England
Thomas Mackintosh, 13, born in Dutch Guyana
Louis Mackintosh, 12, born in Dutch Guyana

The 3 Scottish domestic servants were unmarried and were:

Eliza Donaldson, 23, cook, born in Wick, Caithness
Ann Galloway, 21, housemaid, born in Fordell, Fife
Julia Fraser, 17 tablemaid, born in Edinburgh

There were no children of the Macleods.

The boarders were perhaps the sons of ministers or missionaries who wished their sons to be educated in one of the numerous private day schools in Edinburgh.

The Macleods were not at 4 Eyre Place in the 1871 Census, but New Register House, Edinburgh, provided information about the death of Walter Ross Macleod which occurred on 20 October 1865, when he was 38 years old. He was described as a minister of the Free Church and was married to Barbara Macleod whose maiden surname was Fergusson. His father was Alexander Macleod, deceased, and his mother was Catherine Macleod, maiden surname Rose. The cause of death was phthisis

pulmalis, or pulmonary tuberculosis, of 'several years, certainly 6'. Helen Macleod, his sister-in-law, gave this information.

There was no notice or record of his death in the two daily newspapers, the *Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*. The fact that Walter had been ill for so long from a wasting disease, probably explains why he was not attached to any church. The boarders might have provided their main income and Barbara must have had a difficult task to organise the large boarding establishment.

The Census of 1891 revealed that Barbara Macleod was then living at 3 Dundonald Street. She was head of the household and was a widow, aged 68. She was described as an annuitant, ie in receipt of an annuity. Her twin brother, Charles Fergusson, aged 68, was unmarried and was living with her. He was described as an agent for a slate quarry. They had one unmarried servant, aged 17, Margaret Harker, who was born in Glen Shee, Perthshire.

Miss Fergusson must have been 22 years old when she was the children's nurse in 1845. We don't know how the death of Willie affected her; but her life seems to have been one of gentility and respectability, living as she did in tenements in Eyre Place and in Dundonald Street, in the Northern New Town of Edinburgh, the 'largest single scheme in the development of Georgian Edinburgh'.[3] However, there are large gaps in this account, so her life might well have been always one of struggle against adversity.

Notes

1 Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, (1994), p 152
2 *Ibid*, p 157
3 John Gifford, Colin McWilliam and David Walker (editors), *The Buildings of Scotland. Edinburgh* (1984), p. 45

The newly discovered letters are to be included in a supplementary volume to *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (1966), edited by Arthur Pollard and J A V Chapple, which is to be edited by J A V Chapple and Alan Shelston

Editor's Note: Other letters found with the Gaskell/Fergusson collection show that Mrs Macleod lived at 2 Osborne Terrace, Oxton (on the Wirral) probably from c1875-1885. Unfortunately she does not seem to have been at home on the night of the 1881 census so we cannot add more details. Her brother, Charles seems to have had quarrying interests at Red Wharf Bay, Pentreath, on Anglesey.

Omnibus – A Diary of our Days on Location

by Jean Hockenhull and Sheila Stephenson

Our adventures began at 7.30 am on a Wednesday morning in July. We boarded our coach wondering what was in store for us. We were soon to find out. We arrived outside John Rylands Library in Manchester to be greeted by Tim Dunn our producer, his assistant Debbie Lee, a camera crew, sound engineer and a battery of equipment and cables. We were to be filmed arriving at the library and were requested to proceed through the doors and up the stairs in single file, a request that was to become an all too familiar call "Can you do that again please, remember your places in the line".

The interior of the library with its high Victorian architecture and furnishings provided an appropriate and very impressive setting in which to begin the film. We were joined here by Alan Shelston who shared with us the special privilege of being able to examine Mrs Gaskell's notebooks and letters, and of course we were particularly interested in the *Wives and Daughters* notebooks. After filming some of our discussions we left the library and made our way to Cross Street Chapel and lunch from the nearby Pret-a-Manger. And here a word of praise for Debbie, whose job it was to make sure that we were all in the right place at the right time and that things were running smoothly, a difficult job that she did with unfailing cheerfulness. Added to this she was always on hand to revive flagging spirits by seeming to conjure trays of coffee and cakes out of thin air while we waited for the crew to plan and discuss the filming.

At Chapel Street we were filmed admiring the splendid portrait of William Gaskell and listening to Rev John Midgeley the present minister talking about Mr Gaskell's long involvement with the Chapel. This was one of the scenes that, sadly, had to be left out of the final film.

Next it was on to Plymouth Grove, an important place in the Gaskell Story, as the family lived here from 1849 until it was sold in 1913 after Meta's death. Here, Janet Allen and those members who are interested in promoting and protecting the interests of the Gaskell Society in the property were filmed guiding us round the house and grounds. Hopefully, the screening of *Wives and Daughters* will generate the interest and funding to secure its future.

The last location of the day was a far cry from the elegance of the John Rylands Library and the drawing room of Plymouth Grove. We arrived in the centre of Manchester to be joined by Terry Wyke who was to guide us on our *Mary Barton* location. Terry is an old friend of the Gaskell Society and an expert in both the industrial archaeology of Victorian Manchester and Mrs Gaskell's Manchester novels. We were led along the towpath of the Rochdale Canal, which at one point disappears beneath the main roads around Piccadilly Station. This was an experience not to be forgotten as these very seedy underground towpaths and crofts are the haunt for all sorts of unsavoury characters and goings on that the "prim and provincial ladies of the Gaskell Society" (Reviewer, Times) would not wish to know about. But, unheeding of one or two amusing but unprintable remarks from onlookers we made our way, still in our lines, through the tunnel. Not many photo opportunities here, but we eventually emerged into the late evening sunshine and carefully filed across the lock gates to a landing stage where Terry pointed out some of the remaining features of Manchester's industrial past and we were able to appreciate the cost in human terms of the city's economic growth with the expansion of the cotton industry in the time of *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, and to understand the effect of the depression on the unemployed Davenport family as they turned to radicalism in their plight.

We had much to reflect upon as we made our way back to Knutsford, feeling in Mrs Gaskell's words "Quite knocked up by it all" after our first day's filming.

Not quite such an early start next day as we began filming at the 300 year-old Brook Street Chapel. Tim, Debbie and the crew had been hard at work for several hours, and the peace and quiet of the lovely old chapel was temporarily disrupted by the cameras, cables and lighting equipment that invariably accompanied us all. Alan Shelston joined us again as we climbed up to the gallery to survey the church, hardly altered since Mrs Gaskell described it in *Ruth* and talked about the importance of the Unitarian faith to her and its influence on her writing. We finished the session with a visit to the family grave where Joan read a moving letter from Charles Eliot Norton that the family had received after Elizabeth's death. Here again, most of the scene had to be left out except for the shot of the grave which ends the film.

It was 3 o'clock by this time and after lunch we gathered at the Royal George in Knutsford, another building that would have been very familiar to Elizabeth and one that was depicted in several of her novels. The *Cranford* ladies met here and Roger Hamley set off on his travels by the stagecoach which stopped here. Mary Higginson, who is one of our founder members, and whom many of you will know, joined us in the assembly room, largely unchanged since Gaskell days, and reminisced about the dinner and ball that was held here in 1960 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Elizabeth Gaskell's birth. Sadly, this was not included in the programme except for a small shot showing us walking past the Gaskell Memorial heading for the George. Walking in single file was the only option here, which made us aware of the problems of filming along a very busy thoroughfare as the cameraman tried to film from the other side of the road.

The filming in Knutsford finished with a walk down Gaskell Avenue past the house where Elizabeth was brought up by Aunt Hannah Lumb and of which she had such fond memories.

Unbelievably, it was 9 pm by now and we were all more than ready to call it a day and enjoy a short rest before our next assignment.

On Friday 16th July, we travelled by coach to North Wales. It was a lovely summer morning and the Welsh countryside looked at its best. We

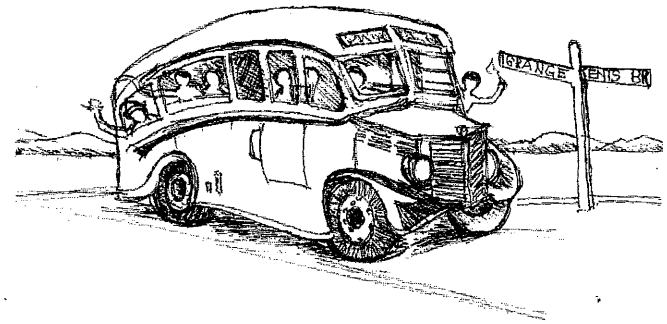
stopped for coffee in Caernarvon alongside the magnificent castle and from there proceeded to Port Madoc and Plas Penrhyn, the former home of Samuel Holland, Elizabeth's cousin, which stands on a hillside not far from the town. The view from the terrace across the estuary to the distant mountains was breathtaking and one could understand why Elizabeth had loved this area so deeply. As a young woman she had spent many happy holidays with the Holland family at Plas Penrhyn and it was no surprise when she chose to go there for part of her honeymoon.

After a good deal of walking in 'Indian file' along the terrace and being filmed by the crew from the garden below the house, we returned to the coach which took us to the railway station in Port Madoc where we boarded the train which would take us to Blaenau Ffestiniog. A carriage had been reserved for us and as we settled in our Victorian style surroundings Debbie, the team member who looked after all our needs, distributed the carriers containing our packed lunch. Silence reigned as we munched our way through sandwiches, crisps and cake, washed down with a carton of cordial. Then a shrill whistle pierced the air, doors were slammed and we were off, chugging along at a civilised pace towards the wooded hillside. The producer and the film crew joined us at the first stop and after that some of us were quite busy being interviewed. As the train climbed higher we looked down on the area where Samuel Holland had some of his works which dealt with the slate blasted from the nearby quarries. Eventually we alighted from the train at the terminus in Blaenau Ffestiniog, but did not stay long in this grim, blue-grey town before boarding our coach, which had travelled by road to meet us, for the journey back to Port Madoc.

