The Gaskell Society

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2014 - Number 58

THE GASKELL SOCIETY HOME PAGE has all the latest information on meetings.
http://gaskellsociety.co.uk

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Editor's Letter

Helen Smith

'And summer's lease hath all too short a date'

As it was in the sixteenth century, so is it now. Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter! Important reminders and dates for diaries:

There are still places available on the Italian study tour: 'In the Footsteps of Mrs Gaskell', 20-25 September 2014. Details from Anthony Coles: email him on arctc@btinternet.com or write to 18 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 5SX.

The Autumn Meeting will be held as usual in Knutsford Methodist Church on Saturday 27 September. On the following day, Society members are welcome at the Brook Street Unitarian Chapel morning service at 11 o'clock. Flowers will be placed on Mrs Gaskell's grave before the service. (Booking form for the Autumn Meeting is enclosed with this Newsletter.)

2015 AGM will take place on Saturday 18 April.

The 2015 Conference will be held at Cober Hill (post code YO13 0AR) 17-20 July. Some excellent speakers have already been engaged. Final details and booking forms will be sent out with the next Newsletter.

Exciting news on the home front! Manchester Historic Buildings Trust, the owner of 84 Plymouth Grove, plans to re-open the former home of the Gaskell family in an official event on Thursday 2 October. The House will also be open on Saturday 13 September as part of the Heritage Open Days week-end. Some of us have already visited the renovated house. After the twenty-first century eye adjusts to designed (fitted) carpets, wallpaper in a different design, chintzy soft furnishings, we can easily slip back into the mid-nineteenth century. Once the boudoir grand (a Broadwood, on loan, I believe) and more furnishings are installed, the house will be ready for visitors to call upon Mr and Mrs Gaskell. (How very different from the current fashion for minimalism and informality). Ladies, please remember your bonnets.

Cri de coeur from Geoffrey Scargill who gave the afternoon lecture on Sir Edward Watkin (1819-1901) 'the nearly man of Manchester' at the AGM on 12 April. In the memorabilia he brought for us to look at, was a small booklet which had belonged to Edward Watkin in childhood, entitled *The Cries of London* or *London Cries*. It was in a small brown envelope. This has not been seen since that day. If any member who attended the AGM knows anything about this missing booklet please get in touch with Geoff on either 0161 432 6992 or 07970 877636.

Correction to page 42 in the last Newsletter: the street in Wellington named after William, the brother of Charlotte Brontë's dear friend Mary Taylor is Waring Taylor Street. The Editor apologises for misinforming the readership.

To all who have contributed in any way to this Newsletter, may I express my sincere thanks. We shall include an article about Marianne, a report on the Italian Study Tour, in the next Newsletter, and much more if YOU will but write. I shall happily suggest subjects if you are in doubt as to what to write about (better grammar than this please!); no one has yet taken up my offer to ghost-write.

To Rebecca Stuart at iPrint, as ever, our most grateful thanks for the finished product and for her patience in the, at times, painful process.

Next deadline: 22 January 2015

Primitive, Cheap and Bracing: the Gaskells in the Alps

Christine Lingard

In 1851 Albert Richard Smith climbed Mont Blanc. Champagne was drunk, a quadrille danced and the 'Marseillaise' sung on the summit. Back in London he staged a lavish magic-lantern show. Audiences were enthralled by his accounts of following in the footholds carved by his young guide, Michel Devouassaud, while enjoying chocolate brought to them by St. Bernard dogs! It was tremendously popular. The young Edward Whymper, most celebrated of Victorian climbers, was one influenced by it. It was the beginning of the Victorian fascination with mountaineering. Between 1854 and 1869 – 'the golden age' - 39 alpine peaks were climbed for the first time, all but eight of them by British parties. The Alpine Club, the world's oldest, was founded in 1857.

It is not known whether any of the Gaskells saw the production, but they had long had an interest in Switzerland. Manuscript music books compiled by Elizabeth Stevenson at school included Swiss and Tyrolean songs, which were fashionable in the 1820s. She annotated one: 'a song or rather National Air of the Swiss – it is forbidden to be played by the French as it caused the desertion of the Swiss Guard.' Her choice of costume for a fancy dress ball was a Bernese shepherdess. Despite his dislike of foreign diet her husband went on a walking holiday in Switzerland in August 1855. No details are known except a mention of the French resort of Chamounix [sic].

In April 1860 a tonsillectomy forced daughter Meta to decline an offer from 'a middle-aged lady friend' to go on a two-month sketching tour to the Pyrénées and

Pampluna [sic]. New arrangements were made – so instead of accompanying the rest of the family to Heidelberg:

> On the 6th of May Meta set out for Paris, Lyons, Avignon, Nice, Mentone, over the Col di Tenda, Turin, Val d'Aosta, [Arona] Maggiore, Orta & Varallo, Lugano, Val Anzasca, over the Simplon, La Vallée, Lake of Geneva, Champèry, [sic] & Diaberets, Thun, Grindelwald & home by Berne, Strasburg, Nancy[,] Paris. There! You can imagine her route, taken with an oldish Miss Darwin (sister of Mr Chas Darwin) in quiet respectable luxury, stopping where they liked, - and sketching. *<Letters p630>*

> It made a great impression – on her return Meta is found engrossed in Tyndall's *Glaciers of Switzerland*. Her mother first visited in 1863, on the return from Italy 'via Verona...Milan, Bellinzona... Inn at top of St. Gothard, [Schweizer-Hof], Lucerne, and then the 18½ hour train journey via Bâle to Paris'. *<Letters p702>*

1864 was a year of great stress for the family. Gaskell was under pressure from George Smith, publisher of *The Cornhill Magazine*, for the next instalment of *Wives and Daughters*. The engagement of her eldest daughter Marianne to her cousin, Thurstan Holland, was the cause of friction in the family. His father was threatening to stop his allowance if the marriage went ahead. Meta was still suffering from the strain of her tireless efforts during the cotton famine. She yearned for 'glacier-air' – it had done her so much good in 1860 – so a visit to Switzerland, where they could live 'au pension', was decided on. Even so her mother had to ask Smith for a £100 advance to finance the trip. William borrowed *A Summer Tour in The Grisons and Italian Valleys of The Bernina* by Mrs Henry Freshfield, from the Portico Library, and their plans were made:

> Last autumn I dare say you know, she [Florence] and Charlie and Thurstan too for that matter, went with us to Pontresina in Switzerland. We had but very little money to spend so our object was to go to cheap healthy places and live there without moving about, and for me to settle to my writing whilst there. We found our two places, Pontresina and Glion (up above the Lake of Geneva) where we lived for 3-4 a day and I think never did such a party go to Switzerland and travel about less. We never saw Mt Blanc nor the Jung frau nor Monte Rosa nor the Matterhorn nor Vevay (4 miles from us at Glion), nor Lausanne, Geneva, Interlacken [sic], Lauterbrunnen, etc., etc. *<Letters p559>*

Glion is described by *The Rough Guide to Switzerland* as 'an eyrie of a village perched among fields of narcissi directly above Montreux, with jaw-dropping views over the lake and the Rhône'. The area had been popular with British tourists since Byron's visit to the Castle of Chillon in 1816. It was still undeveloped in Gaskell's time – no large hotel till 1869. Pontresina is in the Upper Engadine valley, near St. Moritz. Gaskell described it as '6,000 feet above the level of the sea – primitive,

cheap and bracing'. It has long been popular with foreign tourists. Hans Christian Andersen was there in 1862. Other visitors have included Tennyson, Richard Wagner, Matthew Arnold and Arthur Sullivan. A regular visitor, Mary Taylor, friend of Charlotte Brontë, described the friendliness of the locals in her book *Swiss Notes*.

Most visitors stayed at the grand Krone (Crown) Hotel. The Gaskells preferred the more modest family run Hotel Steinbock. The holiday however did not have its desired effect. Meta's health did not improve.

> There she had a very bad attack of headache,- (bewildering, whirling headache is the kind–) and a Mr (later Sir John) Erichsen a great famous London surgeon (University College Hospital) was staying in the hotel, & prescribed for her with such good effect that she has continued under his care. <*Letters p744*>

Marianne North, in her book *Recollections of a Happy Life* (1894), wrote of travelling to Pontresina in 1864 with her father and sister, Catherine, 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 particularly well formed hand.

Marianne (1830-90) was a celebrated botanical artist who travelled extensively. There is a gallery devoted to her work in Kew Gardens. She was half-sister to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, whose husband had introduced Gaskell to Charlotte Brontë. Her sister Catherine (1837-1913) married John Addington Symonds (1840-93), whose many books include *Renaissance in Italy*. 'Mr Symonds took the Newdigate, & a double first, but he might be dull for all that; only he is not', said Gaskell. He wrote in his *Memoirs*:

> Well, I set off alone, early in August 1864, to overtake the Norths, I was going in search of Catherine... on the morning of 10 August, I found myself at the Hotel Krone (then only a modest inn...) Loitering in the entrance before lunch, I met Catherine... And every day we walked together... There is a bridge above the stream at Pontresina; and this became our meeting place; and here, one afternoon, when snow was falling in thin flakes, I asked her to be my wife... We were married in Hastings on 10 November 1864.

Hence Gaskell's delight on 6 December 1864:

> Do you know two very clever people have made one? i.e. 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. <*Letters p739*>

She was innocently unaware that the wedding was a sham – designed to hide his homosexuality and was not happy.

The Alps became a favourite destination for Meta and her sister Julia – including the 1871 Oberammergau Passion Play. You have only to look at the list of paintings in Plymouth Grove to see their love of lakes and mountains. And when they built a holiday home in Silverdale, what style of architecture did they choose? – a Swiss Chalet. It is evident that many of these trips were energetic:

> *What* a trouble one's travelling trousseau is! Good gracious, how tired I am of planning skirts and bodies and panniers, each of which is to combine rightly with all the others – And then boots are such a plague! <*Meta - July 1871*>

It is notable how many of their friends were climbers. An early member of the Alpine Club was Stephen Winkworth, as regular a visitor to Plymouth Grove as was his sister, Catherine, who ended her days in Geneva. His wife, Emma Thomasson, was the first woman to climb the Jungfrau. Presidents of the Club included Virginia Woolf's father, Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) and Mrs Freshfield's son, Douglas (1845-1934), who had accompanied her on her travels. He also climbed in the Caucasus, with another member of that celebrated family of French guides, François Devouassoud. In the 20th century came John Norman Collie (1859-1942) son of Selena Winkworth. Leslie and Douglas had something else in common – they were both brothers-in-law of Thackeray's daughter, Anne Ritchie (1837-1919), a good friend of the Gaskells, – Leslie married her sister, Minny – Douglas, her husband's sister, Augusta. Leslie apparently knew Thurstan Holland. Lady Ritchie writes of a visit from Gaskell just after her father's death: 'Our conversation was interrupted by Leslie Stephen and Thurstan Holland coming arm and arm into the garden'.

