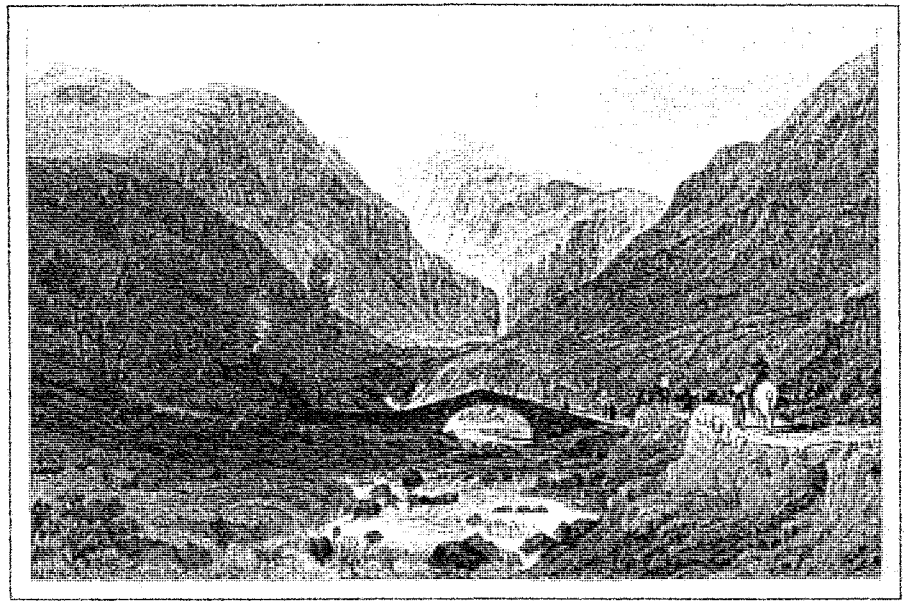
The Gaskell Society



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)

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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Professor of English Literature at Manchester University; meanwhile, with Alan Shelston, the work continues on the unpublished Gaskell letters.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:

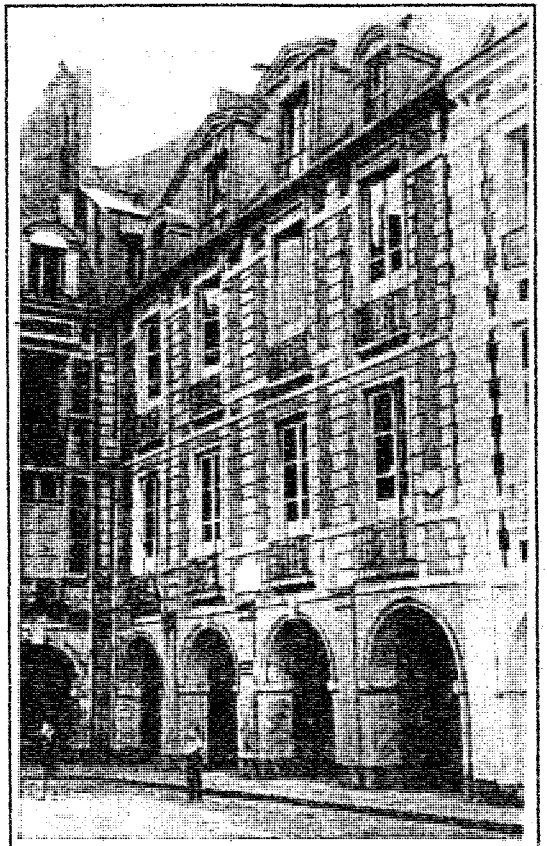
1. ***Traits and Stories of the Huguenots*** (December 1853, in *Household Words*)
2. ***My French Master*** (December 1853 in *Household Words*)
3. ***Company Manners*** (May 1854 in *Household Words*)
4. ***An Accursed Race*** (1855 in *Household Words*, 1859 in *Round the Sofa*): on the 'Cagots', 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

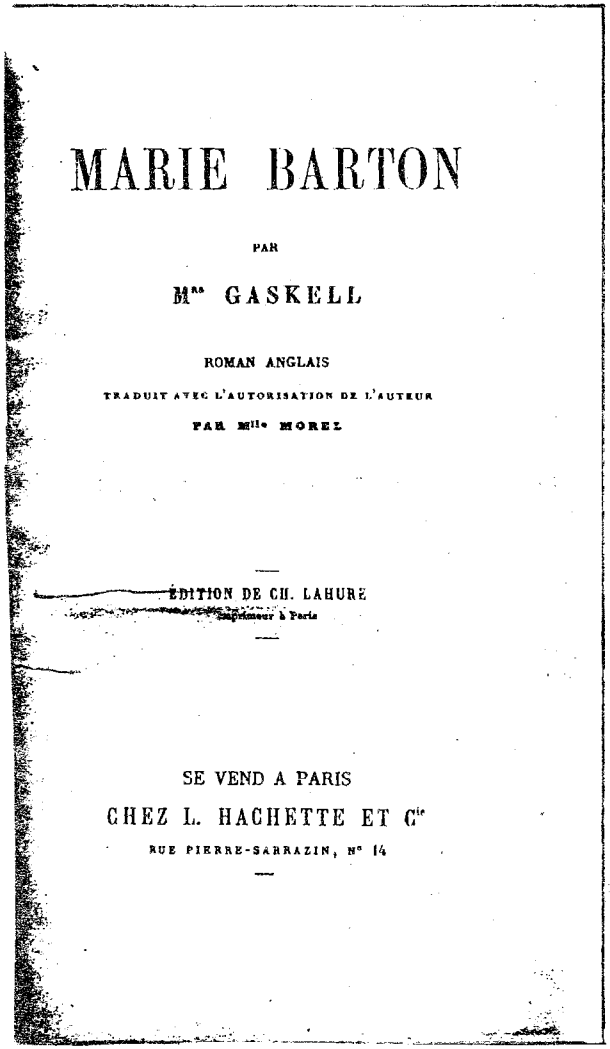
Please put these dates in your diary NOW. Please note that the second meeting of the year will be held on 15 May, not on 24 April as originally planned.

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

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Imprimeur à Paris

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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