After refreshments in the station, more acceptable than a walk around the town in the persistent drizzle which had set in, cars took us up to Garth Terrace where we were met by Dewi Williams, a local historian, and taken to the house where Willy Gaskell, Elizabeth and William's beloved infant son died on 10th August 1845, succumbing to an attack of scarlet fever. The present occupant, Mr Jones, had only learnt a week prior to our visit of the connection with Mrs Gaskell and the likelihood of his being interviewed for the BBC, but he received us with equanimity and chatted pleasantly about the past event, seemingly not at all put out by the scene having to be repeated and filmed four times. Our little group was well used to the procedure by that time!

Back in the town centre we boarded our coach, thankful to be able to rest for an hour or two. Driving along with the countryside on our right and the sea on our left, some of us thought about the strong emotional ties Mrs Gaskell had had with this part of Wales, how its wild beauty, its folklore, had aroused strong passions within her which gained expression in her short stories.

During the afternoon of 18th July, our group assembled in Knutsford, refreshed after a day and a half's break from filming. We were taken by coach to Grange-over-Sands where rooms had been reserved for us at the Cumbria Grand Hotel. We were re-united with Tim our producer, Debbie and the film crew during the evening. The following morning a cream and maroon charabanc rolled up to the main door of the hotel, causing much excitement among ourselves and the other guests. We learnt that Tim had hired this from a firm in Shropshire to transport us during the day and take us back to Knutsford at the end of the evening.



After many photographs had been taken, we set off in grand style to Kents Bank Station where we were met by Cedric Robinson, the Queen's Guide across the Sands of Morecambe Bay. A "conveyance" drawn by tractor took most of us out into the middle of the bay whilst the hardier and more active members of the group made the journey on foot. Under magnificent skies and surrounded by a vast expanse of sand we listened to Geoffrey Sharps reading from *The Sexton's Hero*. Standing there with your feet gradually sinking in the sand and pools of water welling up around your ankles, the wind tearing at your clothes and blowing through your hair, watching the clouds scudding across the sky to mass in great banks pregnant with rain, wondering if that silver line in the distance was the first sign of the incoming tide, it was easy to imagine the scene in the story being related to us. It was good to clamber up on our vehicle and, as we neared the store, watch Cedric gathering a bunch of samphire which he

would later cook for his lunch. He explained how to prepare it and it sounded delicious.

We returned to the bus and our sandwiches and crisps. During the afternoon we drove to Silverdale, a place much loved by the Gaskell family. As we arrived at Tower House it started to rain and turn much colder. The tea and biscuits offered by Mrs Sharp who owned the house were very welcome. We were interested in Lindeth Tower (our cover picture), situated in the garden. This three-storey building was erected for Hesketh Fleetwood early in the 19th century. Mrs Gaskell was a regular visitor and wrote much of her work in the rooms there whilst the rest of her family were enjoying holiday pursuits. The group climbed up to the castellated roof from which there is a magnificent view. They spent an hour or so filming and discussing the Tower and its place in Elizabeth Gaskell's life. There was more filming in the beautiful garden, and finally a group photograph was taken.

Our programme had overrun its time, the rain had started again, we were cold and hungry as we boarded the bus. When we got on the M6 we discovered a corner of the roof at the rear of the bus was leaking, steady drips going down one's neck! What bliss it was to stop for a meal (albeit a hurried one) before completing our journey. The bus caused quite a stir on the motorway, people waved and honked their horns. It quite cheered us all up.

We didn't meet up with our producer and his team again until 26th July, when we completed our filming in England. This final spell of work was done in the village of Holybourne in Hampshire to which we travelled by coach. A year or two before her death, Elizabeth Gaskell had purchased a property in the village with the hope that she would be able to persuade her husband to retire from what she considered his very hard and demanding work in Manchester in order to enjoy a more leisurely lifestyle in his later years. Her daughters were aware of the scheme and had helped their mother prepare the house.

We had coffee in an old inn in the village before walking to the house, which is known as "The Lawn" and is now a very well appointed home for the elderly. One of the residents, 91 years old Miss Lewis, had interested herself in Mrs Gaskell with relation to her time as owner of the property and had indeed written an account of this. She was pleased to join in the

filming and told us how Mrs Gaskell, having attended afternoon service at the local church, came home and died suddenly whilst drinking a cup of tea. Miss Lewis was very concerned about the consequences of collapsing whilst drinking a cup of tea and the ensuing damage to persons and property. Before leaving Holybourne the group visited the church, a pleasant grey stone structure in the Victorian style.

The highlight of our journeys was the visit to Rome in September. We descended from the plane at Rome airport into the warm September sunshine (wearing the same clothes we had worn to explore the underground canal in Manchester, for reasons of continuity, we were told!). We were met by James Walker, the BBC's 'fixer' in Rome, who was to escort us in his minibus around the city. Our hotel was on the outskirts of Rome and overlooked the River Tiber. After settling in, we had a short walk to a nearby trattoria and , judging by the crowded tables, obviously a very poplar place. However, a table had been booked for us and we were joined by Professor Marroni and Maria Concetta Constantini from Pescara University who were to accompany us the next day.

Next morning, refreshed and keen to make the most of our brief visit, we had an early breakfast in the rooftop café with its panoramic views of Rome in the early morning light, and we all felt something of the pleasure and excitement that Elizabeth felt when she spoke so feelingly of "Those charming Roman days". She was far away from cold and grimy Manchester and the stress of finishing the biography of her friend

Charlotte Brontë, and as yet unaware of the gathering storm that was to follow the publication of the book.

As this was our only full day in Rome, we had a busy schedule and were quickly on our way to the area where the Gaskells stayed with their friends the Wetmore Storys who had rented a balcony on the Via Corso to watch the Mardi Gras procession. The Goethe Museum was such a house, and we all in turn went out onto the small balcony to try to visualise the moment when Elizabeth caught sight of Charles Eliot Norton and dangled a stick of confetti over the balcony to attract his attention – a scene that she was to recall so vividly and talk about in such emotional terms. Joan was filmed (several times) coming in from the balcony and joining the rest of us as we speculated about Elizabeth and Eliot Norton's friendship, and how important their days in Rome were to them both.

Later, we were treated to an excellent lunch at a pavement café in the shadow of the Pantheon, no less, and were to be filmed sitting at our tables chatting about Rome, Elizabeth Gaskell and romance whilst eating delicious Italian ice creams. There was much curiosity from the other diners (you're making a film about Mrs who?) and amusement as they watched our ice creams slowly melting in the sunshine as we waited for the camera crew to get round to our table.

Lunch over and a brief pause for postcard buying and photography, and we were on our way through the crowded Sunday afternoon streets, pausing briefly for a quick look at Trajan's Column, but moving swiftly on as it played no part in our story. And then, rounding a corner, we were suddenly in the small square dominated by the famous Trevi fountain. It isn't recorded that Elizabeth ever visited the fountain, but we thought that maybe she did and threw her coin in, in the hope that she would return one day. However, we were taking no chances and, as you can see from the film, we were all eager to toss in our coins (sorry! The BBC's coins, supplied by Debbie) and make our wish that perhaps, maybe … But no time to linger as we had to be on our way to the last location.

Charles Eliot Norton had lodgings in the district around the Piazza del Spagna which was a favourite haunt of poets, sculptors and painters, who gathered on the Spanish steps to socialise. The Story's house was also in this area, and it was the view from their window that was to become such a treasured memory to Elizabeth for the rest of her life. It seemed

appropriate that we should end our visit by resting on the steps surrounded by such beautiful architecture and reflecting on how much the experience of Rome meant to Elizabeth and Eliot Norton.

As a final unscheduled and unfilmed treat, we were driven to the Coliseum and had the opportunity to wander round this incredible monument just as the moon was rising.

But it was not quite the end. We gathered in the evening to enjoy a final meal at the Trattoria with lots of Italian dishes, bottles of wine and photograph taking, before taking our leave of the omnibus team and falling into bed around midnight ready for an early start back to cold rainy Manchester on Monday morning.

The final film shows only a small amount of the actual footage. It would be lovely if we were able to share more of it with you all, but we hope you enjoyed the brief glimpses that you had of a most enjoyable and memorable experience.

Marianne North

by Barbara Brill

A footnote to my article (NL 28 pages 15-18) on the connections of Elizabeth Gaskell with Marianne North in which I speculated on the possibility of their meeting at Gawthorp or Capesthorne. I have now found confirmation that they did meet, but in Pontresina in 1864.

In Marianne North's book *Recollections of a Happy Life* (published by the University Press of Virginia in 1993) she writes of travelling to Pontresina in the summer of 1864 with her father and sister where they stayed in "that paradise for Alpine climbers 'the Old Crown Inn'".

She continues "Mrs Gaskell was also at Pontresina at that time, and had taken a quiet room outside the village to work peacefully. There she finished a great part of her last story *Wives and Daughters*.
"She was very beautiful and gentle with a sweet-toned voice and a particularly well-formed hand."

Book Notes

by Christine Lingard

Elizabeth Gaskell's use of color in her industrial novels and short stories by Katherine Ann Wildt (Saint Louis University). University Press of America

Ostensibly a very specialised subject, this book provides us with a detailed and useful analysis of Elizabeth Gaskell's descriptive technique and a fresh approach to the study of her early industrial writings. It also brings out her debt to John Ruskin and, in particular, his book *Modern painters* providing ample evidence that she made a thorough study of the book. Most gratifying is an analysis of several of the short stories showing the development of her technique – *Libbie Marsh's three eras, Lizzie Leigh, Heart of John Middleton, Sexton's hero, Christmas storms and sunshine, Hand and heart, The Moorland cottage and Cumberland sheep shearers*. The novels dealt with are *Mary Barton, North and south* and *Ruth*. There are extensive notes possibly hindering the flow of the narrative and bibliographical references.