Meta's obituary states that they were the first ladies to cross the Moming Pass, a difficult but not dangerous pass linking Zermatt to Zinkel, which is rarely attempted. This cannot be verified. They certainly weren't the first. Lucy Walker had that honour, in 1865, only a year after Stephen Winkworth had been prevented by illness from joining Whymper's successful attempt. Leslie Stephen did refer to Meta as a 'brilliant performer', after he had taken her on a 12-hour walk over a glacier pass, and was impressed by her endurance. Whymper's *Scrambles in the Alps*, graphically describing avalanches en route, was one of Meta's most treasured possessions, and finally, Michel Devouassoud, guide du Lirets, Chamonix, received £25 in her will.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Mrs Diane Conrad, whose husband's grandfather, Claud Saratz, was a member of the family which owned the Hotel Steinbock in the 19th century, for supplying much of the information and the picture of the Hotel. She will be

organising an exhibition in 2016-17, on Pontresina's distinguished 19th century British visitors and the church they built. Full details will be given when available. For further pictures see www.hotelsteinbock.ch.

Further Reading

Bicknell, John W. (ed.) Selected letters of Leslie Stephen, vol. 1, 1864-1882, 1987.
Chapple, J.A.V. Elizabeth Gaskell: the early years, 1997.
Chapple, J.A.V. & Pollard, Arthur. (eds.) The letters of Mrs Gaskell, 1997.
Grosskurth, Phyllis. (ed.) The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds: the secret homosexual life of a leading nineteenth-century man of letters, 1984.
Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. Blackstick Papers, 1908.
Wiltshire, Irene. (ed.) Letters of Mrs Gaskell's daughters, 1856-1914, 2012.

Corrections

Edwin Stockdale

Charlotte Brontë's existence becomes divided into two parallel currents – her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman. There were separate duties belonging to each character – not opposing each other, not impossible, but difficult to be reconciled.

Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857)

Elizabeth writes in her dining-room,
doors closing and opening around her.
She carries on, undisturbed.

Catch the Midland Railway to Keighley,
take a trap over the moors to Haworth –
church, graves and parsonage dominate the skyline.

Some pages flow untouched;
others are heavily scored,
insertions scribbled on the back.

Charlotte paces the parlour
as frost curls its iron fist at the casement.
She's indelible under moonlight.

Elizabeth closes her manuscript
in a firm fast hand,
hardly a word erased.

On a day of hawthorn blossom
Charlotte marries, watched by tree sparrows
beneath the rim of those hills.

Railways

This article is written to celebrate the naming of a railway engine after Elizabeth Gaskell, by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon George Osborne, MP at Manchester Piccadilly station, 28 March 2014.

The Naming of the Train

Alan Shelston

Elizabeth Gaskell's adult life virtually coincided with the early years of the British railway system. In October 1830, when the first passenger railway train went on its celebratory journey from Liverpool to Manchester, Elizabeth, then a young woman of 20, was familiar with both cities. She liked 'Liverpool and the Mersey and the accent and the people very much' as her letters to her friend Harriet Carr make clear. Manchester was less attractive but it was, as she said, where her work with her husband called her to be.

As the railway system expanded so the Gaskells made increasing use of it. Following the success of the line between the two cities lines were established along the Lancashire coast and through central Lancashire to the north, and the family took advantage of them. Thus Elizabeth writes to Mary Howitt in 1838 after a stay at Rivington 'This morning we were off at half past 8 for Bolton, home per railroad (Gaskell Letters, p.19); in the same letter she makes her famous reference to Mrs J J Tayler's 'impromptu baby at Blackpool... Bathing places do so much good.' The new railway lines allowed bathing places on the Lancashire coast and then North Wales to develop rapidly in the 1830s. In 1846 she takes the children to Poulton-le-Fylde to get them away from the threat of an outbreak of scarlet fever. In 1858 we find her giving instruction to a friend about how to reach Silverdale: 'Meta has looked out your Liverpool trains... leaves L'pool 4-10 p.m./Reaches Preston 5-15/leaves Preston 5-18/ Lancaster 6-14.. I think you take your ticket to Lancaster; then to Carnforth (two stations beyond –) then change trains for our dear little Silverdale – where you arrive 5m. to 7.'

Regular visits to London and to the south of England through the 1840s and '50s were facilitated by the gradual expansion of the system nationwide: as the railway network expanded so too did Elizabeth's social connections, although for some time travel to London from Manchester involved switching between the services

of two companies and a journey of more than five hours. The merging of the London and Birmingham railway with the Grand Junction and the Manchester and Birmingham railways in 1846 made the journey easier, but not as straightforward as Charlotte Brontë's direct journey from Leeds to the capital in 1849 would be. Events like the 1851 Great Exhibition drew Elizabeth to London, as did her daughter Marianne's schooling there from 1850. Fortunately by then the quality of the carriages had improved from the original use of converted horse-drawn road vehicles, but it was not until 1888, long after Elizabeth's death, that a direct line of the GWR would significantly reduce the journey time from Manchester to London.

The rapid expansion of the railway system quickly facilitated the movements of individuals throughout the country in the mid-nineteenth century. It was also of great benefit to the novelists. Dickens travelled from London to Birmingham by stagecoach in 1839, but returned to London by train a few weeks later. Gaskell, Dickens, Braddon, later Hardy, all have novels in which railway travel figures as an instrument of plot; Margaret Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* reads at times like *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*. For the novelists, reference to the railway is always an expression of mood. Such reference is invariably intensely dramatic: railway journeys in Victorian novels are rarely relaxed. In *North and South* the Mr Hale and his daughter make their way 'on the little branch railway', towards the gloom of Milton-Northern (the fictional city standing for Manchester) as if to a prison sentence. In what is perhaps a glancing reference to the massive viaduct at Stockport Elizabeth writes that 'they were whirled over long, straight hopeless streets of regularly built houses'; the viaduct, built of 11 million bricks and completed in 1840, was not far from the Gaskell home in Plymouth Grove. (Ch 7) Later in the same novel the heroine's brother, unjustly pursued by the law, escapes from pursuit late at night from an isolated railway platform of which he is the single occupant: the scene is predictive of the similar use of such circumstance by the film directors of the next century.

Cranford, somewhat surprisingly given its reputation, begins with the violent death of Captain Brown as he tries to snatch a child from the path of an oncoming train. Despite Cranford's reputation as Knutsford fictionalised, this idea must have been an invention by Elizabeth Gaskell: there was no station at Knutsford at the time when she wrote her novel. For that Knutsford had to wait until 1862. In *Cousin Phillis*, written a decade later than *Cranford* and another Cheshire story with a strong autobiographical dimension, the engineering work under the supervision of Mr Holdsworth is more efficiently conducted. Holdsworth has been involved in railway building in Italy, a detail which is also factually accurate, since British engineers did work on the developing continental systems at this point in time. But Elizabeth's most successful fictional account of railway travel is surely to be found in that first novel, *Mary Barton*, written when the novelty of her early Manchester-Liverpool journeys, could still have been in her mind. Here she takes her heroine on a visit to Liverpool to save her lover from certain death as he stands in the dock

accused of murder. For Mary it is a desperately anxious mission, and she regards it with very mixed feelings: 'Common as railroads are now in all places and especially in Manchester, Mary had never been on one before; and she felt bewildered by the hurry, the noise of the people, and bells, and horns; the whiz and the scream of the arriving train.' Nevertheless, and despite her anxieties, 'The very journey itself seemed a matter of wonder.' Mindful perhaps of the various illustrated accounts of the journey that had appeared, like I. Shaw's Views of the most interesting scenery on the line of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, first published in 1831, Elizabeth goes on to describe the beauties of 'Chat Moss and the picturesque old houses' that can be seen from the train: The whole chapter is an example of how rail travel opened the landscapes of the mind. (Ch 26)

I end on a personal note. Attending Gaskell meetings in Knutsford I always enjoy my short ride on what is known in our family as 'The Chester Flyer.' And as we trundle along I take in the view over the green Cheshire plain - Hale, Ashley, Mobberley, Knutsford. Edward Thomas remembered Adlestrop: 'Yes. I remember Adlestrop. The name.' Well I remember Mobberley - the name. For Gaskell followers to have the named train on that line has something very appropriate about it. May the flyer long continue its stately progress – until it is beyond Knutsford at least.

John Geoffrey Sharps B Litt, M Ed, MA, B Th

Heather Sharps

Many Gaskell Society members have shown an interest in my late husband's life and achievements, so I shall outline his academic career which was varied and stimulating. He was born in Cheshire in 1936 and died in Scarborough in 2006 aged 69. During the last years of his life, he suffered from lung trouble; one lung had virtually collapsed and he had to use an inhaler constantly. However his mental faculties were always clear and alert.

I met Geoffrey at the Queen's University of Belfast at the end of my four years of study there (mainly English Language and Literature, with French and German subsidiary). A fellow student introduced me to Geoffrey, who in turn, invited me to accompany him to the graduation ball. I accepted his invitation, and, as a result, we met on several occasions before the 'big' event. We found that we had a lot in common (we were both 'only' children, we also enjoyed good literature, the theatre, the cinema and sight-seeing). Geoffrey had a number of university degrees; an MA in literature from the University of Edinburgh; a B Litt from Oxford - this degree included Elizabeth Gaskell's works; and when I first met him, he was about to be awarded an M Ed. Furthermore, when he 'retired' from academic life, he studied and qualified with a Bachelor of Theology from the University of Hull. The main drawback was the distance between us when Geoffrey returned to his home in

Cheshire. We corresponded frequently by letter and made many 'phone calls, but despite the distance we met on about four occasions per year from 1963 and 1966.

Shortly after graduating, I was fortunate enough to be appointed to teach English, French and German in a grammar school in Belfast (1963 until 1967). Geoffrey and I married in Belfast in 1966, and a year later, I joined him in Scarborough where I held a teaching post for two years. Geoffrey lectured in a College of Education in Cheshire until he went to Scarborough where he lectured and taught at a Teacher Training College (Psychology and Education) under the auspices of the University of Leeds. I joined him in Scarborough in 1967 and was fortunate to find a 'good post' in the Scarborough High School for Boys. After two years I was encouraged by Geoffrey to apply for a teaching post as Head of English in Hunmanby Hall, a Methodist Girls' Boarding School. I taught there for two years, but I found driving strenuous, as shortly after joining the staff of the school I had an unfortunate road accident, which caused constant stress on my part. For this reason, I taught for only two years at the school.

Geoffrey stayed diligently at the North Riding College in Scarborough, until he took early retirement and so he could be fully immersed in the Gaskell Society. We were fortunate to be able to attend many meetings of the Society, and we often travelled over the Pennines to the John Rylands Library and Plymouth Grove. Geoffrey introduced me to every facet of Elizabeth Gaskell's life and work - most of her novels, her family situation and the Unitarian connection. Geoffrey's proximity to Knutsford and other towns and villages (as well as Manchester) obviously influenced his choice of author.

One of his most memorable 'colleagues' or 'mentors' was A Stanton Whitfield, who wrote the foreword for Geoffrey's book. He encouraged Geoffrey in every way he could. He had a 'quirky' sense of humour: for instance, his house in Wales was known as 'Wuthering Heights'.

In addition to revealing her Cheshire background, Elizabeth Gaskell displays a great knowledge of human nature - humour, tragedy, atmosphere good and bad. Geoffrey was a dedicated scholar; he was knowledgeable about his subject and generous in his praise of others who held Mrs Gaskell in high regard. It is through Geoffrey that I came to value Elizabeth Gaskell's insight and gift for story-telling.

