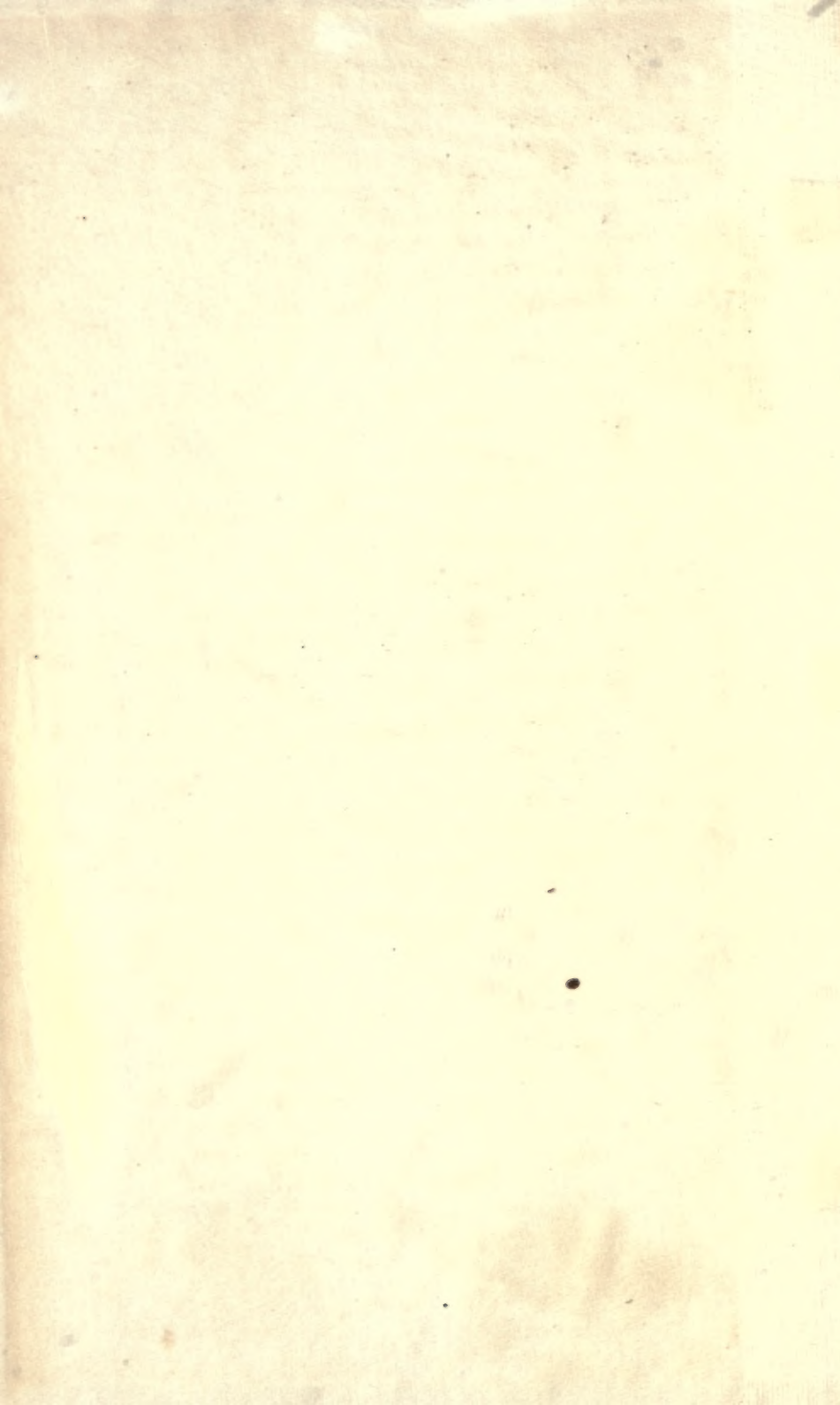
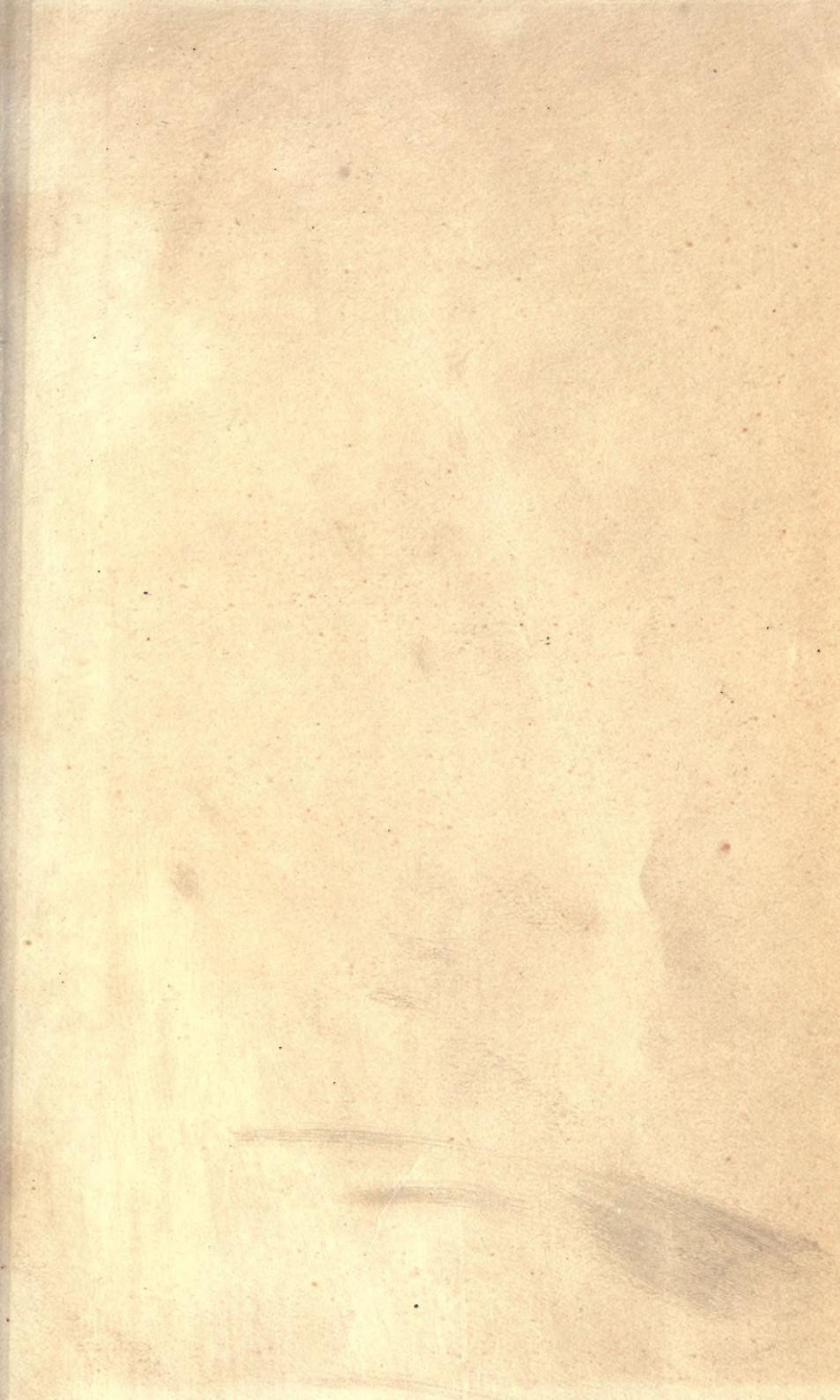