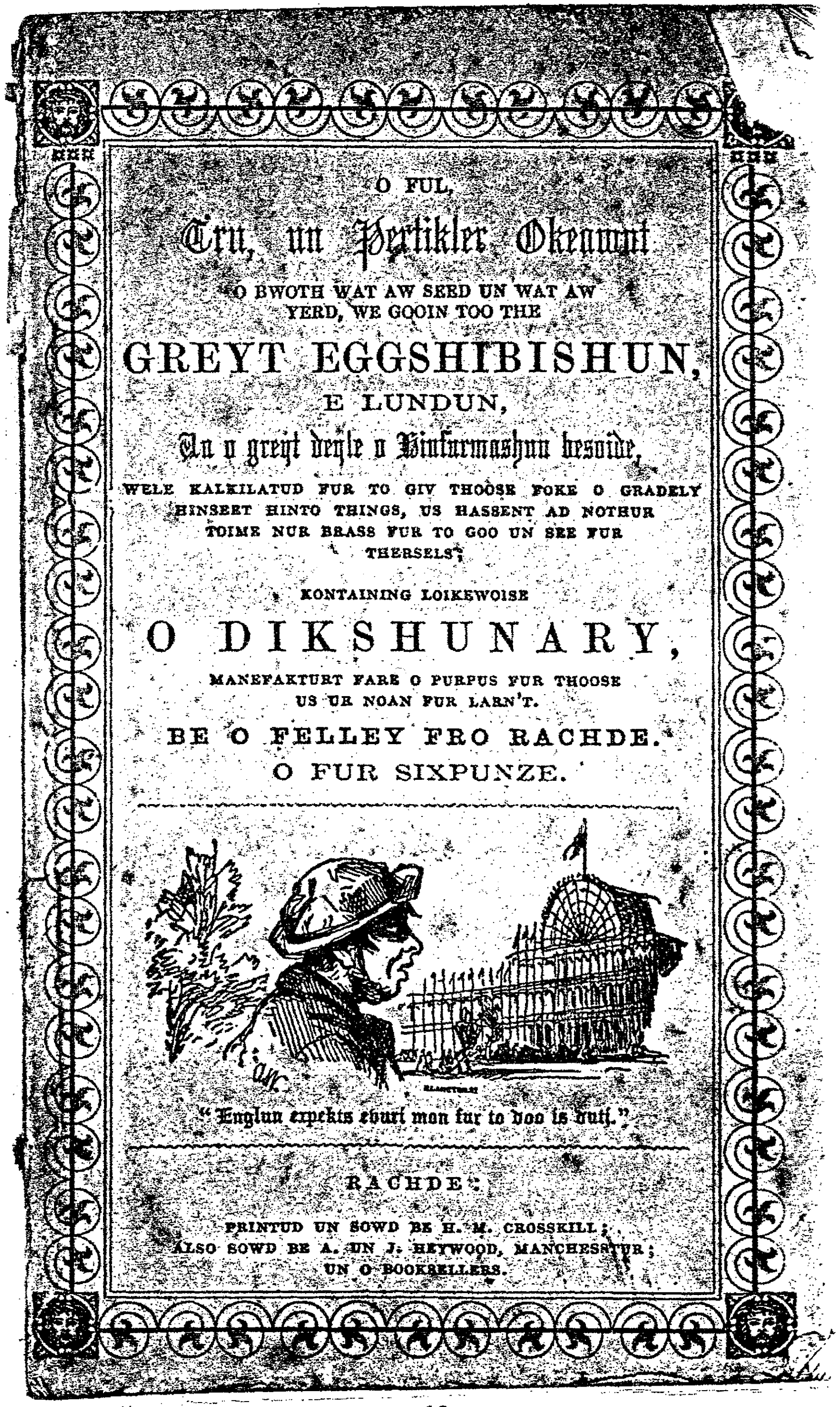
Elizabeth Gaskell: *Mary Barton; North and south*, edited by Alison Chapman. Icon Critical Guides. Icon books, £7.99

This book fills the gap in Gaskell studies between the academic monograph of which there are now several able and the exam crib. Useful for the student, it deals with the topic in more depth than most books at this level – 192 pages with a detailed bibliography and a summary of the critical response of the novel over the years.

Lancashire Dialect and the Greyt Eggshibishun

by John Chapple

In 1855 Elizabeth Gaskell told Parthenope Nightingale that she was looking for the *Ratchda' Men's Visit to th' Great Exhibition*, which had been mentioned by William in his lectures on the Lancashire Dialect the year before. (Reprinted in *Mary Barton*, ed. Angus Easson, Ryburn Publishing, Halifax, 1993.) It is also known that she gave William Whewell a copy at Glasgow in 1855 (Mrs Stairs Douglas, *William Whewell*, 1881, pp. 442-3). We are able to reproduce the title page of this rare work, courtesy of Pam Godman of Rochdale Local Studies Library.


O FUL,
Tru, un Pertikler Okeawnt
O BWOTH WAT AW SEED UN WAT AW YERD, WE GOOIN TOO THE
GREYT EGGSHIBISHUN,
E LUNDUN,
An o greyt deyle o Hinfurmashun besoide,
WELE KALKILATUD FUR TO GIV THOOSE FOKE O GRADELY HINSEET HINTO THINGS, US HASSENT AD NOTHUR TOIME NUR BRASS FUR TO GOO UN SEE FUR THERSELS;
KONTAINING LOIKEWOISE
O DIKSHUNARY,
MANEFAKTURT FARE O PURPUS FUR THOOSE US UR NOAN FUR LARN'T.
BE O FELLEY FRO RACHDE.
O FUR SIXPUNZE.

"Englun expekts euri mon fur to doo is duti."

RACHDE:
PRINTUD UN SOWD BE H. M. CROSSKILL;
ALSO SOWD BE A. UN J. HEYWOOD, MANCHESSTUR;
UN O BOOKSELLERS.

A Dark Night's Work at Inverary Jail

One of our members, Valerie Robertson, visited Inverary Jail in 1999 and noticed that the list of library books in 1875 included *A Dark Night's Work* as its only fiction reading (unless *Now or Never* was also fiction? Does anyone know?) Perhaps it was considered as an object lesson. 'Even if the truth about your crime dies not come out in your lifetime, it will surely blight your life, and that of those closest to you'.

Does any member know more about Frederick and Mrs Hill's connection with Mrs Gaskell?

Chief guide to the prison, J G Parkes, sent this information to Valerie in answer to her query, and also a photocopy of the book list which is too dark to be reproduced but we will transcribe it for our home page.

"The new prison regime that was introduced by an Act of Parliament in 1839 placed a lot of emphasis on reform; change the prisoner's attitude and habits and wean him or her away from crime. Apart from discipline and industrious work, religion and the Bible were made an integral part of the system. A chaplain was appointed for every prison, one of his duties being 'the general management of the prison library'.
In 1883 the Chaplain at Barlinnie reported that books were appreciated by the prisoners, 'but some of them, I am sorry to say, prefer books that treat on secular subjects, rather than those works which discuss religious topics'.

> "Books stood alone like bright redeeming angels, between the prisoner and his dreary thoughts and insane impulses. (Unknown prisoner)

The Victorian journalist, Henry Mayhew, visited Pentonville Prison in 1856 as part of a general investigation into the Criminal Prisons of London. The book that was subsequently published gives an enormous amount of detail about life in prison at that time. In Pentonville he recorded:

> [From 7 o'clock in the evening] till 9 o'clock, the prisoners are allowed to read such books as they may have obtained from the library. To show us that the men were generally so occupied, the officer who had attended us throughout the day led us now from cell to cell, and drew aside the small metal screen that hung down before the little peep-hole in each door; on looking through it we found almost every prisoner … seated close to the gas-light, busily engaged in perusing either some book or periodical that was spread out before him.

The Chaplain at Perth General Prison reported that all the books in the library were in constant use, with Biographies, Anecdotes and Travels etc. being the most popular and best remembered. There had been some abuse of the books – writing messages in the flyleaf or end pages was a frequent occurrence in all prisons, including Inveraray – but he had made arrangements to prevent it happening without detection.
Frederic Hill, the first Inspector of Scottish Prisons and the man mainly responsible for setting up the system, was later involved in petitioning for the Married Women's Property Bill with the Law Amendment Society. His wife, Martha, enlisted many women for the cause, amongst them Mrs Gaskell.
Early in 1875 the committee responsible for running Argyll's prisons requested a list of all the books held in Campbeltown, Tobermory and Inveraray. On 3rd February of that year, John McLeod, Governor at Inveraray, listed all of the books 'under my charge … the greater part of them are not complete through being long in use'. *A Dark Night's Work* was reported as 'in good order'.

> What are four bare walls to the man who has access to the princely minds of all ages? … If anything reconciled me to prison life it was access to standard works on every conceivable subject and the leisure to study them.
> (Stuart Wood: *Shades of the Prison House*, 1932)

Membership Update

The recent media attention, provided by the BBC and some newspapers, has promoted a level of enquiry into the Gaskell Society that is well above normal. Many, but not all, of these enquiries have developed into enrolments, with thirty-two new members being welcomed into our Society throughout November and December. On the final day of 1999 my database consisted of three hundred and sixty members in the United Kingdom and one hundred and twenty two overseas members.

Irene Wiltshire
Membership Secretary

South-West Group Meetings

by Rosemary Marshall

On Saturday 20th November the group found Kay Millard's talk on *Mrs Gaskell and Religion* informative and very interesting. The Question and Answer session afterwards showed how carefully people had listened and how keen they were to learn even more. Kay felt that the Unitarian principles of the value of every human being and toleration of other points of view were most apparent in *Ruth*. On the following day members went to a service at the Unitarian chapel which celebrated the life of Elizabeth Gaskell in prayers, hymns and readings. We were made very welcome by the congregation and felt it a privilege to be there.

On January 18th at an informal supper the adaptation of *Wives and Daughters* was discussed.

The next meeting, on 15th April will be on the Gaskells' friends, William Ewart and George Eliot. Held at The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute, 17 Queen Square.

On 7th May there will be an outing to the home of William Ewart: Broadleas near Devizes. A beautiful garden is open to the public.
Some members of this group hope to attend the next AGM and Knutsford Literature Festival on 30th September.