Editor adds: Geoffrey and Heather Sharps always made a forceful presence at meetings during the first twenty years of the Gaskell Society's existence. I vividly remember Geoffrey with his puns (variable in quality but always abundant in quantity) and his tape recorder (what an aural archive!). We are delighted that Heather comes over from Scarborough to join us when she can.

Fortunately Geoffrey's masterpiece, *Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention: a study of her non-biographic works* is still available. This is an invaluable reference tool for all Gaskell scholars. If any of our members have not yet acquired a copy, this work is available from Mrs Heather Sharps, Sarda Lapis, 25 Cornelian Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 3AL at a bargain price of £5 for Gaskell Society members.

The Murillo Trail of 'Woman Drinking'!

Pat Barnard

In the year 2007 Manchester Art Gallery hosted a splendid exhibition Art Treasures in Manchester: 150 years on. 1857 saw a unique Mancunian achievement with the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition (MATE) being the largest temporary display of art ever mounted in the world.

We know from her letters that Elizabeth Gaskell was busy hosting friends attending the exhibition. The following letters posed an interest in one of the paintings: 'Woman Drinking' and what was it?

1. From The Further Letters, Tuesday September 22nd 1857 to William Stirling

> My dear Sir,
>
> Lady Hatherton has asked one of my daughters to make a sketch for her in water colour of your Murillo 'Woman Drinking'. She went accordingly, yesterday, but was very properly refused (now one thinks of it) to make even a small imperfect sketch without your written permission. May she have it? Meta Gaskell by name, - fond of drawing but not likely to endanger the value of your painting by anything like too faithful a replica.
>
> Yours very truly
>
> E C Gaskell

William Stirling was the leading expert on Spanish art at the time. His interested started in 1840-41 when he toured Spain with George Holland. George Henry Holland, Gaskell's cousin was an exact contemporary of William Stirling at Trinity College Cambridge so it is highly likely that this is the George Holland who accompanied William Stirling.

Letter 373, September 26th 1857 to Mr Deane (one of the organisers of MATE)

> Mrs Gaskell presents her compliments to Mr Deane and begs to inform him that Miss Meta Gaskell has received permission to copy any of Mr Stirling's

pictures that she wishes. She therefore begs to remind him of his kind promise to admit her and the friends staying at her house, who come from a distance tomorrow(Sunday), and as it would be pleasanter for Miss Gaskell to copy before the Exhibition is open to the Public, Mrs Gaskell would be extremely obliged to Mr Deane if he would allow her daughter to have permission to enter at 8 o'clock.

Letter 374 September 28th 1857 to Charles Eliot Norton

-----Meta really did get up this morning to a seven o'clock breakfast, and went, before I was down, to the Exhibition to try and make a water-colour sketch of that Murillo Study-- a woman drinking,---for Lady Hatherton, who asked Meta to do it for her.------

From The Further Letters October 10th (1857)

My dear Sir,

I seem to myself to have been very ungrateful in not having sooner thanked you for your very kind permission to allow Meta to copy your ' Woman Drinking'. I suppose I have a fresh afflux of obligations to you, now I see how successful she has been. She finished her copy yesterday. Thank you very much.

2. Manchester Art Gallery was approached to throw some light on this painting. We were investigating with the title 'Woman Drinking' by Murillo and nothing came up in the research.

3. Dr Waagen (director of the Royal Gallery of Pictures, Berlin) wrote a book *Art and Artists in England* which was a source for The Art Treasures Exhibition. I searched through the volumes at The Portico Library but the mystery remained intact. Emma Marigliano suggested an on-line search but all to no avail. We were searching under 'Woman Drinking'!

   It was suggested that Cheetham's Library may assist.

4. An appointment with Cheethams Library was made indicating our request in advance so that when Ann Waddington and myself arrived, volumes associated with MATE were ready for our perusal. Sitting in the seats once occupied by Engels and Karl Marx we had something of a eureka moment! There was reference to Woman Drinking - detail of Moses Striking the Rock. (The reference did not include a copy of the painting.) However was this the 'Woman Drinking' that Meta had been asked to make a copy of?

5. A hand-out provided by Professor Matsaie Matsumara of the Art Treasures Exhibition 150 years on, did not provide titles but noticed one was of a woman drinking. I emailed the Professor in Japan and he confirmed that this was the

detail that Meta had been asked to copy and that *any library would have a copy of it!!!!*

6. Few weeks later Bramhall library managed to loan a book on Murillo, with relevant painting, from Southend-on-Sea. I later, via Amazon, was able to purchase the Royal Academy of Art Exhibition Catalogue 1983 on Murillo which also included Moses Striking the Rock.

   Photos were taken of the painting ready for poster presentation on The Art Treasures Exhibition 150 Years On, For Plymouth Grove Display.

   Of course although the detail was now established further interest in Murillo and why the detail was important to Lady Hatherton intrigued, so read on!!

7. Murillo was commissioned to execute paintings on the theme of Mercy in 1670 as found in the Gospel according to Matthew (chapter 26 verse 35,36) for The Hospital of la Caradid, Seville.
   (a) Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes. I Was Hungry And Ye Gave Me Meat.
   (b) Moses Striking the Rock. I Was Thirsty and Ye Gave Me Drink.
   (c) Abraham and the three angels. I was a Stranger and You Took Me In.
   (d) Return of the Prodigal Son. I Was Naked and You Clothed Me.
   (e) Christ healing the paralytic. I Was Sick and Ye Visited Me. (Now in the National Gallery London)
   (f) The Liberation of St Peter. I was in Prison and Ye Visited Me.

8. Why was Lady Hatherton interested in the detail Woman Drinking? Lady Davenport was a friend and admirer of Cobden, before and after her marriage to Lord Hatherton. In 1853 ECG wrote to Cobden:

   I saw Mrs Davenport just before her marriage. She showed a packet of congratulations, and then said 'I think I would have given half of these up for a line or two from Mr Cobden.' Your picture hangs up among her 'heroes' in her bedroom.

Christine Lingard provided the following information. Richard Cobden spent 14 months touring the continent with Salis Schwabe and came back a fervent admirer of Murillo. It has been suggested but not confirmed that the Schwabes brought back several copies of Murillos.

Could it be that Lady Hatherton commissioned the copy for Cobden to add to his collection, as an intermediary or as a gift?

Copies of The Works of Mercy are in the Palace of Aranjuez near Madrid. These were created for the 300th anniversary of the painter's death. Marshall Soult took

most of the original Works of Mercy during the Napoleonic era. Christ Healing the Paralytic is now in the National Gallery London.

Perhaps you already knew all this and know where the water-colour sketch is now housed. Is it with descendants of Lady Hatherton or Cobden or even the Gaskells??

I, too, have now become a fervent admirer of Murillo and hope to visit the Palace of Aranjuez but would hope at some stage to visit Seville *on an artistic tour!*

A Very Modern Marriage

Ann Brooks and Bryan Haworth

(This article is based on a talk given by the authors to the London Gaskell Society in February 2014.)

[Note: In text: L refers to Chapple and Pollard eds., *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester, 1966); F.L. refers to John Chapple & Alan Shelston eds., *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester, 2003, paperback edition]

Though Elizabeth Gaskell is well known, she was half of a very unusual couple for the times in which they lived. It has been said that it is 'not easy to understand Gaskell's relationship to William'.[1] Part of the difficulty is that none of the letters between the two has been preserved, and very few of William's at all. Their family and friends would have expected a traditional marriage dedicated to family, the Unitarian church and its incumbent social responsibilities.

On their marriage Elizabeth must have seemed an unlikely prospect for a Minister's wife. It was said of her that 'she had scandalously proved to be a good waltzer' at a party given by the Sydney Potters.[2] She herself seemed sceptical as she wrote to Harriet Carr on 3 May 1832 '... and the day before yesterday another friend of mine has *wedded* (for really *'married'* is becoming too common a word.)'. (F.L. p. 17) Later on 8 August she wrote again with talk of 'wedding-gowns' and added 'I fancy to learn obedience is something new - to me at least it is.' (F.L. p. 19) Aunt Lumb commented 'Why Elizabeth how could this man ever take a fancy to such a little giddy thoughtless thing as you'! [3] For William it seems to have been a *coup de foudre*. On 27th March 1832 he wrote to his sister saying: 'You can't imagine how lonely I feel without her. I must get over to Knutsford again next week! for one day at least! I am now writing with her rings [?ring] on my fingers ... And with her likeness lying before me, if likeness it can be called.'[4]

Were they really so incompatible? They certainly had very different upbringings - the country versus the town.[5] William was born in Warrington in 1805 into a notable

Unitarian family, and spent the rest of his life in various towns and cities. Graduating from Glasgow University, he trained at Manchester College, York, and was appointed assistant minister at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester in 1828. In contrast Elizabeth's experience was much less settled. Elizabeth was born in London in 1810. Her mother died a year later whereupon her aunt, Mrs Hannah Lumb, took her to live in Knutsford, Cheshire. From age 11, she was educated in Warwick and then Stratford-on-Avon. Aged seventeen she returned to London to live with her father who died two years later. The next two years were spent in Newcastle-on-Tyne with the family of Rev William Turner, a Unitarian Minister. This was to be the connection that brought her to Manchester and William.

When the couple settled into their new life, William's ministerial duties continued as before but for Elizabeth it must have been a considerable readjustment. As to her new role she would have had plenty of advice to call on. For example the Rev Turner had written to his daughter on her marriage listing the duties of the wife of a Unitarian minister.[6] These appear daunting today. 'She must not engage in the gaieties of the day but should be grave ... sober and faithful in all things. She must meet her husband's expectations, be discreet, respectable in appearance, affect frugal housekeeping with no needless expense for herself. The family must set an example for religious duties and actively participate in educating the lower classes of the congregation. She should be cheerful and have no meddling gossiping habit'. This was in contrast to the views of her father, William Stevenson, on the role of women, expressed in *The Westminster Review*, January 1826. 'When women are regarded and treated as they ought to be, then will manners be what they ought to be; and what is of greater moment, both sexes will co-operate, though by different means, towards the advancement of society in knowledge and happiness.' He continued that women should 'bestow their approbation only on those men who regard and treat them as equal to themselves in their capacity for knowledge and usefulness.' [7] She seems to have successfully combined these conflicting pieces of advice. She actively engaged in William's work as a Minister's wife together with caring for their growing family. In pursuit of both 'knowledge and happiness' she began to follow her own literary interests as was shown by their joint poem discussed below.

The contemporary descriptions of conditions in Manchester make grim reading:

> There was ... Bear-baiting, dog-fighting, pitch battles of men leading to drunkenness, fighting, obscenities, and misery. ... The dram-shops, Tom and Jerry shops [low class beer-houses], and public houses swarm the Lord's Day over and overflow at night by the addition of these gamblers, and multitudes of females, lost to all sense of shame, and totally destitute of every virtue that makes a woman lovely and respectable ... the depravity of large numbers in Manchester exceeds aught I ever saw before; and the Police use but little power to prevent it.