THE LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
FREDERIC·SHIELDS

1833 - 1911







THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
FREDERIC SHIELDS

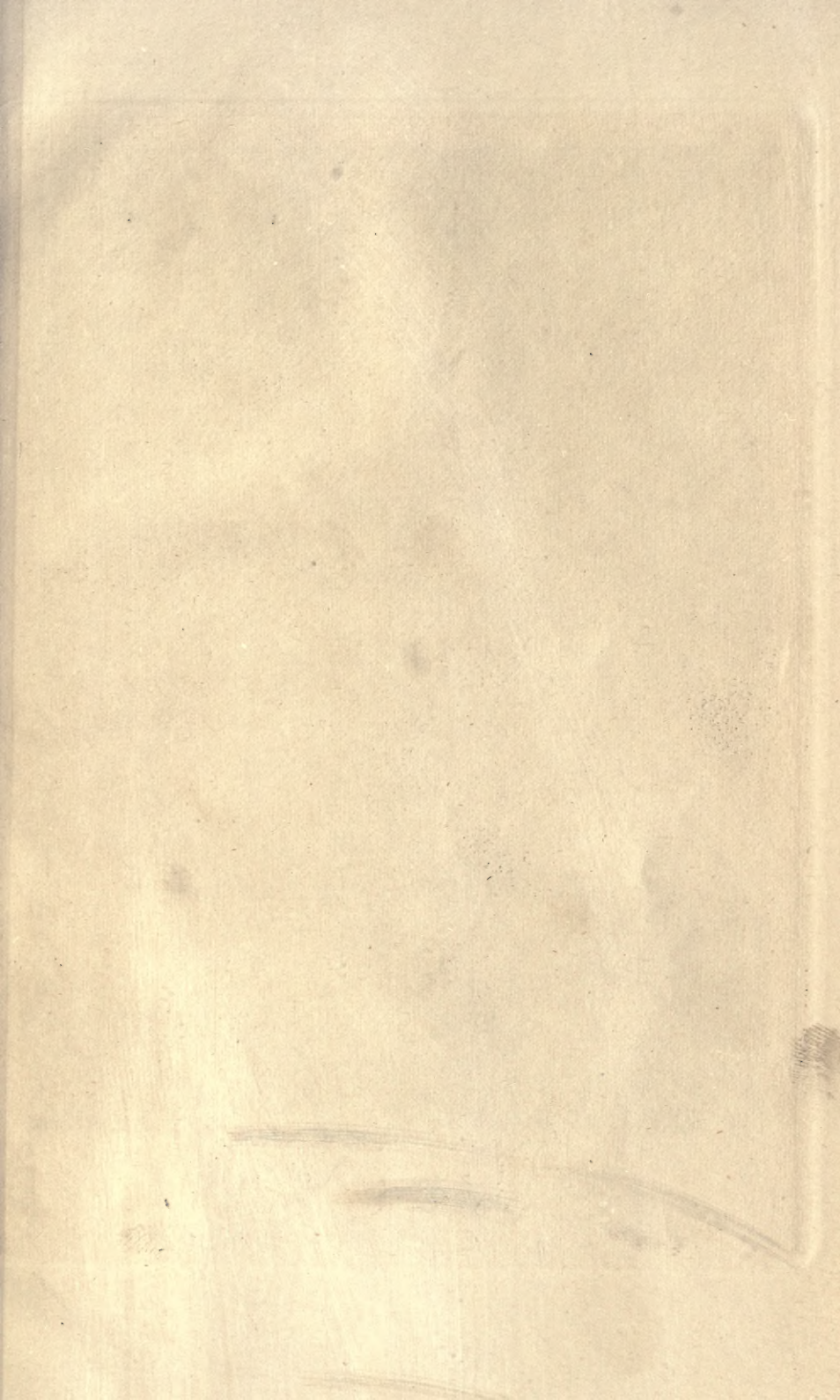
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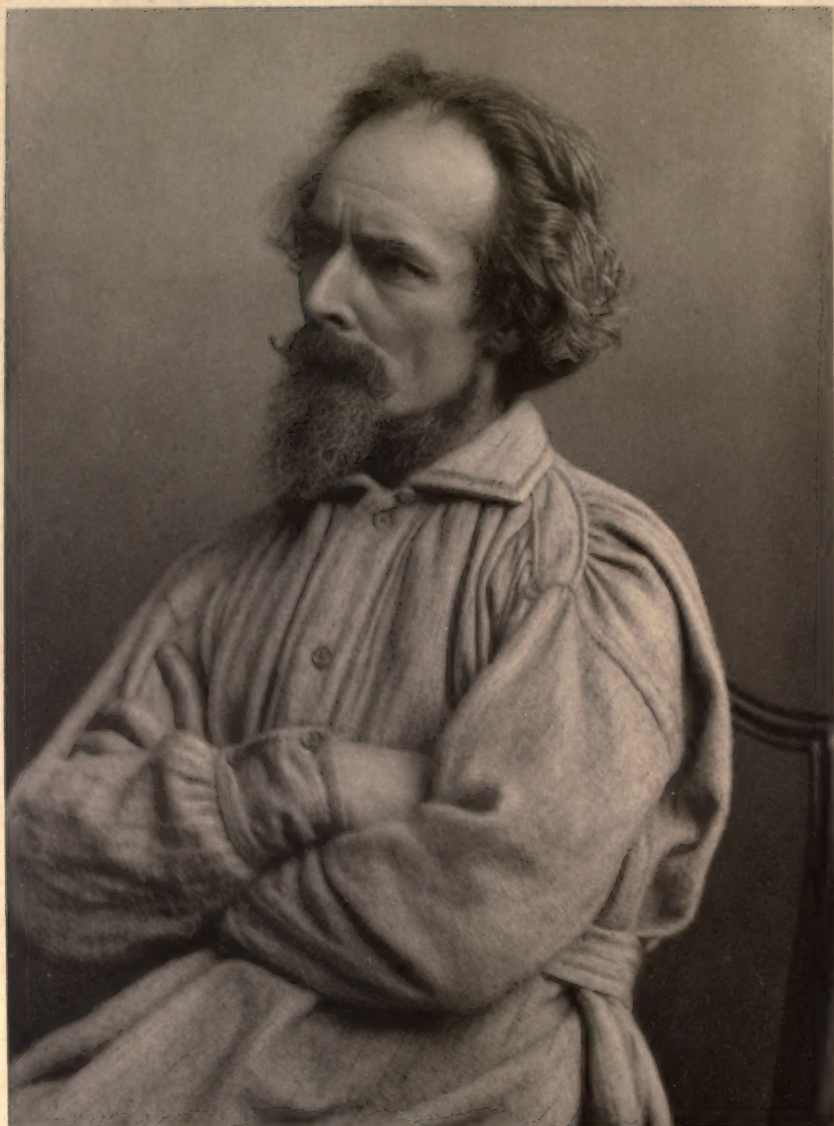


THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
FREDERIC SHIELDS

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*A. S. Hay & Son, Photographers*

*Henry Walter, Jr.,*

*Richard Field*

1903

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THE LIFE  
AND LETTERS OF  
FREDERIC SHIELDS

EDITED BY  
ERNESTINE MILLS

*WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAIT AND  
41 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS*

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
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1912

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## P R E F A C E

My thanks are due to those who have kindly allowed me to use letters over which they had control—Mrs. G. F. Watts, Miss Rose Kingsley, Mrs. Hueffer, Miss Thomson, Miss M'Laren, Mr. William Rossetti, Mr. Mackenzie Bell, Mr. A. Wedderburn, Mr. Hall Caine, Mr. Cyril Gurney, Dr. Paton, Mr. Charles Rowley, Mr. Arthur Hughes, and others.

I have also to thank Mr. Hyslop Bell, Sir William Houldsworth, Mr. J. Parkinson, Mr. Rowley, Mr. J. Simpson, and Miss Thomson, for permission to reproduce pictures in their possession, also the Manchester City Art Gallery, and Messrs. Bradbury & Agnew for permission to use one of the drawings which appeared in *Punch*, for which, however, I have substituted the first pen and ink sketch.

Mr. C. Smyth very kindly sent me particulars as to the birthplace of Frederic Shields, and Mr. T. W. Hanson collected interesting reminiscences of the artist's life at Halifax in 1859.

ERNESTINE MILLS.

1912.



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# THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF FREDERIC SHIELDS

## CHAPTER I

Parentage and birth—Hartlepool—The Spanish wars—St. Clement Danes Charity Schools—The Mechanics Institute—Maclure and Macdonald—Newton-le-Willows—Colouring posters—Worsley Hall and the Earl of Ellesmere—Death of father—Starvation—Baxter's oil prints—Bradshaw and Blacklock's—Housekeeping—Mother's death.

“OFT so it is that long after a man's death some scribe, hunting after new subject matter, unearths a nigh forgotten existence, and for lack of certain data and facts, produces, spite of all conscientious pains to revive a true image, only a travesty either on the heroic or contemptible side. Many are such biographies, presenting no credible glimpse of the once living personality, mere skins, stuffed with the writers' chaff in lieu of their subjects' personality, the marvellous triune being of body, mind, and spirit—‘For who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?’ And even so, how much may not be publicly told, even by the most candid nature? How many follies and errors must lie covered? These considerations weigh to induce me to set down some orderly relation of my years, which I may fitly head with the words of the prophet Jeremiah—‘It is good that a man bear the yoke in his youth.’”