For information contact: Mrs Rosemary Marshall, 138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT. Tel: 01225 426732

Meetings at Cross Street Chapel

These begin with coffee at 10.30 am and are usually held on the second Monday of each month but because February is so short it will be earlier:

7th Feb - Elizabeth Williams: The first three issues of Household Words
13th March - Irene Wiltshire: Elizabeth Gaskell and Witchcraft: A Reconsideration
8th April - Spring Meeting
8th May - Joan Leach: Mrs Gaskell and Spring Customs and Dr Eddie Cass on: Lancashire Peace-Egg Chapbooks (illustrated)

Manchester Spring Meeting at Cross Street Chapel

Saturday 8th April

We hope you will be able to join us for this popular meeting at Cross Street Chapel. We will meet for coffee at 10.30.
At 11.00 am Dr Margaret Lesser will speak about Mme Mohl: Mary Clarke. Dr Lesser is the author of *Clarkey: A portrait in letters of Mary Clarke Mohl.* OUP 1984
Buffet lunch will be served between 12.15 and 2.00pm
At 2.15 Patsy Stoneman from Hull University Department of English will speak on: Taking liberties with the Classics: Adaptation as Opportunity and Responsibility
Booking forms will be sent at the beginning of March together with summer outing details.
We plan to visit the Trough of Bowland area, Stoneyhurst College and Salmesbury Hall in search of the Lancashire setting for Gaskell's short story *The Poor Clare*. Part of this story is set in Antwerp which some of us will see on our Belgium trip in May.
On 30th July we hope to visit an exhibition on the Potter family and attend a commemorative service at Stalybridge Unitarian Chapel.

Knutsford Meetings

Our meetings are on the last Wednesday of the month in St John's Church Hall. A buffet lunch will be served between 12.15 and 12.30 followed by the talk and meetings should finish at about 3 pm. The cost will be £5 per meeting.
23rd February, 29th March, 26th April – Discussion on the television adaptation of *Wives and Daughters* and the Omnibus programme about Elizabeth Gaskell
31st May – Members' miscellany
Further information from Elizabeth Williams Tel: 01925 764271

Internet News

Our Society has been well served by Mitsuharu Matsuoka who has organised our internet pages so that students can download Journal articles and Gaskell texts and find all sorts of information –

The Gaskell Society:
http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-Society.html
The Gaskell Society Journal:
http://lang.nagoya-u.ac-jp/~matsuoka/EG-Journal-Contents.html
Gaskell works in E-text:
http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/EG-etexts.html
Now we also have a UK homepage managed for us by member Jane Thomson at -
http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net/.
Most libraries now have internet facilities so you will be able to consult our homepage for dates of meetings and latest information; it will also be useful for anyone who seeks information about The Society. We can also show you pictures in colour, which cannot usually be done in the Journal or Newsletters.

Knutsford Literature Festival 2000

23rd September-1st October

This is not a Society event but will interest members with its varied programme.
Saturday 30th September will be our AGM. In the morning Andrew Davies will speak about his adaptation of *Wives and Daughters*, showing video clips, followed by a buffet lunch; both of these will be at The Civic Centre.
In the afternoon we will transfer to the Royal George when Jenny Uglow and Margaret M Smith (editor of *Brontë Letters*) will discuss *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Tea will be served before we hold the AGM. We will be voting on taking charity status, which will involve some changes to our constitution.
In the evening there will be an entertainment: Men and Women of Letters, probably preceded by dinner. Members of the public may also attend most of these events, and we realise that Gaskell members may not be able to support such a full programme.
Friday 29th September will be a biography day, and there will be events and a finale on Sunday 1st October. Visiting writers include Nina Bawden, Margaret Drabble, Alan Garner, Michael Holroyd, Angela Huth, Joanna Trollope and Jenny Uglow.
We hope to involve local inns etc in accommodation offers, so watch out for more news. Many of you have become Friends of The Festival (£10 cheque to Joan Leach made out to Knutsford Literature Festival) and will have news and an early copy of the programme, booking concessions etc.

London and South East Group

The group usually meets at The Francis Holland School, Chelsea, a few minutes walk from Sloane Square underground station. Some of the group meet there at 12 noon to have lunch at The Royal Court Tavern. Meetings begin at 2.0 pm

6th May – Wives and Daughters: From Book to Film by Jenny Uglow. Jenny is Vice-President of the Society and advised BBC on the adaptation

16th September – to be arranged

16th November – Annual Meeting – The Thomson Family and the Young Elizabeth Stevenson by Dr Ian Glenn

If any further details are required, please send SAE to Hon Secretary: Dudley Barlow, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA (Tel: 0181 874 7727 – after April: 020 8874 7727)

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings:
http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net/indepth.html

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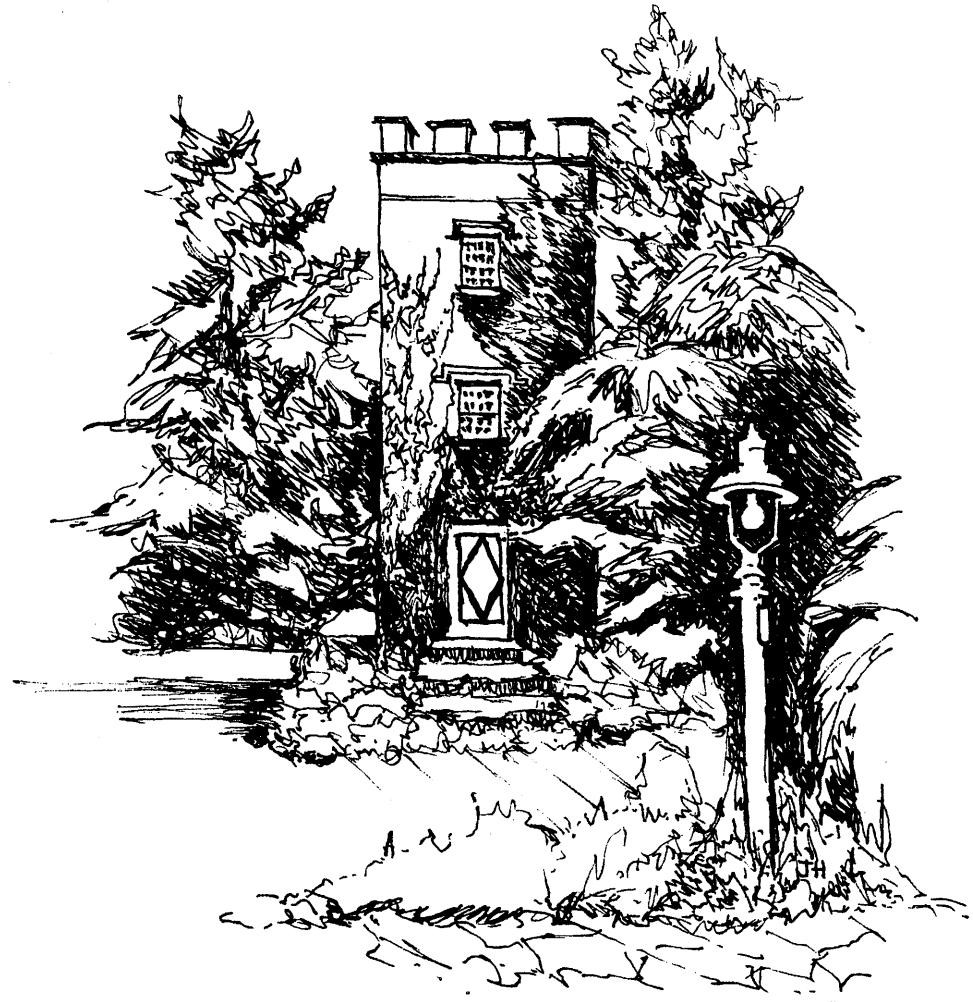
http://www.gaskellsociety.cwc.net

If you have any material or suggestions for future Newsletters, please contact Mrs. Joan Leach, Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN. Telephone - 01565 634668

Hon Treasurer: Brian Williams, 15 Cawley Avenue, Culcheth, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4DF

ISSN 0954 - 1209

The Gaskell Society



NEWSLETTER

August 2000 - Number 30

Editor's Letter

This edition of the Newsletter may look a little different as we have changed our printer. As I write this we are preparing for Knutsford Literature Festival which will be held from 23rd September to 1st October. The Gaskell Society AGM will be on 30th September at 4.00pm after a programme of talks in the morning and afternoon: these will be oversubscribed even though we have space for a hundred and seventy people. The Festival was timed so that Gaskell members could participate but even if it does become an annual event this pressure for space will not happen again because we are proposing to hold future AGMs in Manchester, at Cross Street Chapel, in the Spring; this is partly because members from further afield will find it easier to reach but it will also be more appropriate now that our financial year follows the calendar year. At this year's AGM we will also take measures to become registered as a charity.

In this edition you will be able to read about our visit to Belgium from 11th - 15th May with articles by Jackie Horsfield and Dudley Green. We followed Elizabeth Gaskell to Brussels, where she went to research for *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, and to the cathedral towns for she advised, "If you ever go don't miss these towns on any account". We went to Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent as she did," .... no human being who has not seen them can conceive of the sublime beauty of the cathedrals in the grand old cities in Flanders...while every bit was picturesque the whole was so solemn and sublime...as if the world had stood still with them since the 14th century". (Letters 15)

Part of her story, *The Poor Clare* is set in Antwerp and we were able to see the Beguinage (though there may have been more than one) a community for religious women who served the poor and sick. The story can be found in OUP World's Classics *My Lady Ludlow and other stories.* Some of us will visit Browsholme Hall and Stonyhurst College in Lancashire looking for Catholic traditions which also feature in the story.

We are now planning for our next conference which will be at Bath Spa University, 17th - 20th August 2001. Rome beckons us for 2002. Marie Moss, in this newsletter, has traced for us some of the literary associations of Rome.

We hope to see many of you at our various forthcoming meetings, details of which can be found in the latter pages of this newsletter. You may not be able to join members of the London and South East Group on a guided walk of Southwark by Sylvia Burch so we have printed her itinerary so that you may be able to follow it when you visit London.

Visit to Belgium, 11th - 15th May 2000.