This is an extract from the 1833 *Report of the Ministry to the Poor*, by The Manchester Domestic Mission Society.[8] *A History of the Society* describes William as a man 'so much honoured and beloved, one who, in later years, together with his talented wife, wielded an enormous influence for good in Manchester and the surrounding district ...'.[9] They captured this world in the poem written together, and published in the January edition of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 'Sketches Among the Poor, No. 1.', 1837.[10] Throughout the marriage they were both involved in educational and charitable work including teaching at Lower Mosley Street Sunday School and at the Manchester Unitarian Sunday School.

Both William and Elizabeth continued to have work published after 'Sketches Among the Poor'. His commitment to education for the workers was summed up by a verse in one of his many hymns:

Child of labour lift thine head
Think not meanly of thy state
Let thy soul be nobly fed
Thine shall be a noble fate.

William had handwritten the hymn into his personal copy of his friend John Relly Beard's, *A Collection of Hymns for Public and Private Worship* (London and Manchester, 1837).[11]

He had specific requirements whilst writing, no scribbling while moving around the house as Elizabeth did. William required peace and quiet when teaching, composing his sermons and conducting church business. The family were forbidden to disturb him at such times. At Plymouth Grove he had his own large, sacrosanct study though now he had an outside door for visitors. So total was his seclusion that his wife's existence was doubted by at least one student.[12] William published *Temperance Rhymes* in 1839. Elizabeth sent a copy to John Pierrepoint in June 1841, pointing out Wordsworth had commended the work and Mary Howitt had said 'This is true poetry'. (F.L. p. 24) Elizabeth herself wrote, 'You blame me for not having told you of my husband's poetical talents ... I have the same feeling of modesty in praising my husband that [I] should have in praising myself.' (F.L. *ibid.*) At the same time Elizabeth was an anonymous contributor on local customs to Howitts' *Rural Life in England*, 2nd. ed., 1840.[13] They then published her piece 'Clopton Hall' in *Visits to Remarkable Places*, also in 1840.[14] That Elizabeth had never stopped writing is supported by a request from Mary Howitt in 1849. She wrote asking for an emergency piece of work, suggesting to Elizabeth '... I presume it is already written and is one of the *many* manuscripts which lie in a certain drawer.' [our italics][15]

In October 1844, a son William was born. On holiday in Ffestiniog in August the following year he died after contracting scarlet fever. Both William and Elizabeth

were devastated and William, as an antidote to her grief, encouraged her to consider writing a novel. William's response to the tragedy becomes understandable in the light of what is known of both their writing lives. William's suggestion, that writing could act as a solace for grief, was the key to unlocking her literary talent in a new and unrestricted direction. William continued to act as her editor and agent. He sent further examples of her work to *Howitt's Journal*; two stories were published in 1847 and one in 1848.[16] Her first novel, *Mary Barton*, was published anonymously by Chapman and Hall in London 1848 but Elizabeth was soon acknowledged as the author. Local opinion differed, some feeling she had slighted the mill owners and manufacturers. The *Manchester Guardian's* review commented: 'It sinned generally against truth in matters of fact either above the comprehension of the authoress or beyond her sphere of knowledge.'[17] Another review complained of her 'morbid sensibility to the condition of the operatives'.[18] Elizabeth began her practice of leaving Manchester whenever a book was published to regain her strength.

William was a strong support throughout all this and his role continued through her authorial career. His knowledge of dialect was renowned and his wife recognised this, and his help, by including his series of essays on the subject as an addendum in her 1854 edition of *Mary Barton*. He also acted as translator from the French of two stories in *Household Words; Bran* (pp. 179-81, Oct. 22 1853) and *The Scholar's Story* (pp. 32-34, Christmas 1853) He can also be credited with help in her research. Records in The Portico Library's Borrowing Book show that between November 1859 and May 1860, he accessed three books by William Scoresby on Whale fishing and the Arctic regions. Elizabeth could not take these out herself as women could not be members.[19] Also in 1859, Walter White's *A Month in Yorkshire* (London, 1858) was in William's possession; chapter twelve is titled Whitby. It was in 1859 that Elizabeth Gaskell visited Whitby when researching her material for *Sylvia's Lovers* (Published 1863). He was especially protective after the furore about *Ruth* (1853) and most importantly dealing with the threat of libel after the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1855). William succeeded in fighting off the libel action while Elizabeth and her daughters enjoyed their now famous holiday on the continent.

It was on this tour that Elizabeth met Charles Eliot Norton in Rome, an encounter which has since generated much heat and little light. In her letter to Norton on her return she wrote of the hectic life of Manchester and contrasted it with 'Oh! the delicious quiet and dolce far niente of Italy!' But she was also concerned for William; *'I wish you could persuade him to go to America with you ...* He wants change and yet hates leaving home.'(L. 349 3 June 1857) In all her correspondence to him, she addressed him as My Dear Mr Norton, friendly but formal. In July 1857, when he was unable to visit them she wrote: 'We *are* so sorry - all of us and each of us separately - sorry for your not coming .... No! Now you won't see Flossie and Julia nor Hearn.' (L. 360 p. 459) It is perhaps significant that Norton also began a correspondence with her two eldest daughters after the holiday in Rome. In offering

them the friendship of an art expert on the peregrinations around Rome, he was a fascinating companion to them all. Did she see him simply as a young and intelligent friend and knowledgeable guide? She wrote to him on 25 October 1859 'If good intention were deeds it's about five months since you ought to have heard from me.' (L. 444 p. 579) Time perhaps in which she could reflect on her holiday, though through this time he continued to correspond with the girls. On 9 January 1860, in a letter relevant to this discussion, she wrote to Norton that 'It is perhaps strange to write to you; but I am so perfectly sure you understand me that I have no scruple in doing it; and you will never refer I am sure to anything in your replies, which I tell to you, as to a *brother* of my girls.' (L. 453 p.598) Could this thirty year old have brought a thought of what it would have been like if her son William had lived? Her last letter to him was in September 8, 1865, addressed jointly to him and his wife Susan; William was in Scotland, and she told him confidentially in detail about buying her house in Hampshire - a trustworthy friend indeed. (L 583 p. 774)

Perhaps their holiday arrangements are the one area which is most surprising for a modern reader. For many years they travelled separately as well as together. As a Minister of Cross Street Chapel, William had a month-long paid holiday in August each year, a time he had used to holiday away from Manchester, often in Europe, walking with friends. Elizabeth comments in a letter to the Storys in 1861, 'He cannot meet with a companion (his own women kind wd any of them, be thankful to go with him, but he says he needs 'entire freedom from responsibility ...).' (L. 490, p. 659) This seems cold on both sides and yet in the same letter she was at great pains to make sure he would be well treated. 'It is your bright charming *companionship* I want for him so that if he has a lodging near you it is everything, and he is only too simple in his tastes and wants and wishes.' *(ibid.)* But this was not the whole picture. A different scene emerges when we see him holidaying with the family. One of their favourite holiday destinations was Silverdale on the edge of Morecambe Bay.[20] On 4 May 1852, she wrote to Marianne who had asked to take a friend, Miss Banks, 'I find Papa does not like the idea of having a *stranger* in the house in holiday time when you know when he likes to play pranks, go cockling etc. etc. and feel at liberty to say or do what he likes. I think you may fancy how Papa would feel constrained and obliged to be proper.'(L. 122a, p. 850) She continued this theme in the letter to the Storys quoted above, '.... he is very shy, but very merry when he is well, delights in puns and punning and very fond of children.' (L. 490, p. 660)

It is clear that Elizabeth had total access to her earnings. It should be remembered at this time that any money earned by a wife was, by law, considered her husband's property. William seems to have had no inclination to exercise his rights in this matter. The letter dated 8 September 1865 confirms this when she confided in Norton the details of the purchase of her house in Hampshire. 'I have not money enough to pay the whole two thousand pounds; but my publisher (Smith and Elder) advanced the one thousand pounds ... and I hope to pay him off by degrees. Mr Gaskell is *not to know till then*.' (L. 583, p. 773)

One final comment is perhaps called for. William has always been portrayed as the stiff, unbending Minister but as Elizabeth illustrated in many of her letters he had another side to his nature. He possessed a sense of humour, demonstrated by Elizabeth's descriptions of their family life. Perhaps, also, by his response to another seeming rumour - William's involvement with one of the Winkworth sisters whom he tutored. In 1851 Susanna Winkworth had published a greatly respected translation of *Niebuhr* and Elizabeth felt she herself snubbed by Susanna as a result. In a letter to Eliza Fox c. May 1852 Elizabeth wrote that '...S.W. is so funny and cock a hoop about *Niebuhr*, she snubs me so, and makes much love to William he says 'my life is the only protection he has - he *knows* she would marry him. I wish you could hear him thus in a meek fatalist kind of way.' (L.124, p. 190) Surely an ironic comment that amused them both. In one of the only scraps of his surviving correspondence, William wrote to Marianne after a train journey 'my three fellow passengers like true Englishmen never opened their lips or the windows ...'.[21] If only more of his letters had survived they might have revealed more of his playful nature.

When considering the couple's marriage, it is notable how busy each of them was, both together and separately; Elizabeth with family, house, charities, writing and travelling; William with his ministerial duties and public activities.[22] From the start of the marriage their reported level of domestic and social work activity was remarkable. They were surely both people born with exceptional levels of energy. This allowed them to embark on a scale of activity that for many people was, and is, inconceivable. Could this have been the factor that drew them together? William recognising in the free-spirited young woman, the same intelligence, drive and energy that he himself possessed. The letters demonstrate their continuing devotion to the family and each other. In 1846, in a letter to Miss Barbara Fergusson (their governess) from Southport, Elizabeth showed concern for William, 'Just a line to ask you how you think Mr Gaskell *really* is.' William had fainted in church on the Sunday. There followed detailed instructions on how to look after him; '*Milk* I think he likes best for a constancy; and not too much bread in it; but *always* to take something up. I wish you would make Marianne attend to taking an egg beaten up with a little warm milk and sugar every morning ...'. She added 'I would much rather come home.'(F.L. p.31) Her visit to Southport shows William's concern for her as he had sent her to the coast to rest during the latter stage of her new pregnancy after baby William's death. They were a very close and loving couple and all the evidence suggests this pervaded the whole marriage despite their seemingly divergent lives. In effect this can be regarded as a very modern marriage even though Mrs Gaskell was proud to be Mrs Gaskell and Mr Gaskell was proud to have such a wife.

1 Bonaparte, Felicia, *The Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester*, (Charlotteville and London, 1992), p. 264
2 Chapple, John, *Elizabeth Gaskell, The Early Years* (Manchester,1997), pp. 413-4
3 Chapple, *ibid.*, p. 419
4 Chapple, *ibid.*, p. 453
5 See: Brill, Barbara, *William Gaskell 1805-84 A Portrait* (Manchester Literary and Philosophical Publications Ltd., 1984); Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell A Habit of Stories* (London, 1993

6 William Turner to Mary Robberds, Newcastle, 29 January 1812, Appendix III, Chapple, J.A.V., and Wilson, Anita, *Private Voices The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland*, p. 115. This advice was not just confined to Unitarians. 'Hints to a clergyman's wife or female parochial duties practically illustrated (London, 1832) was dedicated to the Rev Charles Bridges M.A., Vicar of Old Newton, Suffolk. The clergyman's wife is counselled that 'Let none be able to say that private or personal feelings influenced any part of her conduct', p. 10

7 See: Review by William Stevenson, Article III, 'The History of Chivalry, or Knighthood and its Times by Charles Mills Esq. Author of the History of the Crusades 2 Vols., 8 vo. 1825' in *The Westminster Review Vol. V. 1826 Jan - April* (London, 1826), pp. 59-101, extract pp. 80-81.