With these words, a few weeks before his death, Frederic Shields began the story of his life, having collected together many scattered sheets of reminiscences written at different times for various purposes, innumerable letters, and a series of diaries extending over a period of more than sixty years. It seems fitting that one to whom he entrusted this varied collection, should endeavour to complete the task, for which there is certainly no lack of facts or data. Whether the facts will be only those which Frederic Shields would have wished to record, or how far the view given of that vivid personality will resemble that which he himself would have shown to the world, I cannot tell. But so far as is possible, he shall speak for himself, whether in the universal language, of which he was one of the greatest modern interpreters, or the forcible English in which, day by day, he recorded his life, from the time when, at the age of fourteen, he opened the shutters of his mother's tiny shop and spent his starved and strenuous boyhood in pursuit of his ideal.

His grandfather, James Shields, was a sergeant in the Dumfriesshire Light Dragoons, but almost the only fact recorded about him seems to be that in the reduction of the regiment in 1796 he was discharged. He died, leaving two sons, John and James, in the care of their grandparents, a Mr. and Mrs. Scott, who lived in the parish of Cardross in Perthshire, on a small freehold property of their own. The two boys early left their grandparents. James emigrated to America; John, the father of Frederic Shields, seems to have had a somewhat adventurous youth. He was a bookbinder by trade, and married in 1830, at the age of twenty-two, at the Parish Church, Heton-le-Hole, Georgiana Storey, a farmer's daughter and a native of Alnwick.

Two children, who both died in infancy, were born in



the following years, and on March 14th, 1833, Frederic James Shields was born at Hartlepool. Pigot's Directory of Northern Counties for 1834 records:—

HARTLEPOOL—

Bookseller, Binder, Stationer, and Printer :

Shields, John—Southgate.

Libraries, Circulating :

Shields, John—Southgate.

Straw Hat Maker :

Shields, Mrs.—Southgate.

The house in which Frederic Shields was born has been identified as a printer's shop in High Street. From a printer's shop it became the General Jackson Hotel, which was not long ago pulled down to make room for a new fish quay.

What strange combination of circumstances can have led to his father's next experiment in life we cannot say, but in 1835, when the British Government, by the repeal of the Foreign Enlistment Act, sanctioned the landing of ten thousand men from Great Britain, in aid of Queen Isabella of Spain against Don Miguel, John Shields left his bookbinding, his circulating library, his wife and his little son, and enlisted in the Scottish contingent under General Shaw. Many recruits from all parts of Scotland joined them, and they embarked at Greenwich on 19th August 1835, arriving in Spain on the 31st of the same month.

A much worn and tattered document, written by John Shields, seems to recount his many grievances during his time of military service. After some preliminaries, it runs as follows: "It will digress too much to detail the six general engagements, besides skirmishes, which we were in, also the hardships and privations that we endured without a murmur, until the period arrived that entitled

us to claim our discharge. As the expiration of our engagement drew nigh, and as little prospect of the war being near a termination, as when we first entered the service, we thought it proper to state, in the beginning of the month of September 1836, that we only enlisted for one year and therefore were entitled to claim our discharge, and intimated the same to Colonel Godfrey. On the 18th, Colonel Godfrey called us on to the parade, said there was a Board of Officers to sit in the convent in a few minutes, and that any of us who could prove by document or take an affidavit that he only engaged for one year, that he had instructions from Lieut.-General Evans to grant our discharge. Two hundred of us went before the Board and legally claimed our discharge, we were ordered to bring our arms, accoutrements, &c., and put them in Store.

“On the 19th, those who had been before the Board the day previous were marched into Santander and quartered there, and to our surprise were kept as prisoners, part of the 9th Regiment doing duty over us. Here every means was tried to induce us to volunteer for twelve months more, and in many cases they succeeded, for a Spanish prison at best is more loathsome than any other; and in this case our rations were curtailed. Our rations, when doing duty, were one and a half pounds of bread, one pound beef, and one pint wine per diem. By General Evans' orders the wine was stopped; but in lieu thereof we should have a penny a day, but we did not receive it. When we had remained here for six days we were marched back to the Convent de Corbon, and were made to know what we should have to endure if we did not enlist for twelve months more. The English soldiers who did duty over us were removed, and were replaced by Spaniards, with whom, although fighting in the same cause, we were not on friendly terms; and to increase the breach they were

told that we were mutineers, and if we attempted to pass our prescribed limits to run us through or shoot us, whichever might be most convenient. It was not long before the hospital at Santander was supplied with six patients, who had been wantonly wounded by the Spaniards for no real cause. Thus was English blood spilt and English subjects maltreated to gratify the mere jealous passion of a Spanish country. The officers in charge of us were frequently changed, and they were mostly men of harsh and cruel dispositions; there was one in particular, I do not know by what orders, but he did everything in his power to make us more miserable, using the most petty excuse for punishing and keeping our rations from us. On one occasion he punished some men for disobeying an order, which order was not read to us until we were on the ground, where the poor fellows suffered the horrid torture of the cat's tail. Without straw, or even a shirt to our backs; without covering, the bare floor was our bed. No opportunities for cleanliness were permitted; soon we were overrun with vermin and became loathsome in our sight. When things were thus, we were visited by a medical officer, who seemed to commiserate us, and shortly after we received orders that we should embark on the 8th of December 1836, and in the most wretched state we were landed in England." Here the torn and faded document becomes indecipherable, save for the words: "This is all the return I have yet received for a year's hard servitude in a foreign land, having exposed myself to danger and death. Whether British subjects who left their homes with the approbation of . . ." The rest is missing. It appears to be an appeal to those in authority for arrears of pay.

John Shields was twenty-eight years of age when he returned from the Spanish war in 1836. What reception he met with from his wife, his son Frederic, then aged

three years, and a baby daughter, born a few months after his departure, is not recorded; nor whether his poor wife, left alone with her straw hat making and her two babies, had not perhaps silently endured as much pain and privation as the volunteer who so gallantly left them to enter the service of Isabella of Spain. We do not know how the next few years were passed; but in July 1839 we find mention of the birth of another son, Edwin, and the family is then settled in the parish of St. Clement Danes, London. John Shields was a man of strong artistic instincts, and in his youth greatly desired to be an engraver; but his father, the Dumfriesshire sergeant, sternly refused to allow this, for two engravers had been hanged in Edinburgh for forging banknotes, and he was determined that his son should run no risk of such temptation. The pent-up artistic instincts of John Shields found an outlet in later life in encouraging the genius of his son Frederic, who records the first lesson given to him at the age of six years: his father holding up to the window a print of T. P. Cooke, as William in *Black-Eyed Susan*, for the child to trace.