How fortunate we are that Mrs. Gaskell, as well as providing us with some wonderful literature, was also a well travelled lady. Following in her footsteps is proving to be a pleasure indeed. On Thursday 11th May, some forty of us converged on Brussels from various starting points, ranging from Cheshire (of course), Yorkshire, London, Scotland and the Midlands. On our arrival it rained very briefly, but thereafter the sun shone gloriously. How much more pleasant is any place when the weather is lovely.

We began with a conducted coach tour to give us an overview of the city, and this was followed by a sightseeing walk which took us to the Grand Place, only minutes from our hotel. This was an extremely handsome square, with its 17th century Flemish Renaissance style trading and mercantile guild-houses, glittering with gold filigree. Loitering in the bustling, narrow streets it was hard to believe that we were only one hour away from Manchester by plane and it was clear already that Brussels is not like any other city in the world, having a charm that is all its own.

The evening saw us enjoying the first of our very tasty dinners in a nearby restaurant, this trip was already proving to have been very well organised.

On Friday the coach took us to Antwerp, where we were met by an excellent guide, Sheila Cosforth. We began in the Grote Market (Main Square). On three sides are 16th century Guild Houses, topped with gilded figures, whilst on the fourth is the Town Hall. After this we enjoyed the beautiful stained glass windows in the Cathedral of Our Lady. This is a very light and airy cathedral, Belgium's biggest. Works by Rubens and his school embellish the interior. We then visited St. James Church, where Rubens is buried, followed by the Beguinage, a 16th century institution for Beguijns, religious women whose vows were somewhat less strict than those of nuns. Today it is a restful neighbourhood of little houses and cobbled streets.

Saturday was a free day in Brussels, where we followed our own inclinations. Many of us returned to the Grand Place, which was home to a brightly coloured flower market. The little restaurants in the neighbourhood gave plenty of choice for somewhere to have lunch. It was altogether very pleasant to take life at a slower pace and, over a glass or two of wine, to appreciate the tang of flavour of life in Brussels.

On Sunday we went by coach to Bruges. Nowhere on our trip seemed very far from anywhere else, and soon we were in this charming city, with its canals and beautiful squares. Like so many medieval places, it throws your sense of time out of joint, transforming you back across the centuries.

Here, some of us treated ourselves to a tour of the city by horse and trap. Bruges is a gem of a place and very manageable on foot. It really does not need the title 'The Venice of the North' as it can stand most charmingly in its own right, without any reference to other cities. Again, there were plenty of picturesque, good value cafés to choose from. We enjoyed wandering around a flea-market, situated in a lovely, leafy setting at the side of a canal. On a more cultured level, the Beguinage and the Basilica of the Holy Blood were well worth a visit. The trip ended with a 35 minute cruise through the canals where we saw the buildings from yet a different angle.

On our final day, Monday 15th May, we boarded our coach for the last time to visit Ghent. With its canals, this shares some characteristics with Bruges. Both are relatively confined, but Ghent feels more like a real city, a lived-in place. There are many reminders of the medieval mercantile and weaving traditions that brought the city its wealth. Another canal trip was a fitting end to our visit, and as before, the sun shone. In fact, by now it was hot! We enjoyed a final al fresco meal before setting off for the airport and for home.

Altogether, this was a splendid visit. Even the weather had been specially ordered, and Jupiter Pluvius had kept well away. The fine spell broke two days after our return and the temperature plummeted. We all owe our thanks to Janet Allan and Jean Alston for visiting Brussels in advance and for generally sussing out the place, it was particularly bad luck that ill health kept Janet away after all her hard work. And of course our thanks, as always, to Joan Leach for her superb organising abilities (anyone else?).

We look forward with pleasure to our projected trip to Rome. Thank you, Mrs. Gaskell, for visiting so many fine places. I am currently undertaking research to see if she visited the Canadian Rockies, or perhaps China. At the very least, she must have gone to Athens! If anyone has any evidence of this, I would be delighted to receive it.

Jackie Horsfield.

Following The Brontës in Brussels - May 2000

One of the objects of our visit to Brussels was to follow in the footsteps of Charlotte and Emily Brontë who came to the city in February 1842, escorted by their father, the Revd Patrick Brontë. Their aim was ultimately to establish a school of their own in the Parsonage at Haworth and in order to fulfil this ambition they needed to acquire a better knowledge of French and German. Arrangements were made for them to study at the Pensionnat Heger run by Madame Heger in the Rue d'Isabelle. The two sisters remained at the Pensionnat for nine months, returning home in November 1842 on the death of their aunt, Elizabeth Branwell. Charlotte returned to Brussels alone in January 1843 to teach English at the Pensionnat and also to continue her language studies. She stayed in Brussels for a further twelve months before returning to Haworth in January 1844.

It is no easy matter to identify the site of the Pensionnat Heger since there have been so many changes to the area where the school was sited. The Rue d'Isabelle was situated below the fashionable eighteenth century quarter of the city, with its colonnaded Place Royale, Parc de Bruxelles and Palais Royale, and above the lower, medieval level with its crowded shops and huddle of narrow streets. No trace remains of the Pensionnat Heger but it is possible to descend from the Rue Royale to the street levels which Charlotte and Emily would have known. On our first night we were guided by Jean Alston down to the Rue Terakin where we were able to gain some impression of the area where the school was sited. The Rue Terakin is now a scruffy little street but the road still contains the old setts of cobbles. As Ernest Raymond wrote in his *In the Steps of the Brontës:*

> "Down there in the silence you are as near to the Rue d'Isabelle as you will ever get, and your feet are on the cobbles which Charlotte and Emily trod when it was Sunday in Brussels, and the bells were ringing, and they were coming out of the low-lying Rue d'Isabelle into the Rue Teraerken on their way to the Protestant Chapel in the Rue du Musee."

On Saturday morning a group of us decided to explore the area further. We started at the impressive statue of General Belliard beside the Rue Royal and descended the steps to the street below. In *The Professor* Charlotte Brontë describes Mr. Crimsworth's first visit to the Pensionnat:

> "I remember, before entering the park, I stood awhile to contemplate the statue of General Belliard, and then I advanced to the top of the great staircase just beyond, and I looked down into a narrow back street, which I afterwards learnt was called the Rue d'Isabelle. I well recollect that my eye rested on a green door of a rather large house opposite, where on a brass plate, was inscribed, Pensionnat de Demoiselles."

We descended to the street level and after a careful search Brian Hechle pointed out the plaque high on the wall of the adjoining Palais des Beaux Arts, which records that:

> 'Near this site formerly stood the Pensionnat Heger where the writers Charlotte and Emily Brontë studied in 1842-43'.

We then walked the short distance to the Place de la Musee where we found the Chapel Royale where Charlotte and Emily worshipped most Sundays. It was their normal custom to come to the Anglican service held there at 2pm. In *The Professor* we may read Charlotte's trenchant description of her fellow countrymen who attended the chapel. Mr. Crimsworth has just attended a service at the Chapel Royale:

> "I turned from the door of the chapel-royal which the door keeper had just closed and locked, and followed in the wake of the last congregation,now dispersed and dispersing all over the square. I had soon outwalked the couples of English gentlemen and ladies. (Goodness gracious! Why don't they dress better?

Gaskell Society members at the statue of
General Belliard in Brussels.
The Pensionnat Heger was in this area.

My eye is yet filled with visions of the high-flounced, slovenly, and tumbled dresses in costly silk and satin, of the large unbecoming collars in expensive lace; of the ill-cut coats and strangely fashioned pantaloons which every Sunday, at the English service, filled the choirs of the chapel-royal, and after it, issuing forth into the square, came into disadvantageous contrast with freshly and trimly attired foreign figures, hastening to attend salute at the church of Coburg)."

t was in this chapel that Mr. Crimsworth was married to Frances Henri. It was ıere too that Charlotte attended the funeral service of her vibrant young friend, Martha Taylor, who died of cholera in Brussels in October 1842. The chaplain ɔf the Chapel Royal at that time was the Revd Evan Jenkins, known to Mr. Brontë through his brother, David Jenkins, who 30 years earlier had succeeded ıim as curate of Dewsbury. It was through Mr. Jenkins' recommendation that Charlotte and Emily had come to the Pensionnat Heger. After escorting his daughters to the school, Mr. Brontë stayed several days with the Jenkins family ınd paid a memorable visit to the battlefield of Waterloo, a journey also ındertaken by one enterprising member of our party.

Not far away is the Cathedral of St. Michael and Ste Gudule. The toll of its bell dominated the surrounding area as Charlotte knew well, and it was here in September 1843 that Charlotte had one of the strangest experiences of her life. When the school broke up for the summer vacation in the middle of August, Charlotte, feeling an acute sense of loneliness in the deserted ɔuilding, fell into a mood of deep depression. On 1st September she went for ı long walk in the country. She visited the grave of Martha Taylor in the Protestant Cemetery and on her return, not feeling able to go back to the lonely Pensionnat, she wandered through the adjoining streets. On the following day she wrote to Emily describing what happened:

"Yesterday I went on a pilgrimage to the cemetery. When I came back it was evening; but I had such a repugnance to return to the house,I still kept threading the streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue d'Isabelle and avoiding it. I found myself opposite to Ste Gudule, and the bell, whose voice you know, began to toll for evening salute. I went in, wandered about the aisles where a few old women were saying their prayers, till vespers begun. I stayed till they were over. Still I could not leave the church or force myself to go home, - to school I mean. An odd whim came into my head. In a solitary part of the cathedral six or seven people still remained kneeling by the confessionals. In two confessionals I saw a priest. I felt as if I did not care what I did, provided it was not absolutely wrong.