8 Perry, Rev. Herbert E., *A History of the Manchester Domestic Mission Society, 1833 -1933* (Manchester, 1833), p. 7-8. The Society, established on January 1st, 1833, was one of the many charitable organisations that the Gaskells were connected to. William became Secretary in 1838 (a post he held for the rest of his life).

9 *ibid.* p. 8

10 *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, January 1837, pp. 48-50. See also: Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 101

11 Brill, Barbara, *William Gaskell 1805-84 A Portrait* (Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 1984) p. 49

12 The student, George Fox, thought Gaskell was a myth because they never saw her. See: Smith, Leonard (ed.), *Unitarian to the Core* (Unitarian College, Manchester, 2004), p.61.

13 See: George A. Payne, *Mrs Gaskell A Brief Biography* (Manchester, 1929), p. 40

14 See: Chapple, J.A.V., and Wilson, Anita (eds.), *Private Voices The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* (Keele, 1996), p.46, fn. 32

15 Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p.173

16 'The Sexton's Hero', *Howitts Journal, No. 2*, 1847 and 'Christmas Storms and Sunshine', *Howitts Journal, No. 3*, 1848

17 Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp.215-218, p.224

18 Quoted in Briggs, Asa, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1963), p. 103

19 See: Foster Shirley, 'We sit and read and Dream our time away': Elizabeth Gaskell and the Portico Library', *The Gaskell Society Journal*, Volume 14, (2000), pp. 14-23

20 See: 'Silverdale Tower - Elizabeth Gaskell's Lancashire Inspiration' at http://lancashire.greatbritishlife.co.uk/article/silverdale-tower

21 Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 612

22 1100 people gathered for a soiree at Manchester Town Hall on 10 October 1878 to honour William Gaskell's fifty years work for the city. Each organisation he had belonged to were allowed five minutes to make their contribution. Eleven charitable and religious societies and churches took part and they did not include The Portico Library and The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. See: *Manchester Guardian*, 11 October, 1878; Cross Street Chapel Archives, October 1878.

In Praise of the Independent Singleton

John Greenwood

Towards the end of her article on Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë in a previous Newsletter[1], Patsy Stoneman deals with the situation of the unmarried or single woman. In this article I intend to develop this topic by referring to a few novels and short stories of the 19th century. My choice is obviously arbitrary and readers will no doubt have their own preferred works to refer to. Stoneman focuses on Brontë's *Shirley* and *Villette*, stressing the precarious and lonely situation of

such women; however, Stoneman is careful to point out (by quoting Brontë herself) that the problem is not so much being single as being lonely.

By the end of the 19th century the position of women (both married and unmarried) had radically changed from the situation in, say, the 1850s, though there was still much to be done. In a recent review of a book on the literary and cultural life of Victorian clubland the reviewer writes: '… a large number of women-only clubs flourished in the 1890s… These homes-from-home, such as the *Pioneer*, the *Alexandra*, and the *Empress*, offered the lady-shopper respite from the bustle of Oxford Street, and provided the sporting or culturally-minded lady with opportunities to enjoy her favourite pursuits and … to make independent professional connections. The Victorian gentleman may have searched for 'a room of his own' … but by the end of the century clubs enabled women, too, to escape from domestic confines.'[2]. Needless to say, such facilities were restricted to those women with money and time at their disposal. What was called the 'Woman Question' became the women's liberation movement from the early 20th century onwards. Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) was probably the first literary work in England to focus on the *New Woman* figure. Other writers like Meredith, Shaw and Gissing soon followed, and in 1909 Wells published *Ann Veronica*.

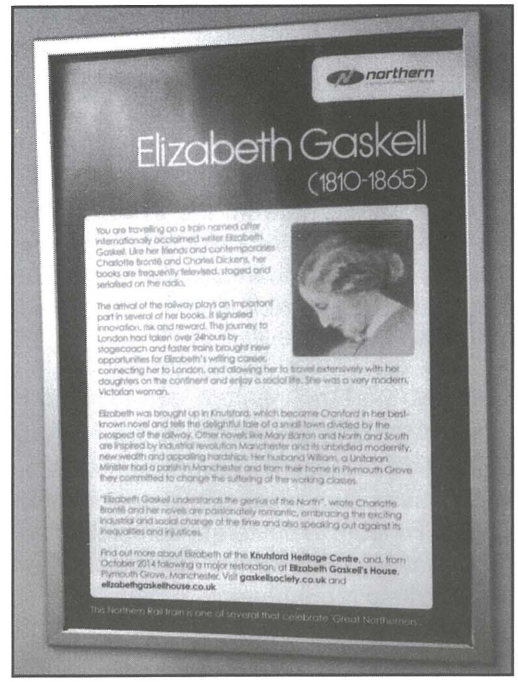
Just to take three articles from the *Guardian* in 2013, much has changed (even since the early 1900s, let alone the mid-1800s) in attitudes and activities in the field of Women's Lib. For example:

> (i) …in a single weekend in October (2013), you could have attended a feminist freshers' fair in London, the North East Feminist Gathering in Newcastle, a Reclaim the Night March in Edinburgh, or a discussion between different generations of feminist activists at the British Library.[3]
>
> (ii) Times have never been better for single women. Long gone are the days when they needed a man to pay the bills and protect them, with a social status dependent on their spouse….There are single people of all ages out there going about their business and enjoying themselves, and the word spinster has been pretty much outlawed.[4]
>
> (iii) Bridget Jones was at least a singleton again, but it was still disappointing that a character who had always been defined by her status as a single woman could only be truly happy when attached to a man.[5]
>
> (iv) Why must the character who is a single woman also be the one who is a failure and obsessive and increasingly odd? It is not as if the single woman is a statistical oddity; the census reveals that the number of single-person households is on the rise. Are the women in these flats and houses all desiccated or loopy or permanently furious or desperately sad? Does the

'Good choice of name'

Tatton MP George Osborne concludes his remarks as he unveils the train's name.

Manchester Piccadilly, 28 March 2014



The Inside Story

NB. Portrait of ECG by daughter Meta

Members of the Gaskell Society and railway buffs gather on Platform 11, at Manchester Piccadilly to celebrate the naming of a train.

thought ever occur that some of them might be happy and fulfilled, with jobs that they love and an understanding of the term family that may extend beyond the word husband or baby?[6]

The typical portrayal of a single woman in 19th century novels was negative; a sad and lonely figure, such as an unappreciated governess or a withdrawn aunt. However, without benefiting from the re-assurance arising from the situation now prevailing, as indicated in the quotations above, there are interesting examples of single women depicted by 19th century novelists as independent and determined to make their own decisions. I have chosen four works by Gaskell: *Ruth* (1853), *Half a Life-Time Ago* (1855), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) and *Cousin Phillis* (1863) and one by George Gissing: *The Odd Women* (1893).

The heroine Ruth shows an independence of mind and will on two crucial occasions. The first is when she is confronted by Bellingham, now using the name of Donne, in North Wales. As well as being in a seemingly weak social position with little prospect of any escape from it, and also still unable to obliterate completely her former feelings for him ('His voice retained something of its former influence. When he spoke, without her seeing him, she could not help remembering former days.' [7]), she counters his very tempting offer of marriage and acceptance of Leonard as his legitimate son and heir:

> I will save Leonard from evil. Evil would it be for him if I lived with you... I do not love you. I did once....I could never love you again... We are very far apart... You shall have nothing to do with my boy, by my consent, much less by my agency... If there were no other reason to prevent our marriage but the one fact that I would bring Leonard into contact with you, that would be enough.[8]

Such a forthright rejection of her former lover and father of her child shows admirable independence and resolution as to what she thinks is her duty to herself as well as to her son, but it is at a price:

> Oh! If I had not spoken so angrily to him – the last things I said were so bitter – so reproachful! – and I shall never, never see him again![9]

The second occasion when she shows strong determination to have her own way, in spite of much opposition by her doctor, Mr Davis, is her decision to nurse Bellingham, who has caught the dreaded fever raging in the town:

> I don't think I should love him, if he were well and happy – but you said he was ill – and alone – how can I help caring for him?... He is Leonard's father... but let me go – I must go.[10]

And, of course, go she does, saving Bellingham but not herself. A sad and even

unacceptable ending to most readers, but in her situation as a single woman she must surely feel relieved, highly satisfied, at her independent decision.

Two years later (1855) Gaskell wrote the short story *Half a Life-Time Ago*. There are certain parallels between this story and *Ruth*. Both heroines have to make extremely difficult decisions which are, in their view, necessary and just, even if painful. The heroine, Susan Dixon, has survived the typhus fever that raged in the village, and so has her brother, William, but 'his speech became slow, impeded, and incoherent. People began to say that the fever had taken away the little wit Willie Dixon had ever possessed, and that they feared that he would end in being a 'natural', as they call an idiot in the Dales.'[11] Susan loves and is engaged to Michael, who unfortunately cannot bear Willie and often mistreats him. Furthermore, Susan promises her mother on her deathbed that she will always look after her brother. When Willie asks her whom she prefers, she quite rightly admonishes him: "You should not ask such questions. They are not fit for you to ask, nor for me to answer."[12] However, she immediately re-assures her brother that he has nothing to worry: "Lover nor husband shall come betwixt thee and me, lad."[13] Susan has the courage and intelligence to confront Michael with the problem in the hope that she can persuade him to help her by accepting joint responsibility for Willie when they marry. To her dismay he refuses, so she has to decide between brother and lover:

> "Thou wilt not bide in the same house with him, say'st thou? There's no need for thy biding, as far as I can tell. There's solemn reason why I should bide with my own flesh and blood, and keep to the word I pledged my mother on her death-bed; ... If thou marry me, thou'll help me to take charge of Willie. If thou doesn't choose to marry me on those terms - why, I can snap my fingers at thee, never fear... Willie bides here, and I bide with him."[14]

Like Ruth and her son Leonard, Susan has made her stand independently; she knows her duty towards her brother is paramount. But again, like Ruth's decision, it is at an enormous personal cost, for (unlike Ruth's changed feelings towards Bellingham, she still deeply loves Michael) she is greatly tempted to regret her brave decision:

> Then she would wonder how she could have had strength, the cruel, self-piercing strength, to say what she had done; to stab herself with that stern resolution, of which the scar would remain till her dying day. It might have been right; but as she sickened, she wished she had not instinctively chosen the right. How luxurious a life haunted by no sense of duty must be! And many led this kind of life; why could not she? O, for one hour again of his sweet company! If he came now, she would agree to whatever he proposed.[15]

However, the very next sentences Gaskell writes are: 'It was a fever of the mind.