In one of the sheets of reminiscences written by Frederic Shields he gives an account of his early home.

“My mother had a store of stirring Northumbrian ballads (for she was born at Alnwick) that held my childhood spell-bound. Fair-haired was she, with grey blue e'en, and features that must have been fine before the combined labour of dressmaking and the cares of a family ploughed her face. This business she carried on at 39 Stanhope Street, Clare Market, the first place I have memory of. This street, largely swept away now, though till lately (haply still) the old house stood, was bounded at the south end by Clare Market, the busy food mart of the poor; and at the other by the Irish colony of Drury Lane. A little eastward lay the great square of stately

Georgian mansions called Lincoln's Inn Fields, then so jealously guarded that once, flying my little kite there, I was hunted out of its precincts by the beadle, terrible in his cocked hat. For London was then a provincial city contrasted with its now palatial streets and roaring, hurrying, perilous motor traffic. There were no refreshment-rooms, save in back streets; grimy and ill-kept coffee-houses where you sat within wooden partitions, with forms on either side, with the bar and cooking arrangements at the end of the shop. A chop or steak, fried liver and bacon, was the varied menu. The streets were filled with quaint cries, as 'Fresh country milk, bring out your pretty jugs and your ugly mugs—fresh from the cow-o'; or the seller of winkles: 'Winkety, winkety, wink, penny a pint, twopence a quart.' Rowlandson's virile presentations vividly recall my young environment, and shame it is to English connoisseurs that the sentimental rubbish of Wheatley is preferably sought after. A wedding in the vicinity was often signalised by the butchers marching in procession to the festal house, clanging their cleavers with marrow-bones. While still a schoolboy I was introduced to an elderly gentleman resident in Maiden Lane, and his interest in my work drew out the gift of sixpence. I never saw him again; but in that narrow lane had Turner been born, whose wondrous gifts were to set my mind a-quiver with joy in them in after days. What if I had found a Mr. Munro in this early patron—how different would have been my early youth!

"A cellar beneath my mother's shop was incongruously held by a blacksmith, and ever resonant with the strokes of his anvil. One or two apprentices helped her in the dressmaking, and the shop had a little triangular room behind, where meals were taken with my sister and two brothers—I being the eldest. The first story was occupied by a woman in charge of the property, and the attic

was used by her son, a costermonger, to store his fruit in. The second story my mother rented, and used as our Sunday room. It contained some shelves of solid literature, my father's gathering, some in rich bindings adorned by his own tasteful tooling.

"In the attic, where I crept at every chance, neglected and mouldering in a large portfolio, were treasures of fine engravings after Fuseli, Stothard, West, Copley, and others. Strangely was thus fed my early passion for the world of Art. Over these I secretly gloated to my heart's content, and here also, feeding my imagination, were a dozen or so of old swords, of various designs, which I would wield as I attacked imaginary giants and dragons, images conjured from my mother's legendary lore, and fired moreover by the heroics of the Iliad, which at the age of twelve had become my favourite book. The London police, or 'peelers,' as they were nicknamed, then used big wooden rattles for alarm. When I was at school, some fellow schoolboys with myself clubbed our pence to buy a quantity of 'red fire,' such as is used for stage conflagrations, and one night lit this at the further end of the deep arched entrance of a factory in Stanhope Street. Soon the crimson glow made the factory seem on fire, while we retired to watch the effect of our ruse, gleefully hailing the peelers' rattles which successively alarmed the neighbourhood, and were followed by their maledictions on the hidden tricksters. A few houses from my mother's shop stood St. Clement Danes Charity School, where some sixty girls, attired in quaint caps and blue woollen dress, were educated at the cost of the parish, while to an uncertain number of boys clothing and education—or education alone—was given."

To this school went Frederic Shields, leaving at the age of fourteen, though at the age of thirteen he attended an evening drawing-class at the Mechanics Institute,

Southampton Row, and gained a prize for a chalk drawing of a figure.

Incessant use of the pencil had already won him the reputation of a draughtsman, and the habit of sketching any striking face or incident was begun in these childish days and continued to the end of his life. For several months after leaving school he worked daily in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum. It was already decided that he should follow some artistic profession, and he attended for a few months the School of Art at Somerset House, where a course of drawing of Greek outline from the flat was, he considered, of inestimable value to him at that time.

His mother had some slight acquaintance with Robert Carrick, who had then just forsaken lithography to apply himself to painting domestic subjects, and he kindly volunteered to give the boy a few lessons. So eager was the boy, that although Carrick lived so far away as Hampstead, young Frederic Shields was at his door before he had risen, and stood eagerly awaiting the drawing of the curtains of his room. But he did not gain anything from Carrick's lessons, save some facility in the use of Harding's conventional treatment of foliage. Through Carrick's influence, a place was offered to the boy as apprentice to a firm of lithographers, Maclure, Macdonald & Macgregor, the first three years to be without pay. He started work there on October 4th, 1847. To quote again from his own words:—