The Pensionnat Heger in the later nineteenth century. (Le Soir, Brussels)

I took a fancy to change myself into a Catholic and go and make a real confession to see what it was like. A penitent was occupied in confessing. They do not go into the sort of pew or cloister which the priest occupies, but kneel down on the steps and confess through a grating. Both the confessor and the penitent whisper very low, you can hardly hear their voices. After I had watched two or three penitents go and return I approached at last and knelt down in a niche which was just vacated. I had to kneel there ten minutes waiting, for on the other side was a penitent invisible to me. At last that went away and a little wooden door inside the grating opened, and I saw the priest leaning his ear towards me. I was obliged to begin, and yet I did not know a word of the formula with which they always commence their confessions. It was a funny position. I commenced with saying I was a foreigner and had been brought up a Protestant. The priest asked if I was a Protestant then. I somehow could not tell a lie and said 'yes'. He replied in that case I could not 'jouir du bonheur de la confesse'; but I was determined to confess, and at last he said he would allow me because it might be the first step towards returning to the true church. I actually did confess - a real confession. When I had done he told me his address, and said that every morning I was to go to the Rue du Parc - to his house - and he would reason with me and try to convince me of the error and enormity of being a Protestant!!! I promised faithfully to go. Of

course, however, the adventure stops there, and I hope I shall never see the priest again. I think you had better not tell papa of this. He will not understand that it was only a freak, and will perhaps think I am going to turn Catholic."

With this account on our minds we climbed the impressive steps leading to the main door of the cathedral. Wandering around we saw several imposing confessionals with ornate wooden carving and dark green curtains. We tried to imagine the scene which Charlotte had described and reflected on her feeling of loneliness and on the depression which had driven her to such an uncharacteristic action.

As we returned along the Rue Royale we were reminded of a happier occasion which took place a few days later when Charlotte caught a glimpse of the 24 year old Queen Victoria on her first visit to Brussels on September 1843. As she wrote to Emily:

"You ask about Queen Victoria's visit to Brussels. I saw her for an instant flashing through the Rue Royale in a carriage and six, surrounded by soldiers. She was laughing and talking, very gaily. She looked a little, stout, vivacious Lady, very plainly dressed, not much dignity or pretension about her. The Belgians liked her very well on the whole - they said she enlivened the sombre court of King Leopold, which is usually as gloomy as a conventicule."

Entering the Parc de Bruxelles we recalled the concert given in the park on the occasion of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the evening of 15th August 1843, it seems likely that Charlotte attended this concert, since in chapter 38 of Villette she included an item from the actual programme given on that occasion in her description of the celebrations which Lucy Snowe encountered when she wandered through the park at night.

Charlotte Brontë's experiences in Brussels, and especially her relationship with Monsieur Heger, provided a vital element in the shaping of her creative genius. For us it was a significant and moving experience to follow in her footsteps.

Dudley Green

Travelling the Literary Trail

by Marie Moss

Working with a BBC television production team, as some members of the Gaskell Society were last summer made aware, requires much standing in line and even more standing about. The long gaps in filming were used most profitably by Jean Hockenhull, who drafted evocative pencil sketches of our locations, and sometimes of her more dilatory companions, who filled the waiting hours with talk of little, or but moderate, consequence. On one such occasion, it was Rome, I remember, at the Goethe Museum, the balconies of which building look usefully over the Corso, Geoffrey Sharps amused the group by relating his close encounters with some of the media darlings whom the press have chosen to lionise. In the absence of a passing carnival parade, or the charming face of Charles Eliot Norton looking up to seek our acquaintance, we were happy to be entertained by Geoffrey's recollections of his meeting with Mandy Rice Davies at the Floral Hall in Scarborough, and allow his claim to even more glamorous intimacy having once shaken the hand of Sacha Distel, which had lately embraced Brigette Bardot.

Returning to the Mediterranean on holiday with my husband a short time later, I paid a brief visit to Taormina, to seek but not find Fontana Vecchia, ' the pink stucco farmhouse' where David Herbert Lawrence and Freida sat out under the Sicilian sun, the bad press which greeted the publication of *'Women in Love'*. Our cruise ship stayed only a day at Messina, before turning north, passed Stromboli, to plough a wake through the Tyrrhenian Sea, along the route the restless Lawrences followed to Sardinia and to Rome. Some days later we moored in the old port of Civita Vecchia, where Elizabeth Gaskell came ashore after her eventful voyage south from Marseilles in the spring of 1857. Like Lawrence, she was seeking sanctuary from the critics. As the paths of these two literary favourites converged, we followed them to Rome, and where else but to the Piazza di Spagna. Rain cascaded down the deserted Spanish Steps, so we took shelter in Casina Rossa, the Keats - Shelley Memorial House. Here are to be found relics of all who, like Norton and Gaskell, lodged in this district of artists, writers and poets, and of many known in some way to Elizabeth. The letters of Goethe, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt; the lock of hair which Elizabeth Barrett gave to Robert Browning, and the sculpture of William Wetmore Storey, Elizabeth's generous host at Casa Cabrale during her stay in Rome.

As the rain continued to fall beyond the opened windows, my husband turned to the small print of our museum guide and drew my attention to a compelling

carnival mask which had been worn by Lord Byron in Venice. I had seen its ike before - yes, it was at the Goethe Museum where a display of etchings of he Roman carnival was filmed by our cameraman for the Omnibus production. smiled, remembering Geoffrey's entertaining exposition of Sharps' Connecting Theory, and my mind began to wander the web of associations, of family and of friendship, which connect E C Gaskell with D H Lawrence. The writer of '*Wives and Daughters'* with the author of *'Sons and Lovers'*. Gaskell readers will be familiar with the two published letters which Elizabeth wrote from the home of her dear friend Mary Greg, The Mount, in Bollington, Cheshire. (Letters 21 and 114). On the first of her visits, made when Florence was quite young, Elizabeth found "such famous nurseries," and a cot by her bedside for baby Julia. The Greg children regretted that Julia had not been brought, but made up for it by making much of Florence, who rushed to be dressed next morning in the nursery to join in their play. She was taken with Alice, Herbert, Katie ('2 years old today') and baby Isobel to the Greg's Home farm to collect cream for them to "churn themselves" for a little birthday tea, 'with their own butter." "Flossy is in high glee and thoroughly at home", Gaskell reports to Marianne and Meta.

In 1852 Elizabeth was again staying at The Mount, and went with Mrs. Greg and all the children and a pony " to meet Meta and Florence," (presumably at the station). Meta mounted and rode the pony home, while Florence "disappeared among the group of children as happy as happy can be with Alice." The next day, Elizabeth and her girls walked with the "4 eldest Gregs" to the Unitarian Chapel in Macclesfield. "3 miles up hills and down hills, wind and dust too and the little chapel itself was so very hot that it made me very sleepy ever since we are all pretty well tired," but Meta "seems to be enjoying herself."

Mary Greg was a warm-hearted woman and good friend to Elizabeth throughout the years of Manchester and motherhood before her increasing fame. Like Caroline Davenport of Capesthorne Hall, a mutual friend, she provided the country air and country pursuits which Elizabeth always wanted for herself and her children. Mrs. Greg was born Mary Needham (1809) into a large Unitarian family living at Lenton, a village at that time, just outside Nottingham. The sons of Hannah and Samuel Greg Senior attended Mr. Taylor's Unitarian school in Nottingham, and all the boys were made welcome at the Needham's home, Lenton House. Mary's lifelong friend was Anna Enfield, the daughter of another Unitarian family. Mary's sister married Anna's brother and remained in Nottingham, but the two friends were separated by what, before the railway age, was a vast distance when Anna married Septimus Dowson and went to live in Norfolk, and Mary came with Samuel Greg Junior to Bollington.

The Gregs had eight children; six girls and two boys, and created for them a happy family life in their large and comfortable house with its big gardens and ample grounds. On August 12th 1860 Ben, the son of Mary's old friend, paid a call with his uncle, William Enfield. Years later this is how Ben Dowson described the occasion:

> "It was a date that has always remained fixed in my mind...in the afternoon we called at Mr. Samuel Greg's house. It was only a visit of a few minutes,but it sufficed to give me a picture of that sweet home as it then was. The girls, scarcely more than children, rushed me down the terrace to get a peep at the lovely view over the hills to Buxton. Amy and Bertha I already knew and loved, but this was my first sight of Alice, then nearly 16, but looking so slight and young."

For Alice and Ben it was love at first sight. Ben Enfield Dowson was a recently qualified lawyer with a position in his uncle's law practice in Nottingham. As William Enfield was also uncle to Alice there was opportunity for her aunt to further the young people's relationship, and in September 1863, when Ben was 26 and Alice 19, the two were married.

Their first baby arrived in 1864 and thereafter others followed at all but yearly intervals until there were ten, eight of them exhaustingly boisterous boys. Alice was an educated, serious minded girl, but young as she was, she found it difficult to manage her children, or her growing household. Her mother came to her rescue. Mary Greg rushed down to Nottingham to care for her at each confinement, and as the family grew, gathered up the older children to bring back to Bollington. Alice too returned to Bollington for weeks and months at a time throughout her mother's life. William Enfield Dowson, Alice and Ben's first born, was what today would be termed as a hyperactive child, and it soon became apparent that separation from Will gave Alice the greatest relief. Although loved by his mother, Will had less than his share of her attention, and spent his early days with his grandparents with whom he was a favourite, and with his unmarried aunts, Amy, Katie and Isobel at The Mount. Will's exploits, breaking and stirring up preserved eggs in the cellar, pouring ink onto blankets and sofa covers, and raiding the kitchens in the middle of the night, nearly setting fire to the kitchen door with a candle, began to be judged dangerous. With his naughtiness seemingly beyond curbing, he was boarded at a small school, at first in Nottingham, and later in Southport. From here he continued to come to Bollington for holidays, and was nursed there when he was sick.

In 1852 Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in a letter to Marianne, "Little cousins are pouring in upon the world" (Gaskell letters 134). One of these, the daughter of William Gaskell's brother Robert, christened Susan Elizabeth (Lily) Gaskell, became Mrs. Walter Greg when she married Alice's younger brother and came to live in Prestbury, some two or three miles from The Mount. Lily Greg and her children spent much time with Alice's boys at the tolerant home of her mother-in-law, and later her daughter, Hilda, was to marry one of the Dowson brood, Will's younger brother, Gerald. The Gaskell, Greg, Dowson ties were close at this time, and the adventure and drama that always seemed to surround young Will Dowson must have been relayed to the Gaskell daughters at Plymouth Grove by their cousin, Lily, or their friends, Alice and her sisters.