She passed through it, and came out healthy, if weak. .... She acknowledged to herself that he [Willie] was to be her all-in-all in life.'[16] Susan is fully aware of the consequences; she will remain a single woman. On the death of Willie, 'there was no one to love her. Worse doom still, there was no one left on earth for her to love.'[17]

In the persons of Ruth and Susan, Gaskell has thus created two personalities who, while not at first revealing any particular strong traits of character (so unlike Sylvia with her unforgiving nature often openly expressed) are placed in a most unenviable dilemma, requiring them to make their own independent decision. Neither turns to friend or family for advice at the crucial moment; both realise the consequences of their decisions. They act courageously as independent single women just as much as the New Women or the Feminists of 20th and 21st century novels.

As to Sylvia Robson in *Sylvia's Lovers*, her experience is far more complex than that of either Ruth or Susan. I mention her in order to contrast her with the other two. While to a certain extent she shared their 'singlehood' status by being denied union with the man she loved (Kinraid) and abandoned by the man she reluctantly married (Hepburn), she lacked their independence of action. After Philip Hepburn's disappearance she is uncertain what to do apart from vague 'notions of the possibility of a free country life once more', so she goes to Jeremiah Foster for advice: 'She was too much a child, too entirely unaccustomed to any independence of action, to do anything but leave herself in his hands.'[18] She also lacks their confidence in making a decision: 'After she had learnt that Kinraid was married, her heart had still more strongly turned to Philip...But across all this relenting came the shadow of her vow... How should she decide? What would be her duty, if he came again, and once more called her 'wife'? She shrank from such a possibility, with all the weakness and superstition of her nature.'[19] By the end of the novel there is surely much sympathy and understanding for Sylvia's plight, but she is not the strong independent 'singleton' we find in Ruth and Susan.

In *Cousin Phillis* we read the sad story of the unrequited love of Phillis for somebody who declares to a friend his love for her, yet goes off to work in Canada and there marries somebody else. This leaves Phillis devastated, but resigned to fate. Throughout the story Gaskell depicts Phillis as very passive, rarely taking the initiative. Holdsworth, the man she secretly loves, describes her thus: "Love her! Yes, that I do. Who could help it, seeing her as I have done? Her character as unusual and rare as her beauty! ... God keep her in her high tranquillity, her pure innocence... She lives in such seclusion, almost like the sleeping beauty."[20] On discovering her love is hopeless, she is deeply grieved but says nothing. The narrator advises the servant Betty: "Don't let us show her we guess that she is grieving; she'll get over it the sooner,"[21] and later he comments: 'Yet all I could do now was to second the brave girl in her efforts to conceal her disappointment and keep her maidenly secret.'[22] So a very different personality to Ruth and Susan, it

seems. However, right at the end of the story Betty (a typical Gaskell creation: no-nonsense but sensitive servant like Gaskell's own Hearn) gives Phillis a piece of her own mind: "Now Phillis! We ha' done a' we can for you, and the doctors has done a' they can for you, and I think the Lord has done a' He can for you, and more than you deserve, too, if you don't do something for yourself. If I were you, I'd rise up and snuff the moon."[23] In a letter to her publisher Gaskell proposes a more detailed conclusion, rather than the rushed one submitted to reach a deadline. She outlines a plot which shows Phillis much more active, determined and independent as a single woman: typhus fever in the village; putting into practice engineering skills she learnt from Holdsworth by draining the village to get clean water; and adopting two child orphans (similar to Susan Dixon's action at the end of *Half a Life-Time Ago*). So potentially, Phillis joins this happy breed of single women who have few of the advantages later singletons will benefit from.

To conclude, I now jump forward to 1893 with the publication of George Gissing's *The Odd Women*. During this interval of three decades much had changed in England for the single woman. In Gaskell's time, when it was estimated there were about 50,000 single women in England, it was possible for the 'spinster' (often unfairly ridiculed as 'old maids' in literature as well in real life) to find protection, for example, in large families where she could help out with domestic duties. By the 1890s this number is estimated to have risen to almost one million in London alone. So the marriage market had become much more competitive. Two of Gissing's *Odd Women* represent the situation of educated but impoverished unmarried genteel women who struggle to maintain respectability (indeed, one of them hides an alcoholic problem). Their sister, Monica, enters into a disastrous marriage for financial reasons - a not uncommon occurrence at the time. However, it is the characters of Rhoda Nunn and her friend, Mary Barfoot, who are Gissing's main concern. These two Odd Women do not seek their future as financially and socially secure wives but as competent and hopefully successful women following feminist aims. They set up a business school in London for training women to participate in public life. A major element of the plot is the conflict for Rhoda between this activity and her love for Mary Barfoot's cousin, Everard Barfoot. This conflict of interest seems to me as tense and painful as that experienced by Gaskell's Ruth and Susan and with the same decision taken, however painfully, to opt against marriage but for an independent single life:

> Will! Purpose! Was she not in danger of forgetting these watchwords, which had guided her life out of youth into maturity? That poor creature's [Monica] unhappiness was doubtless in great measure due to the conviction that in missing love and marriage she had missed everything. So thought the average woman, and in her darkest hours she too had fallen among those poor in spirit, the flesh prevailing. But the soul in her had not finally succumbed. Passion had a new significance; her conception of life was larger, more liberal; she made no vows to crush the natural instincts. But her conscience, her sincerity should

not suffer. Wherever destiny might lead, she would still be the same proud and independent woman, responsible only to herself, fulfilling the nobler laws of her existence.[24]

As confirmation of her having taken the right decision in rejecting Everard, Rhoda exclaims on the final page of the novel, when asked if her work is successful: 'We flourish like the green bay-tree. We shall have to take larger premises. By-the-bye, you must read the paper we are going to publish… Miss Barfoot was never in such health and spirits - nor I myself. The world is moving.'[25]

My intention in writing this article was to refute Thackeray's cynical and supercilious remark '*Is the single woman destined to misery?*' Rather, I would agree with Harriet Martineau's comment when reviewing Brontë's *Villette*: 'All the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing…love. It is not thus in real life. There are substantial, heartfelt interests for women of all ages, and under ordinary circumstances, quite apart from love.'[26] And we must never forget that the trait of independence in a person is not to be confused with either selfishness or irresponsibility. I have already referred to Cousin Phillis' decision to adopt two orphans in Gaskell's alternative ending. Susan Dixon 'took Michael Hurst's [her former fiancé] widow and children with her to live there, and fill up the haunted hearth with living forms that should banish the ghosts.'[27] Gissing ends his novel with Rhoda sharing the responsibility for looking after Monica's baby. Gaskell and Gissing have so much in common as novelists that it puzzles me why he is not as well known and read as she is – but dealing with that puzzle needs another article!

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F E Bache: a Brief Life

John Chapple

In a letter of 22 November 1852 Elizabeth Gaskell suggested to Marianne that 'Helen Tagart & perhaps Ed. Bache with her … or Emily Shaen' might help choose a piano at Broadwood's. Francis Edward Bache (1833-1858) was a musical prodigy - violinist, pianist organist and composer - the son of an important Unitarian minister in Birmingham. He was also friends with an employee of John Broadwood & Sons, A J Hipkins. Hipkins, a distingished authority on keyboard instruments, was trusted to tune the Broadwood pianos used by Chopin on his visits to England.

Helen Tagart was the wife or perhaps the daughter of a prominent Unitarian minister in London, Edward Tagart, a friend of Dickens. Emily Shaen, née Winkworth, had not long before married William Shaen, the Gaskells' lawyer and close friend, William Gaskell himself officiating at the ceremony.

Samuel Bache (1804–1876), Francis Edward's father, was the minister of the Unitarian 'Church of the Messiah' in Broad Street, Birmingham. He had been educated at Manchester College, York in 1826–9. William Gaskell, who had entered the college a year before, would have been a fellow student in the modest and learned Dissenting College just outside Monkbar.

Three of Samuel's seven children were notably musical: Francis Edward, Walter and the youngest daughter, Constance. Constance, who outlived both Francis and Walter, published a memoir in 1901, entitled *Brother Musicians: reminiscences of Edward and Walter Bache* (available on openlibrary.org) and dedicated to A J Hipkins.

Amongst the truly remarkable applied art collections in Birmingham City Art Galleries is a stained glass window rescued from Samuel Bache's church when it was eventually abandoned in the cause of city development. The window is a Victorian Gothic memorial to Francis Edward Bache. The money to pay for it had been raised by a performance of Mendelssohn's once popular oratorio *St Paul*, on 1 October 1863 (BM, p. 101).

F E Bache, a pupil of Sterndale Bennett, became an organist, teacher and composer of piano pieces in London, Leipzig, Dresden and Paris. In his sadly short career he even managed to publish a number of musical items. Some years ago Hyperion recorded Howard Shelley and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra playing a piano concerto by Bennett and one by Bache (CD67595). Though Bache's concerto may never have been performed in his lifetime, it is flowing, tuneful and fresh, with brilliant passages for both soloist and orchestra.

Bache's hectic life, full of original promise, was afflicted by poor health. In January 1856 he went to Algiers to alleviate the symptoms of consumption, but the heat drove him away in April. By December he was settled in Rome (BM, p. 91), where he joined the artistic circle of English and American friends that included Catherine Winkworth, Mrs Gaskell and two of her daughters, Marianne and Meta. Catherine Winkworth stayed with Emma Shaen, an invalid, the Gaskells in the Via Sant'Isidoro with the sculptor William Wetmore [sic] Story and his wife Emelyn. As we know from Gaskell's nostalgic letters to Emelyn Story, it was a supremely happy time. But when Catherine Winkworth came to hear Bache play, she thought that though he played beautifully, he looked 'wretchedly ill' (S Winkworth, ed. *Letters and Memorials*, I.121). In fact, he had not long to live.

The Roman climate and houses 'with their marble floors and absence of fires' became too cold for him. Despite a successful concert in April that gained him £60 net, in May he fled back to his home in Birmingham. A stay in Torquay for the winter, where once again he managed to give a successful concert to a crowded audience in February 1858, did not result in a cure. He returned to his home in Birmingham and arranged a farewell concert. In this he was too weak to play, so a friend had to take his place at the piano. Bache died a few days later, on 14 August.

Left:

Two portraits of F E Bache

Elizabeth Gaskell and Henry James

Alan Shelston

In heaven there'll be no algebra,
No learning dates or names.
There's only playing golden harps
And reading Henry James.

(Popular rhyme cited by admirers of Henry James)

Less than six months after the untimely death of Elizabeth Gaskell in September 1865, a review of her interrupted final work, *Wives and Daughters*, appeared in the American journal, *The Nation*. It was written by the young and upcoming novelist, Henry James, who was then cutting his teeth as a reviewer. Gaskell's novel had first appeared in serial form in the United States in a less distinguished magazine, *Littel's Living Age*, and was finally published there in two volumes only a few days after her death

The publication of British fiction in the United States was a consequence of a process whereby new novels published in England were rushed across the Atlantic for immediate publication by one of the various competing publishers in the major American cities. Where novels were concerned instalment publication obviously helped the process since copy could be printed month by month in anticipation of the work's completion. All of Gaskell's novels, her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and a number of her stories attracted American publishers; she herself once wrote that she was considering publishing only in America. She was of course an Amerophile, with a number of American contacts, but Meta Gaskell was relieved when her mother gave up this idea. Dickens complained of piracy by American publishers, but in fact on occasion he had received quite considerable sums for the publication of his work in America. As in England the circumstances surrounding the completion of *Wives and Daughters* must have presented problems for the publisher but these seem to have been surmounted. James's article appeared in the American journal *The Nation* on 22nd February 1866, the two volume edition of the novel having been published by Harper & Brothers of New York on February 2nd of that year.