“The firm shortly removed to the very shadow of Wren's noble steeple, Bow Church. Proceeding thither one morning, I had to pass the Holborn end of Newgate Street, filled with a surging mob, the attraction a black scaffold and a woman hanging from it. Happily our lads will no more see such a sickening spectacle. Crossing Cheapside I was knocked down under the feet of a 'bus

horse and dragged out by a lady, who, asking me pitifully if I was hurt, opened her purse and gave me a shilling—dear soul, strange to me ever, but for that one tender touch. For practice I was set to copy upon lithographic stone one of the cattle groups by Sidney Cooper, and boy though I was, looking now at a print of this attempt that I have preserved, I question if I could have made a closer copy at any period of my work. One of Douglas Jerrold's sons sat at the same bench, often dilating upon the superiority of his father's powers to those of Charles Dickens, and with us a brother of Fred Skill, an able magazine illustrator, and worshipper of John Gilbert. Through Skill I was moved to buy the *London Journal* and *Reynolds' Miscellany* weekly, illustrated by Gilbert's facile invention, two most skilful wood engravers, Gorway and Hooper, rendering his swift, delicate drawing and his rich chiaroscuro with the most worshipful fidelity. No more, no more, shall we see the like! Photography has swept this beautiful art of engraving on wood from the artist's line drawing away for ever, substituting its eye-scarring snapshot blocks, and wholly destroying what little sense of beauty dwelt in the public. Wonderful stories of Gilbert's swift dexterity were told—how an editor would send up a block to him at Blackheath, stipulating the subject to be designed, the messenger, who had been instructed to wait, returning with it completed."

During the year 1848 Frederic Shields began keeping a diary, and the habit was continued, with more or less regularity, to the end of his life. The first book has inscribed on the fly-leaf: "Frederick Shields, from his father, who hopes to see it when filled, a precious record." It certainly records a strenuous life for a boy of fifteen. The entry for January 1st is as follows, written in a beautifully neat hand: "Got up 7.30. Cleaned my boots and



face. Then took down the shutters, got my breakfast, went to Mr. Maclure's, cleared up the shop, continued drawing the infant's head which I was busy at yesterday, finished it by 12 o'clock, began the tinting of some mountain scenery on stone. Mamma sent me my dinner, bread and roast veal; continued tinting till 10 minutes past 4, when I left work and got home by 20 minutes past 4. Read Rob Roy Macgregor from *Chambers' Tracts*. Got my tea at 20 minutes past 5, went to the Mechanics Institute. The porter was in the library. I returned *British Costume* and got out the *Pictorial History of Old England*. Went into the reading-room, read *Punch*, and articles from the *People's Journal*. Got home by nearly 9 o'clock, went some errands for Mamma. Shut up the shutters, read part of Shakespeare's *King Henry V*. Had a slice of bread and butter and went to bed at 10 o'clock."

Again we read:—

"*Wednesday, February 15th.*—Got up at half-past six. Cleaned my boots and face, took down the shutters, got breakfast and went to work by eight. Rubbed down seven inks, drew the winged lion until one. Had dinner 1 lb. bread and a cup of coffee, came back and drew until 7, came home, got tea, read *Coriolanus*. Went to the Mechanics to hear Mr. Hatton's lecture on the music of Handel, Bach, and Mendelssohn. Came home, cleaned the knives and forks, brushed my boots and clothes, went to bed at 12.

"*Monday, 20th.*—Got up, cleaned my boots and face took down shutters, got breakfast, went to work by half-past eight, rubbed down five inks, drew the weary soldier till one, minded the office and ran errands till half-past three, went to dinner, bread and coffee, came back and drew till seven. Came home, got tea, read *Coriolanus*, went to the Mechanics for the Human Figure class, paid

for the quarter 6d., outlined two hands, came home at half-past ten, cleaned knives and forks, went to bed at 12.

"*April 12th.*—Got up at half-past four. Cleaned my boots and face. Lit the fire, took down the shutters, continued my design of Hamlet and the Ghost. Got breakfast, and went to work by eight. Drew a ram's head after Cooper, went to dinner, bread and coffee, drew till seven. Went home, got tea. Read Sir Walter Scott on Demonology and Witchcraft. Went to Mr. Cleverton's lecture on Chloroform. A guinea-pig inhaled it, and a young man had a tooth taken out under its influence. Came home at half-past ten, shut up, wrote my diary and went to bed at 11."

These are not exceptional days; the record continues for months in the same terrible style—terrible, indeed, to think of a growing boy working at this pressure on a diet which mainly consisted of bread and coffee, for each day's dinner is chronicled and any variation from 1 lb. bread and coffee is an exception. No wonder that pathetic references to broken chilblains and other ills are frequent. Surely few boys of fifteen have left such a record. At St. Clement Danes schools the boys were marched to church three times every Sunday, and the habit of writing the texts and a short résumé of the sermon was kept up by Frederic Shields for many years. Each Sunday is thus chronicled at the end of this little book.

All this year, the father, owing to slackness of trade in London, had been in the North working for various firms, sending what help he could to his family in Stanhope Street. We hear of his going without a fire that cold winter, sitting with his feet in a pail of shavings to keep them from freezing. Times were very bad, and in June he seems to have made up his mind that he could no longer afford to keep his eldest son at unpaid work. John

Shields had at that time found a post as foreman book-binder to the firm of MacCorquodale at Newton-le-Willows, and he sent for his son to join him, leaving the brave mother in London to support the three other children by her trade of dressmaking.

There is no comment in the boy's diary, merely the fact recorded on June 5th, "left Mr. Maclure's." He seems to have then enjoyed a few days' relaxation—if relaxation had been possible to him at this time. Saturday, June 10th, records: "Got up at six. Cleaned my boots and face, took down shutters, made breakfast ready, read the Player's scene from *Hamlet* to Mamma. Went to the Vernon Gallery; stayed there until half-past twelve. Got dinner, boiled bread and milk. Drew Mamma's portrait till three, drew the Italian figure till five, and Charles I. parting with his family till six. Went several errands, read No. 1 of Mr. Fox's lectures on the Political Morality of Shakespeare's plays, picked the gooseberries, cleaned the knives and forks, washed plates, put my drawings right, wrote to my father, shut up and went to bed."