Despite the difficulties of his rearing, Will grew into an attractive and capable young man. After two years at Owen's College, Manchester, and some time spent in Dusseldorf, learning German, he became a successful Nottingham lace manufacturer, and a real estate entrepreneur, with boats and weekend cottages for hire along the Trent. Fun-loving and gregarious, his taste for adventure never diminished. He was a pioneer of winter sports in the Alps, and the first in Nottingham to own a car, number AV 1. He drove his mother, Alice, "....so fast that it was rather frightening," she felt. In 1894, Will married Helena Brownsword (Nellie) and took a house on the Mapperley Road.

A near neighbour, Frieda Weekley (née von Richtofen), the lively wife of a rather dull academic, Ernest Weekley, became a frequent visitor, and Alice and Ben Dowson also invited the Weekleys to their home. When Frieda's second daughter, Barbara, was born in October 1904, Will Dowson agreed to be her Godfather.

Will shared with Frieda and her children his enthusiasm for the countryside. He took them for drives, and to swim from his boat and little bungalow on the river. Frieda, bored and ill at ease in English provincial society, proved deft at starting a love affair. They made love on a sea of bluebells under ancient oaks in the grounds of Byron's estate at Newstead Abbey, and in Will's car in Sherwood Forest. Frieda described Will euphemistically as "the one great friend" with whom she "felt alive," and he made Nottingham almost bearable for her. They liked to talk about contemporary novels and Will recommended a satire by John Galsworthy on the theme of a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, probably *'The Patrician'*. "I've met somebody," Frieda told Dowson, "who's going to be much more than Galsworthy." Frieda was ready to turn from a man who had known too little of his mother's love, to one who had known too much.

The story of Frieda's dramatic flight with her husband's former pupil, David Herbert Lawrence, is well known. Will Dowson later wrote to Frieda, "If you had to elope, why not with me?" His letter was carelessly slipped between the pages of *Anna Karenina*, a tale Frieda had read in Nottingham but which now had acquired new meaning for her. Shortly afterwards she sent the book to Ernest, no doubt with an analysis on the moral to be drawn from Anna's dilemma. Dowson's letter was still inside the book when it arrived. Ernest Weekley examined it and mailed it to Lawrence without comment. Lawrence, of course, was not unknowing. Frieda talked freely to him of her relationship with Will, and shared the details of their lovemaking. These were transposed, with authentic locations (Bluebells, Sherwood Forest et al) into the affair between Ursula and Rupert, in *'Women in Love'*.

As the rain stopped, my husband closed his guide book, and we left Byron's sinister mask, peering from its dark corner, to go out into the Piazza in search of lunch. "I think Newstead Abbey would be worth a visit," he observed, "interesting life - Byron's."
"Yes," I agreed, "perhaps next year when the bluebells are in bloom." You know Geoffrey, with a little help from your theory, literary trails become surprisingly crowded. One never knows whom one might meet!

Sources:

Chapple J.A.V. and Pollard A.
- *'The Letters of Mrs Gaskell'* (Manchester 1966)

Byrne Janet
- *'A Genius for Living - A Biography of Frieda Lawrence'* (London 1995)

Meynell Alix
- *'What Grandmother Said - The Life of Alice Dowson 1844 - 1927' (Cambridge 1998)*

Book Notes

O'Farrell, M.A. Telling complexions: the nineteenth-century English novel and the blush. Duke University press £11.95.

This book explores the use of not only the "blush" in Victorian novels to indicate a character's inner emotions and desires but also the use of body traits for similar purposes. It has particular reference to *Pride and Prejudice, Persuasion, North and South,* and *David Copperfield.* The author is particularly concerned with the character of Fanny Thornton (who blushes) and Margaret Hale (who blunders). She draws parallels with Gaskell's editorial difficulties with Dickens.

BRONTË CHARLOTTE and EMILY. The Belgian essays a critical edition. Edited and translated by Sue Lonoff. Yale University Press, 1996.

People who went on the recent Gaskell Society visit to Brussels in search of the Pensionnat Heger may be interested to learn that this book has been reissued. It comprises twenty-eight devoirs or essays written by the two sisters in response to exercises set by M. Heger. Each piece in french is accompanied by a parallel translation and all the corrections and notes made by their teacher. The editor's extensive notes and introduction make ample references to Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and tries to assess the importance of these years on their subsequent careers.

MEYNELL, Dame ALIX. What grandmother said: the life of Alice Dowson, 1844-1927 based on her diaries by her grandmother. Colt books, £25.

For those interested in the people of Gaskell's circle this book has some interesting anecdotal and background information. The author (a distinguished civil servant) has written a biography of her grandmother drawing extensively on her diaries. She was Alice Greg (1844-1926) one of the large family of Samuel Greg the younger of the Mount, Bollington Cross, near Macclesfield who as a child of eight met Mrs Gaskell in 1852 and got on well with her daughter Flossy. She married a lawyer and went to live in Nottingham where she raised a large and diverse family and became a campaigner for reform of women's health and other issues. The book includes information on the Greg family and is in its own right an interesting account of the role of women in the nineteenth century and what was achieved by some of them without the benefit of a university education. I was particularly intrigued by the appendix listing the signatories to the petition against female emancipation of 1889, which includes several people well-known to Gaskell. Mrs Leslie Stephen (mother of Virginia Woolf) whose first husband was a member of the Duckworth family whom she visited several times, the sisters Mrs Walter Bagehot and Mrs William Rathbone Greg, wife of one the most severe of Gaskell critics and also Alice's uncle (their other sister Matilda was once also engaged as was Meta Gaskell to Capt. Hill), Mrs Matthew Arnold and her sister-in -law Mrs W.E. Forster, known from visits to Ambleside, and Mrs Charles Buxton, Sir Henry Holland's daughter.

Mary Barton, edited by Jennifer Foster (doctoral candidate at the University of Ottowa) Broadview literary press, Ontario. (Distributed by Turpin distribution services Ltd, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth SG6 1HN)

Wives and Daughters, edited by Graham Handley, Everyman Gaskell series. Dent, £4.99.

Two new scholarly paperback editions are now available with critical introductions and notes. The new edition of *Mary Barton* is published in Canada. The text is that of the 5th edition of 1854 omitting William Gaskell's lectures on dialect. Textual notes and references are printed as footnotes to the text. Gaskell's own footnotes are distinguished from the editor's by the letters EG. The editor's notes are mostly bibliographic identifying quotes and references. The bibliography includes several books of social background and a general nature.

Wives and Daughters uses the text of the Knutsford edition with misprints silently corrected. Textual notes are brief usually confined to linguistic definitions. What distinguishes both these edition are the appendices of literacy criticism. The former has 103 pages of reviews many quoted in full and extracts from longer works. William Rathbone Greg's influential but very critical article in the *Edinburgh Review* is printed in full for example. They consist of letters describing the composition of the novel, contemporary reviews, contemporary fiction and social documents. There are extracts from such authors as Carlyle, Engels, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Charles Dickens.

Wives and Daughters has only sixteen pages but they include contemporary reviews such as that which the 22 year old Henry James wrote for the *Nation* and unlike the former has extracts from modern critics such as Sharps, Uglow and Stoneman.

Christine Lingard

Literary Walk of Southwark - 19th August, 2000

Mrs Gaskell to her daughters - Marianne & Meta - late 1855?
"...in the bus I sat next to somebody, whose face I thought I knew,...he read '*Little Dorrit*' *And* I read it over his shoulder. Oh Polly! He was such a slow reader, *You'll* sympathise, Meta won't, my impatience at his *never* getting to the bottom of the page...We only read the first two chapters, so I never found out who '*Little Dorrit*' is..."

Perhaps we can do better, as we start our walk close by the site of the Marshalsea prison - where Little Dorrit was born - and almost next to the church of St. George the Martyr - where she was baptised and at the end of Dicken's story, married. This whole area is rich in Dickens associations and we shall visit the Southwark Local Studies Centre (located close by the last surviving wall of the Marshalsea) to examine old photographs and pamphlets/maps etc. After our lunch break at the George Inn in Borough High Street, we shall continue our walk to Southwark Cathedral, and along the riverside to the Globe Theatre.

Detailed Itinerary
Start from BOROUGH Underground Station (Northern Line) Booking Hall - look at nearby Lant St. (Dickens had lodgings there as a young boy) and possibly other Dickens associations. See Church of St. George the Martyr and remaining Marshalsea Wall.

Visit Southwark Local Studies Centre - to see maps of the area, pamphlets etc.

Walk along Borough High St. to the George Inn - noting White Hart Inn plaque on way. Also, site of *Tabard* - starting point for Chaucer's pilgrims.

Lunch at the George Inn - sandwiches/meals available. Prices £5 - £6. £3 for club sandwiches. If fine you may wish to sit in the courtyard.

Short walk to Southwark Cathedral - noting especially tomb of John Gower (first English poet(?) and friend of Chaucer), Shakespeare memorial and window - Harvard Chapel, etc.

Walk along riverside via Golden Hinde!
Palace of Bishops of Winchester (Rose window), Clink St. to Anchor Inn - frequented by Doctor Johnson. Enjoy view from terrace and look into 'Dictionary room' with Johnson Quotes on the wall.

Walk under Southwark Bridge (Dorrit's 'Iron Bridge') towards Globe Theatre - negotiating possible cones, drills and building works!

Near the Globe - explore Bear Gardens area and possibly visit *Light & Sound* Presentation on sit of Rose Theatre (cost at group rate is £2 per person). This is a 23 minute film, shown 1/2 hourly and is well worth seeing for background to the Elizabethan theatre. It needs to be booked in advance.

At the Globe Theatre - tea/coffee is available, also Globe Theatre exhibition, for those who wish to see this. It may also be possible to join a tour of the theatre (cost about £7.50, £6 concession).

At Cardinal's Wharf (just past the Exhibition entrance) - notice the house from which Christopher Wren watched building works at St. Pauls, opposite! And to conclude, for any one who has the energy, the 'delights' of Tate Modern are only a few steps away!