James's reviewer's teeth, were already very sharp. Reviewing Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, for example, also in *The Nation* and at the same time (21 December 1865), he attacked Dickens's latest works with vigour: '*Bleak House* was forced,' he wrote, '*Little Dorrit* was laboured; the present work is dug out with a spade and pickaxe.' If the acknowledged master of English fiction was to receive this kind of treatment what hope might there be for Elizabeth Gaskell's more restrained and provincial art?

But *Wives and Daughters* was to be a different story. In his reviews James always wrote for effect and he begins his article with fulsome praise for Gaskell the author: 'There is no sign of haste and immaturity about any of her novels... her word-painting was perfect of its kind.' He expresses his admiration for *Cranford* (nevertheless defining it as 'a work of quite other pretensions') and then praises the distinctive realism of what he admits is a very long novel: 'we are on speaking terms with all the personages of "Wives and Daughters," we can see the Gibsons and Hamleys, and Brownings, as well as if we had called upon them yesterday.' James clearly knows his Gaskell; he follows his opening remarks with a résumé of her work and argues that 'Mrs Gaskell's genius ... was so obviously the offspring of her affections, her feelings,, her associations' that he concludes that her 'genius' was little more than a peculiar play of her personal character.' The writer, in other words was the woman and she herself was exceptional. The article is part criticism, part obituary and, as Dr Johnson remarked, 'in lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath.' However James's hyperbole comes out of his knowledge of the novels: the only work about which he has reservations is *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* where 'her fine qualities, of affection, of generosity of sympathy of imagination' betray her into a 'want of judgment.'

When James goes into detail about *Wives and Daughters* his comments become more specific and in one respect more surprising. 'The book is very long 'and of an interest so quiet that not a few of its readers will find it dull.' Furthermore 'even a very well-disposed reader will be tempted to lay down the book and ask himself of what possible concern to him are the 'clean frocks and the French lessons of little Molly Gibson.' However these are the details that 'have educated him to a proper degree of interest in the heroine'. In other words the very quietude of the novel's provincialism is the key to Molly's 'homely *bourgeois* life.' and that is true also of those 'strongly marked, masculine middle-aged men' like Doctor Gibson and Squire Hamley, who are 'so forcibly drawn as if a wise masculine hand had drawn them'. James had no inhibitions about gender distinction. He would later review George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and praise it for the intellectual power of its organisation and its characterisation. *Wives and Daughters* though is a very different case: it inspires affection for the world and the characters Gaskell has created, rather than the rigour of organisation that is at the core of George Eliot's 'study of provincial life'.

In a later essay, his 'Preface' to his novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, James wrote of the way in which Victorian novels focussed upon their heroines, 'the wonder being how absolute, how inordinately [they] ... insist on mattering.' He listed examples: 'Hetty Sorrel and Maggie Tulliver and Rosamond Vincy and Gwendolen Harleth' – all of them from George Eliot as it happens. And the drift of his argument in his essay on Mrs Gaskell is that the reader becomes over-familiar with Molly who, while unquestionably lovable, lacks the complexity, as distinct from the affection, normally to be encountered in a fictional heroine: 'it may be said that no young lady is a heroine to one who, if we may so express our meaning, has known her

since she was "so high."' The argument is specious, but James, who was himself to write novels where the analysis of character and situation can fairly be said to arrive at the point of inertia, turns his admiration of Mrs Gaskell's skills to a character who has the complexity of interest and motive that he is seeking, and that is Cynthia Kirkpatrick: 'Molly Gibson, we repeat, commands a slighter degree of interest than the companion figure of Cynthia Kirkpatrick.', he writes, whereas Molly's clean frocks and French lessons apparently leave him with nothing to add. But Cynthia's mother, Hyacinth Clare, is 'the best drawn character in the book: Touch by touch, under the reader's eye, she builds herself up into her selfish and silly and consummately natural completeness.' When it comes to the men they are 'less successful than her women,' while Osborne Hamley is 'a much more ambitious figure than Roger' - i.e. ambitious on his creator's part – 'and ambitious as the figure of Cynthia is ambitious'.

When we consider Gaskell and James together there are some surprising similarities. In their lives both enjoyed the privileges of country house week-ends in fine houses. Both became Italophiles; both had a liking for ghost stories: as Miriam Allott once suggested, Gaskell's 'Old Nurse's Story' can be said to anticipate James's more powerful 'The Turn of the Screw'. They both focussed their novels on 'frail vessels' – that ironic Jamesian term for the heroines who bore the brunt of the story. And it is the frailty of the vessels that both exposes and fortifies them. Ruth Hilton, Sylvia Robson and Phillis Holman are examples from Gaskell, while James gives us the heroines of the early novellas, Daisy Miller and the Catherine Sloper of Washington Square, both of whom have a limited knowledge of the world and are thus vulnerable to the carelessness of attractive and more experienced young men. Catherine Sloper, immured in her father's house in Washington Square, is heiress to a fortune. Disregarded by her father she is initially a somewhat timid young woman when, rather like Phillis Holman, she is surprised by the entry into her life of a more worldly young man, Morris Townsend. Townsend however abandons her when he realises her father will never grant him access to her wealth. In stories such as these the heroines are acted upon rather than acting for themselves and the moral outcomes depend upon how they respond rather than on the choices that they make. Gaskell was uncertain how to end Phillis Holman's story after Holdsworth has left for Canada; in *Washington Square* James deliberately left his heroine 'for life, as it were' after a final meeting with the lover who has deserted her, a phrase as telling as Hamlet's 'the rest is silence.' Or to come back to the novel form it is as if Captain Wentworth had NOT returned to claim Anne Elliot, and had left her bereft, like her Victorian sisters. Marriages famously conclude novels, but Elizabeth Gaskell and Henry James seemed on occasion to have taken a more dry-eyed view of human relationships.

Henry James did not take up permanent residence in England until after Gaskell's death and so would not have known her personally. Like Elizabeth, he too proved to be a prolific letter-writer and in 1878 he wrote to his sister Alice, 'I have gone on

dining out … with Mrs Crompton, daughter of Mrs Gaskell [and] with Leslie Stephen etc.' Stephen, who was to become editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, was accompanied by his future second wife 'the charming woman, (Mrs Duckworth by name) who had 'by a miracle, consented to become, matrimonially, the receptacle of his [i.e. Stephens] ineffable and impossible taciturnity and dreariness.' The Duckworth family, possessed of a cotton fortune, were known to the Gaskells and as Stephen's second wife Mrs Duckworth would become stepmother to Virginia Stephen, aka Woolf. There is some irony in the fact that the daughter famously described by her mother as a child as having no talent should have made these distinguished literary connections. And in a later letter we learn that in the same year Meta, who as we know had many years previously been left 'for life as it were' by a faithless lover, joined James and Florence at dinner and proved herself to be 'a most pleasing, amiable, sympathetic woman.' Their mother would surely have looked down on them with approval.

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Book Notes

Christine Lingard

Interdisciplinary perspectives on aging in nineteenth-century culture, edited by Katharina Boehm, Anna Farkas, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein of Regensburg University, Germany. Routledge studies in nineteenth-century literature.

A study which provides frameworks for the understanding of old age that continue to be influential today. It aims to bring about fresh readings of texts by Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, Henry James and others.

British women writers and the short story, 1850-1930: reclaiming social space by Kate Krueger. Professor and Coordinator of Women and Gender Studies at Arkansas State University. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

A discussion of traditional feminine occupations, as depicted in a wide range of nineteenth and twentieth century short stories. Chapter one is entitled 'The Spinster Re-Drawing Rooms in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*'. It also discusses the stories of Rhoda Broughton, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, George Egerton, Charlotte Mew,

Evelyn Sharp, Barbara Baynton, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Rhys.

Giving women: alliance and exchange in Victorian culture by Jill Rappoport, Associate Professor of English at the University of Kentucky. Oxford University Press, first published in 2012, and now reissued.

A discussion of altruism and charity giving in the Victorian age. Chapter 3 discusses Conservation in *Cranford*.

Mr Harrison's Confessions: a new reprint, Hesperus Classics

Gaskell Study Tour to Worcester, Bromyard and surrounding areas - 20 to 22 May, 2014

Jean Alston

The purpose of this study tour was to visit the area in which Marianne Holland, the Gaskells' eldest daughter, spent her later years. Her husband, Thurstan Holland, died in 1884, at the age of 48, (also the year of William Gaskell's death). During their married life, Marianne and Thurstan, apart from a short spell at 9 Woburn Square, Bloomsbury, had lived at 1 Sunnyside Wimbledon. By the time of Thurstan's death, Marianne had given birth to seven children, only three of whom survived to adulthood. Our study tour also considered the three grown up children: William Edward, Florence Evelyn and Bryan Thurstan, who all spent their later years in the areas of Bromyard, Worcester and Malvern.

Twenty-four members and friends of the Gaskell Society joined the tour. We began with a visit to Hanbury Hall, Droitwich, where we listened to an introductory talk, toured the William and Mary period hall, and had lunch. Our next call was at Boughton House (now Worcester Golf and Country Club), home of the Isaac family in the 19th Century and where Gaskell and her children visited cousin Charlotte, who had married John Whitmore Isaac. Marianne would have visited Boughton House on several occasions and was later to marry Thurstan, Charlotte's nephew, and son of Sophia (née Isaac), who had married Edward Holland of Dumbleton. We believe we were able to identify portrait paintings of Thurston's (Isaac) grandparents.

In December 1850, a letter from Elizabeth, headed *Boughton House near Worcester* to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, describes her plans for Marianne's education at a Mrs Lalor's school in Hampstead, and in August, 1856 she wrote to George Smith from Boughton about various aspects of the biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. From Boughton House, we travelled to the Bank House Hotel, where we were to enjoy excellent, newly refurbished accommodation and very good food.

After dinner, many members read from Elizabeth Gaskell's letters and also from those of her daughters. The selection of letters and newspaper extracts referred to Gaskell's management of Marianne as a child, her choice of education for her as a teenager and her concern when Marianne expressed her doubts about the Unitarian faith. The newspaper cuttings described a garden party held by Marianne at Birchyfield and a mishap when her daughter Florence escaped serious injury by jumping from the carriage as the horses became out of control and galloped towards the town of Bromyard. We were later able to see the New Road hill and Queen's Arms Hotel where the horses had eventually crashed through the windows.

Wednesday, 21 May, proved to be a beautiful warm and sunny day when we visited the areas where Marianne persisted in her enjoyment of rural life, which must have been very similar to that of her maternal grandparents in Sandlebridge, Cheshire. We first visited the Church of St Mary Magdalene at Alfrick, where Michael Hood, Churchwarden, showed us Marian's burial record, written in September 1920. This is a beautifully located church with early features such as a twelfth century window and barrel-shaped roof. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of Marianne's grave as most grave inscriptions have been eroded with time.