Here the small, neatly written paragraphs cease; the diary was apparently written for the benefit of his absent father, and as the boy joined him at Newton shortly after this, he presumably felt there was no need to continue the record.

At Newton young Frederic Shields took whatever odd tasks could be found for him, colouring many hundreds of life-sized figures on posters advertising the tailor Hyam's suits, wandering about the country near, sketching all that interested him. Careful pen and ink drawings of old houses at Newton have been preserved, made on his rambles in these new surroundings, which were so different from the murky Clare Market streets. His father directed his reading from an extensive and peculiar

selection of literature. In one month the following list of books read is given:—

Life of Theodore Hook.  
 The Tile Burner and his Family.  
 A Word on the English and Scotch Criminal Laws.  
 Recent Revelations of the Microscope.  
 Ben Jonson.  
 Narrative of Frederick Douglas.  
 Adventures in the Pacific.  
 The Progress of British Art.  
 Life of Blaise Pascal.  
 Manners of the Chinese.  
 Sketches from Flemish Life.  
 Cobbet's Grammar, and  
 A Visit to a Harem!

But the brave father evidently felt the hand of death upon him, and his anxiety was intense to find some permanent situation for his beloved son. During his illness he seems to have written to his cousin, of whom he had lost sight since early boyhood, Dr. A. G. Scott, then of University College, and was deeply pained that no reply came. This arose from the loss of the letter, received just as Dr. Scott was removing from London to Manchester, a loss which Frederic Shields used to say "probably entailed years of misery to myself, for its object was to enlist the Doctor's interest in his boy, who he knew would soon be left desolate." At last the father found him a place at wages of five shillings a week with a Scotchman named Cowan, a mercantile lithographer in Manchester. Almost immediately the father's state became more acute, and he had to return to London alone, to seek admission to the Brompton Hospital.

Frederic Shields wrote of this period of his life:—

"In a low quarter of the town, Cupid's Alley, I found a lodging at 2s. 6d. weekly, leaving 2s. 6d. for food and



CROW TREE INN, NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS

(1848)



clothing. I used to buy a bag of Indian meal for the week, and this served for all my meals, while my dress wore shabbier and my shoes wore out with little margin to amend them. Then Cowan failed, and I was without any opening and friendless in the great city. I wandered from public-house to public-house, offering for a penny to sketch the profile of any man there, but few were my paltry gains." One day he wandered to Worsley and sketched the hall and the church. He writes to his father:—

MANCHESTER, August 2nd, 1849.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I received your kind letter on Tuesday. I have also to thank you for the *Illustrated News* you sent me. It is a splendid number; the prize cattle, and the views of the cascade, and the Gap of Dunloe are worthy of any work.

Often as I lie in bed I think of your thin body and face, and in my fancy see you beside me. Are you getting any stouter with your increase of strength? I wish to God your cough was well, then you would soon recover. I hope to hear of your admission into the Hospital next letter. I intend to go down to Worsley in the course of two or three days with my drawing of the church. I hope that I may see the Earl or the Rector. I have got some jobs at ticket designing for a private printer named Bardsley, in Oldham Street, and several portraits, at which I have improved wonderfully.

Regrets are useless now, father, but still I wish I could get apprenticed to the woodcutting, the lithog writing, or even the bookbinding. O, how I wish I could get to the painting under a good master. Tell me always how you are.—I remain, your affectionate son,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.<sup>1</sup>

Worsley Hall seems to have been a promising sketching ground, as the next two or three letters relate.

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps a point of interest to those possessing early drawings by Shields, that until about 1864, he signed his name "Frederick," subsequently he omitted the final letter.

MANCHESTER, *October 2nd*, 1849.

MY DEAR FATHER,—I received your kind letter of the 27th ult., but I thought I would not answer you until I had seen either the Earl or the Rector. I went yesterday to Worsley, and saw the Rector; he told me to make him another drawing of the church, in addition to the one I have already done. He gave me a shilling. At the lodge I found my endeavour to see the Earl would be fruitless, as the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Lord Wilton, and several other of the nobility were dining with him that day. In a week I will go down again. O father, you know not what pleasure it gives me to know that you are better; God grant that you may continue to progress towards recovery and go forth from the Hospital with a thankful heart for God's mercy. I get 4s. to 6s. for portraits, according to the style they are done in. I thank you, father, for your kind consideration, but I have got a good pair of boots.

I am sorry to tell you that I am about 12s. in debt, but by the efforts I am making I hope soon to be free. There is a young man named James Tait, a Scotchman, lodging here. He is a painter, and his father is in business for himself in the same line, in the small town of Gatehouse, in Kirkcudbright. He is out of work just now and thinks of returning to Scotland. He has offered to take me with him to Gatehouse and apprentice me to the painting and graining with his father, providing me with meat, lodgings, and clothes. Of wages he can say nothing until he asks his father. I would wish you to weigh well this offer before you return any positive answer. Adieu, dear father, for the present.—Your affectionate son,  
FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

MANCHESTER, *November 18th*, 1849.