Knutsford Meetings

The latest season of Knutsford meetings was well attended, in spite of the fact that we had to change from Monday to Wednesday. We wondered how we should manage without Irene Wiltshire, who had built up the group so successfully, but this year we have enjoyed a 'Members Miscellany', with a variety of topics and speakers. Dudley Green talked about Patrick Bronte and his relationship with Elizabeth Gaskell; Marie Moss discussed the short story

'Christmas Storms and Sunshine'; Emily White told us about the Gaskell's niece, Mrs Walter Greg, and Margaret Smyth talked about literary Manchester in the Gaskell's time. All speakers were both well-informed and entertaining. Our thanks go to Irene, for four years of carefully-researched talks and stimulating discussion, and to this Year's speakers who have managed to maintain that same high standard.

We also discussed the BBC dramatisation of *Wives and Daughters,* which was pronounced a resounding success, several members giving it ten out of ten. Opinion was more divided on the Omnibus programme about Gaskell. We watched some of the out-takes and were impressed by the stamina of our members in repeatedly climbing stairs, knocking on doors, coming in and going out, and still managing to talk intelligently.

For the next series of meetings we shall be discussing *Cranford.* Meetings will be on October 25th, November 29th, January 31st, February 28th, March 28th and April 25th, with possibly an outing on May 30th. As last year, we shall be meeting at St. John's Parish Hall at twelve o'clock, and each session will involve a buffet lunch, followed by a talk or discussion. All are welcome.

Elizabeth Williams.

For queries about group meeeting address to:

Knutsford and Manchester
Joan Leach
Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN

London and South East
Dudley Barlow
44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA

South West
Rosemary Marshall
138 Fairfield Park Road, Bath BA1 6JT

Gaskell Society Southwest
Group Report on Spring Activities 2000

On Saturday April 15th the group held a meeting at 2.00pm at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution in Queen Square. This was in preparation for our 'Literary Jaunt' to Devizes and Elizabeth Gaskell. Peter Skrine began by describing George Eliot's stay in Devizes at the home of Dr. Brabant, his attempts to dominate her intellectually and physically and her expulsion when this all became to much for Dr. Brabant's blind wife and her sister. The resemblance to Casaubon and Dorothea in 'Middlemarch' is very clear.

Rosemary Marshall then spoke about William Ewart M.P. His family and his political achievements, which included The Public Libraries Act (1850) to enable everyone to improve themselves with free access to books. The bill was pushed through in the Lords by Lord Stanley of Alderley (who thought free libraries were such a good idea that schools could be abolished!). He bought the house at Broadleas because of the new railway line which made it possible to get to London in 3 hours. For such a radical reformer who achieved so much, he seems to have very little recognition today, but his friendship with William and Elizabeth Gaskell must recommend him to us.

Outside the front entrance to Broadleas with its present owner, Lady Anne Cowdray and her dogs.

On Sunday May 7th 16 members and friends met at Avebury on a perfect late spring morning and drove to Devizes. The scenery was just as described by Mrs Gaskell in her letter to Emily Shaen in September 1856, in which she describes "blue misty plains, and villages in nests of trees, and church spires which did not reach nearly where we were in our beautiful free air and primitive world". We assembled in the market square where Peter pointed out the fine 18th century buildings which indicated the prosperity of the town, before taking us to the house from which poor young Mary Anne Evans was so ignominiously ejected. We enjoyed a very good lunch before going out to Broadleas, since 1947 the home of Lady Anne Cowdray, who opens the beautiful garden to the public. She kindly allowed us to see the ground floor of the house before we went round the garden. No wonder Mrs Gaskell once wrote that she "enjoyed Broadleas far the most of my visit."

We plan a picnic in August and then Dudley Green is coming to speak to us on 'A Question of Trust: The Relationship between Patrick Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell' on Saturday, November 18th at 2.00pm.

Rosemary Marshall

Manchester Meetings at Cross Street Chapel.

The next season's meetings will be held on the second Monday in each month at 10.30 for coffee and biscuits.

9th October -	Christine Lingard, librarian at Central Library, Manchester will give a talk on The Gaskells and Popular Education.
13th November -	Dr. P. O'Brien on Warrington and the Gaskells. Dr. O'Brien MD is the author of *Warrington Academy 1757-86 Its predecessors and successors* (1989).
11th December -	A Christmas Carol Service for The Gaskell Society conducted by the Rev. John Midgley

London & South-East Branch

Future Meetings

Saturday 16th September 2000:	'Meteorological Accuracy in Gaskell's Provincial Novels' **Frances Twinn**
Saturday 11th November 2000: (Date to be confirmed)	'The Thomson Family and the young Elizabeth Stevenson' **Ian Gregg**

Both meetings to be held at Francis Holland School, 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF commencing at 2pm. Lunch beforehand at Royal Court Tavern, Sloane Square, 12 noon, if you wish.

At Home with Elizabeth Gaskell

Many Gaskell Society members have enjoyed a performance of Barbara Brill's *At Home with the Gaskells* at Plymouth Grove, Brook Street Chapel, the National Gallery and many other venues. Now this has been produced as a booklet by:
Teamband Ltd, Wanwood, Park Corner, Nettlebed, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 6DR

One or two copies £5.50 plus 50p postage each, 6-9 copies £4.15 plus 35p a copy postage etc. cheque or postal order to Teamband Ltd.

Tennyson and Gaskell

Our president, Professor John Chapple, having completed the editorial work on *Further letters of Mrs Gaskell,* soon to be published by MUP, finds time to address The Tennyson Society at its memorial service in Bag Enderby church, Lincolnshire, 3.00pm on Sunday 6th August. Members will remember the admiration for the poet which Elizabeth Gaskell shared with Samuel Bamford (Letters 50, 56, 59) and Mr. Holbrook in *Cranford.*

On his visit John will look out for the signpost, 'To Old Bolingbroke and Bag Enderby' to which someone added 'God's gift of a daughter'.

Two Events at The British Library

Tuesday 12th September, 6.15pm - 7.15pm
Andrew Davies & Jenny Uglow discuss:

'Adapting the Classics'
For many people today, the classics of English literature are most readily accessible through film versions, and especially televised 'costume drama'. Andrew Davies is the doyen of TV scriptwriters, having adapted *Pride and Prejudice, Middlemarch, Wives and Daughters* and many others. Here he talks to Jenny Uglow, author and editor of many books, including *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (1993). Video extracts from Andrew Davies' work will be shown.
Prices are £7.50 & £6.00 concessions.

Sunday 1st October, 3.00pm-4.20pm
Tuesday 3rd October, 7.00pm-8.20pm
Pascal Theatre Company present the world premiere of:

'Charlotte Brontë Goes to Europe'
An adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette.*
Written and directed by Julia Pascal; music composed and played by Mark Bousie.
Villette, unlike *Jane Eyre,* does not end with 'Reader I married him', and its autobiographical aspects are unmistakable, with more than a hint of Charlotte's own unrequited love for Monsieur Heger. *Charlotte Brontë goes to Europe* is set in the mid-19th century and the present day, and uses video, hymns, live contemporary music, original text, dramatisation from the novel and Charlotte Brontë's little-known Belgian notebooks, in a work specially created for the British Library.
Prices are £7.50 & £6.00 concessions.

Apply to:
The British Library
Events Box Office
96 Euston Road
London
NW1 2DB
Tel: 020 7412 7332

Email: boxoffice@bl.uk

Progress on The Gaskell House Plymouth Grove

The Gaskell Society has been very concerned about the house for years, but we are a literary society, not capable or willing to take on the responsibility of bricks and mortar. However we instigated the setting up of the Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, an independant Building Preservation Trust, which has as its first project the restoration and conversion of the house. The trustees include two members of the Gaskell Society Committee, the Chairman of the trustees of Cross Street Chapel (the Unitarian Chapel in Manchester where William Gaskell was Minister), a property owner, a surveyor and a conservation officer, and there is a professional project manager. A detailed survey of condition, history and possible self-supporting future uses is now almost complete. The house is in a very poor state of repair and also suffers from subsidence. The approximate cost of restoration and conversion will be £1,200,000. The Heritage Lottery Fund in principle support the project, and would supply about half the money needed. The trust hopes to find the remainder from a combination of grants, income from the property and low-interest loans. This process will take about 2 years, during which time we hope the present tenants will remain to guard the house against vandals.

The beautiful drawing room, dining room, music room and William Gaskell's study, although in very poor condition, retain many original features and we hope will be available for public use. Photographs taken in the 1890s show these interiors in some detail, and some of the original furniture is known to exist. The rest of the premises have very few original features, except the doors and windows. The catalogue of the auction sale in 1914 lists most of the contents, and we are anxious to trace the articles which were sold then.

So you see that although 84 Plymouth Grove does look neglected and shuttered, much work has already been done and we hope that in two or three years time it will open its doors to the world.

Historical Background

84 Plymouth Grove was the home of the Gaskell's from 1850 until the death of Meta Gaskell in 1913. Its importance was recognised in the 1950s when it was given a grade II* listing which saved it from demolition when most of the rest of the street was cleared to make way for the present housing estate. It is

recognised as a building of national importance. At present it belongs to Manchester University and is let to a Tamil Housing Association, the long-term tenants, the International Society, having recently moved to other premises.

Janet Allan

Stop Press

Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell
edited by John Chapple and Alan Shelston.
Published by Manchester University Press £45: distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press, Inc. 175 Fifth Avenue, New York Ny 10010 USA.

The Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton by James Turner
Published by Johns Hopkins Unversity Press: distributed in U.K. by Plymbridge £35.00. This book, reviewed in the Times Literary Supplement (14th July, 2000) may be of interest to members and will probably be reviewed in our next journal.

We have a few copies of:
The letters of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Eliot Norton 1855-1865
edited, with an introduction, by Jane Whitehill (1932)

This is a 1973 reprint by George Olms, in their *Anglistica and Americana* series. Our copies cost £10 with 70 pence p&p to U.K. addresses and pro rata.

Apply to:
Mrs. Joan Leach,
Far Yew Tree House, Over Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0HN.

Illustrations on cover and p.10 by **Jean Hockenhull.**