From the church, we travelled to nearby Alfrick Court, where we were given a very warm welcome by the present owner Maria Fitch. This is a most beautiful house, with fine garden and currently about ten acres of land. The 1911 Census shows Marianne, aged 76, living at Alfrick Court with Florence Evelyn (39) and Bryan Thurston (35), accompanied by a cook, a waitress, two housemaids, a kitchen maid, a groom, a retired governess (visitor) and a six year old boarder.

Alfrick Court

Our lunchtime visit was to Lower Brockhampton NT Estate, where we were given a tour of the moated grounds and a specially arranged preview of more rooms of this 14/15 century manor house (to be opened to the general public later in the year). There was a reference to Dumbleton, which will give us a further task if we attempt to establish links between Lower Brockhampton and Dumbleton Hall, where Thurstan grew up.

The visit to Birchyfield, Avenbury, near to Bromyard, was to the farm occupied by Marianne before she moved to Alfrick Court. Mrs Sue Stephenson, the present owner, welcomed us and allowed us to walk in the garden and field where Marianne had held her garden party to raise funds for the Bicentenary Fund of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1901. The house had been built in the 1830s and members commented on several features which are similar to those in the Gaskell house at Plymouth Grove. The report from Birchyfield in the *Bromyard News and Record*, 20 April 1899 about Marianne's daughter Florence and her carriage escapade had been read by us the previous evening at the hotel.

The remainder of the day was spent in Bromyard, where Marianne's family's household shopping and outings would have taken place. Members were able to visit the church and identify many buildings of very early architecture; very little demolition and replacement of buildings had occurred in the last few centuries in Bromyard town centre. A coach drive over Bromyard Down, with a pause for views and short downland walks to observe the magnificent scenes so familiar to Marianne and her children, completed the day's outing.

Thursday, 22 May, our last day, was filled with further visits. We began at Leigh Court Tithe Barn (a few miles from both Boughton House and Alfrick) built in 1340s for the tithes of the monks of Pershore Abbey. This is the largest tithe barn in England with a nine cruck oak structure which would surely have been known to Marianne and family and probably to ECG herself. We then travelled to Kempley, where we visited the two village churches. St Mary's was built early in the 12th Century and has Norman frescoes. It was sobering to realise that the frescoes, still in very good condition, were completed sixty four years after William the Conqueror arrived in England. A mile away in the same village is the Arts and Crafts Church of St Edward the Confessor, built to replace St Mary's, now under the guardianship of English Heritage, where only occasional services are currently held. The new church has contributions from Gimson, Ashbee and Barnsley, all Arts and Crafts designers of considerable repute.

After lunch in Ledbury, we travelled back to Cheshire and Greater Manchester. We had enjoyed our stay in an excellent hotel, had been very fortunate with the weather, had benefited from the good companionship that the Gaskell Society always manages to engender, but we were rather tired and ready for home - until the next Gaskell foray!

Editor adds: Many thanks to Jean for organising this amazing study tour with her usual good humour and weather. To Christine Lingard we offer many thanks for her meticulous research. And thanks are also due to Pam Griffiths for her efficient administration.

A Note of Thanks from Rosemary Donaldson

Rosemary would like to thank everyone for the beautiful flowers that were delivered personally by Pat Heath on Sunday 25 May. These flowers are much appreciated by Rosemary following her untimely accident of the previous week whilst on a short Gaskell study tour. Rosemary had ample opportunity to study Worcestershire Royal Hospital where she received excellent care. Rosemary is now recuperating at home.

Editor adds: Rosemary goes off on a study tour and returns plastered. Well, well! We send Rosemary our very best wishes for a successful recovery after the double fracture to her right arm.

Alliance of Literary Societies, AGM Canterbury 30 May-1 June 2014

Janet Allan

The ALS AGM week-end was hosted by the Marlowe Society in Canterbury.

The sun shone on the sixty people who gathered together at The King's School, Canterbury (as old as the Cathedral itself). Marlowe was a chorister at the Cathedral; later he went to the School and then on to Cambridge. His literary output, including seven plays, contrasts with his a very dodgy life as a spy which ended in his death in a tavern brawl – unless this was a sham and he actually escaped to the Low Countries and pretended to be Shakespeare.

Those of us who had come from afar met on Friday night to enjoy a drink with our President, Jenny Uglow. On Saturday morning we all assembled for a welcome by the Marlowe Society's Chairman George Metcalfe, followed by former Chairman Valerie Colin-Russ who spoke on the colourful life of Marlowe. Professor Richard Wilson then delivered a lecture on 'The Work and Genius of Christopher Marlowe'. A short walk in the sun took us to the statue of a scantily clad (but classical!) female outside the Marlowe Theatre. Here three colourful wreaths were laid by the Sheriff of Canterbury Mr Austen, Christopher Miles on behalf of the Society, and Tim Armstrong for the School. This combination of intellectual and physical exercise

left us in need of the excellent buffet lunch, which was followed by a commendably brief ALS AGM.

During the afternoon the Archivist, Peter Henderson, had arranged a display of the School's Walpole Collection of English Manuscripts, which included MSS from Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Ellen Nussey's description of Charlotte Brontë, a watercolour by Thackeray of Becky Sharp with Jos Sedley, and autographs by Wilkie Collins, T.S. Eliot, John Betjeman, Nelson, Dylan Thomas et al. Keith Carabine gave us a very interesting talk about another Canterbury resident, Joseph Conrad.

After a suitable interval we met for dinner at The Parrot restaurant, in an upstairs room of what may have been a Kentish longhouse in the time of Marlowe. An excellent meal was followed by the traditional readings from various members.

The following day we had a special mention at the 11 o'clock morning service in the Cathedral. Other delights included the Museum with exhibits on Marlowe, Conrad and Mary Tourtel, the creator of Rupert Bear, a river trip, the Canterbury Tales Experience or coffee and cake in the sun.

The whole weekend was a delight and I must record special thanks to the Marlowe Society, in particular, to their Membership and Social Secretary, Frieda Barker, who had worked so hard to make everything flow smoothly. She certainly deserved the bouquet which was presented to her at the dinner!

NB ALS AGM 2015 will be hosted by the Trollope Society in York, 30-31 May.

A Week-end with Mrs Gaskell and Mr Dickens 12-14 September 2014

Howard Gregg will be leading a discussion group on two historical novels: *Sylvia's Lovers* and *A Tale Of Two Cities*.

Venue: The Green Man Hotel, Old Harlow, Essex. From Friday 12th evening until after lunch on Sunday 14th.

Cost: single room: £300; shared twin or double: £260 pp; non-resident £175.

To book or for more information please contact: Marilyn Taylor, 17 Amesbury Road, Epping, Essex CM16 4HZ, tel: 01992 572510
e-mail:johnmarilyn2000@amesbury17.eclipse.co.uk

Forthcoming Society Events

Autumn Meeting

Saturday, September 27, 2014 Methodist Church, Knutsford.

10.30am Tea and coffee

11.00am Fran Twinn will deliver the Joan Leach Memorial Lecture: The Many 'Mes' of Mrs Gaskell

12.30pm approx. Lunch

2.00pm Geoffrey Scargill: Father and son, Absalom and Edward Watkin

3.30pm approx. finish

Cost £15 to include lunch, (£5 without lunch)

Sunday September 28

10.45am Placing of flowers on the Gaskell Grave at Brook Street Chapel

11.00am Service at Brook Street Chapel

North-West Group

Manchester Meetings
The Manchester meetings will be held at 1.00pm on the first Tuesday of the month (October to March excluding January) in Cross Street Chapel, Manchester (across from The Royal Exchange).

The Chapel will usually be open from noon for lunch (bring your own, coffee available) in the Percival Room where the lectures will be given at 1.00pm.

Tuesday 7 October
Robert Poole: *The Pendle Witch Trials*

Tuesday 4 November
Paul Ross: *Attitudes of Victorian travellers and explorers towards Africa and Africans*

Tuesday 2 December
TBA

Tuesday 3 February
Karen Laird: *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*

Tuesday 3 March
Simon Rennie: *Ernest Jones and Chartism*

The Gaskell Society is running a day school on *Mary Barton* at 84 Plymouth Grove (written in 1847 before the Gaskells moved there) on Saturday 8 November. Angus Easson, Alan Shelston and Mike Sanders will deliver lectures.

After lunch, poet Edwin Stockdale and balladeer Jennifer Reid will offer entertainment.

Details of this and the following event will soon be on the new website: www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk

Before this major day there will be a book launch on 14 October. Carolyn Lambert author of *The Meanings of Home in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction* (Victorian Secrets, 2013) will sign her book in the Gaskell home.

Knutsford Meetings
These meetings held in St John's Church Centre will resume on Wednesday 29 October and continue on the last Wednesday of each month (excluding December) until and including April.

Buffet Lunch (£10, please pay on arrival; if not having lunch, please pay £3) available from 12.15 with literary talk and discussion led by Elizabeth Williams to follow, at about 1.30. Meetings end around 3.00.

In October we shall be studying *A Hard Night's Work*.

After this small 200 page volume, we shall move on to *The Moorland Cottage* followed by *Libbie Marsh's Three Eras*, if time permits.

New Year Lunch
Wednesday 14 January 2015. Further details TBA.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 18 April 2015, Cross Street Unitarian Church, Manchester. Further details TBA

The Gaskell Society South-West

Sunday, 7 September, 2014, 12.30 pm
We will hold our Summer Lunch party at the home of Boyd and Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, and as usual it will be a Bring and Share event.

If you wish to come, please phone Veronica Trenchard (01225 852155), who will confirm your booking and ask you what you would like to bring.

Saturday, 15 November 2014, 2.30 pm
We welcome back to Bath Elizabeth Williams, Vice-Chairwoman of the national Gaskell Society, to talk to us about Fanny Trollope, another interesting Victorian author. The meeting will be at the usual venue of the BRLSI, Queen's Square in Bath, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there.

The cost will be £2 for members of the Gaskell Society and the BRLSI and £4 for all others. Coffee and tea will be available after the lecture.

As a 'taster' for next year, our book for discussion in February will be *Cranford* and the date will be announced later.

Any queries to Elizabeth Schlenther, 14 Vellore Lane, Bath, BA2 6JQ, Tel: 01225 331763.

London and South-East Group

Saturday, September 13, 2014
Train Trip to Plymouth Grove to see Mrs Gaskell's newly refurbished home.

Saturday November 8, 2014
Dr. Rebecca Styler Editor of the Gaskell Journal. 'The Maternal Image of God 1840 to 1920'. The talk will reflect Mrs Gaskell's work.

Saturday February 7 2015
Dr. Ann Brooks and Bryan Haworth. 'The other side of Manchester.' Ann and Bryan will put Manchester in a social context. Their research has focused on Manchester so they are knowledgeable about the city in Mrs Gaskell's time.

Saturday May 9, 2015
Dr Irene Wiltshire. 'The letters of Mrs Gaskell's daughters 1856 -1914'. These

letters have been compiled and edited by Irene and were published in 2012 by Humanities – Ebooks. She will talk to us about her work and the letters.

Venue: Francis Holland School, Graham Terrace, London
This is the provisional programme for 2014-2015. Domestic arrangements will be as usual.

Notes