MY DEAR FATHER,—It is the old prologue "I went to Worsley" again, but I am happy to be able to add that the performances on this occasion were of a very novel kind. Upon my arrival at the hall, I enquired for the steward, Mr. Rasbotham, and was informed that he had gone to his own house in the village. I immediately



repaired thither. He was at dinner. The servant undertook to announce my name, and returned with the kind answer that I was to have something to eat and drink, and that he (Mr. Rasbotham) would see me afterwards. I had a capital dinner (at tea-time) of roast beef, boiled salary, bread, potatoes, &c. The servant then told me that Mr. Rasbotham was waiting for me. But before I proceed further, I must ask you if you remember the large sketch of Shakespeare which I did at Newton. Be that as it may, I have since made a large drawing in chalk of the same subject. This, together with a portrait and some smaller drawings, I took with me to show him. He took them into the dining-room to let the company see them, and asked me what would be the price of a copy of the Shakespeare. I scarce knew what to ask but at last I said ten shillings, which I did not consider too much, as there is four good days' work on it, besides materials. He said he would see about it. He then said that the Earl did not see how he could be of any assistance to me with regard to a situation, but he would consider the matter. In the meantime his lordship wishes me to do a drawing of the Church for him in pencil. Now for the grand climax, the last scene of all. Mr. Rasbotham put his hand into his pocket and asked if a trifle would be of any service to me, at the same time putting into my hand half a sovereign. I thanked him almost with tears in my eyes, so kindly and considerately was the action performed, took my leave and walked home praising God for His great goodness in having found me at least a temporary friend. You ask if my landlady trusts me. It will give you great pleasure, I know, when I tell you that for nearly a month, when I only brought a few shillings, she never grumbled. It is true, she is a little hasty at times, but she is good at heart, and I can put up with her. My dear father, you ask me to tell you all my wants. Believe me, my chief want, I might almost say my only one, is you, for I cannot speak in a letter as I would if you were beside me, for when I sit down to write, it chills the heat and fervour of what I could wish to say into an arctic coldness. I know well what must be your feelings concerning me,

you could swallow all, ah! and much more than all, that I could tell you, at least so I feel with regard to you.—I remain, your affectionate son,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

The father, now in Brompton Hospital, is evidently worse, and soon to be discharged as incurable.

MANCHESTER, *November 27th, 1849.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—I received your kind and affectionate letter. I am grieved to hear that you have been worse again. Oh! tell me whether you are better. It gives me the greatest pleasure to know that Dr. Roe is kind to you, God will reward him.

I went to the Hall yesterday, the day appointed. I was shown in to Mr Rasbotham, whom I found seated at his desk writing. Upon my entrance he rose, and bade me good morning. I returned his salutation. We then proceeded to business. He seemed to like the view of the Church very well and took it in to show his lordship. He returned with the gracious information that his lordship was very well pleased with it, and that I was to execute two more views of the hall, to be sent down to the house in London, 10 Belgrave Square, where they intend proceeding on Friday. He then gave me £2 for the view of the Church, and I consider that I was exceedingly well paid. I am glad that I left the Shakespeare with Mr. Rasbotham, this time he told me he should consider the ten shillings he gave me as an equivalent for it. I gratefully acceded. I have great pleasure in being able to send you an order for ten shillings payable at the Brompton Hospital. I send you a rough sketch which I took of John Bright, M.P.—I remain, your affectionate son,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

I thank God that I am out of debt.

MANCHESTER, *December 2nd, 1849.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—I received your wished-for letter on Thursday morning. On that day I went to the Hall with a portrait for one of the servants. They were all very busy making preparations for the Earl's departure. I believe he is in London by this time. I have not yet taken the sketches of the Hall, for I did not like to be seen cutting and capering about the grounds adjacent to the Hall in search of a point of view while the family were at home, but I intend making them to-morrow. It will be cold work taking them, but that is not the worst of it. I shall have to turn the leafless, skeleton-like trees of winter, into flourishing summer plants heavy with foliage, a somewhat difficult task, but if I succeed in it, the more triumph. They shall be done on tinted drawing board. Oh! father, if you had been at my side when I received the money, and been able to see as it were through a glass into my mind, you could not better have interpreted my feeling than you have in your last letter; which I have read over and over again, until it has almost made me cry, teeming as it does with kindness and affection. But you say you cannot think of accepting the money; believe me, father, you could not hurt my feelings more than by returning it. My only grief has been that I have never been able to send you anything before, and my present grief is that I am not able at present to send you more. Think you I can forget one who, with disinterested affection, sent me money so often, when he himself so badly needed it. I pray God I may never be forgetful and ungrateful, and do I not respect Gibson (whose portrait and life you were kind enough to send me) the more for that, in the words of his biographer, "in affluence at Rome he *never* forgot the duty of sharing his means with his parents in Liverpool." I have been enabled, too, to buy myself a new waistcoat, two pair of stockings, two cotton handkerchiefs, and a pair of woollen gloves, so that you will perceive that I am not in immediate want for anything.

You say well! How often have I sighed, vainly sighed, even as you now sigh, for a repetition of the happy evenings we spent at Newton. It is only when in adver-

sity that we know the value of health and prosperity. Write soon.—I remain, your affectionate son,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

MANCHESTER, *December 16th, 1849.*

MY DEAR FATHER,—I received your kind letter, returning the money order, this morning. I have been induced to accept the money, the more especially as you say you are not in want of anything, and yet (forgive me for it) I scarce know whether to believe you or not, I know so well your self-denying love. You say you have no fire, for the love of God try to get some. Will the landlady not let you sit at hers? how do you spend your time, have you any books? I would have liked to have sent the sketch of the Hall to you with this letter, but that I am not finished with it yet, it would give you an idea of the place. It is a very elaborate building in the Elizabethan style.

My dear father, do not grieve about me. Here I am not as I should like to be, but thank God I am not so bad as your fears lead you to suppose. On Monday I got six shillings for a portrait of a child, on Tuesday, sixpence and my tea for a sketch of a head, and to-day I shall get two shillings and my dinner and tea for another portrait, a small one, and last night another sixpence for an hour's tuition in drawing. So that I am not so badly off as you think, and I beg of you, dear father, not to make yourself ill concerning me. If you were well and by my side, I could endure ten times the misfortune I am now subject to with pleasure.—Your affectionate son,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

He was at this time sixteen years of age.

For the two drawings the Earl of Ellesmere paid the boy the—to him—fabulous sum of five pounds, and he also drew the portraits of several of the servants at the Hall for five shillings a head. But this could not last, and no one seems to have heeded or inquired what prospects the boy had. So he wandered back to Man-

chester, and suffered every misery of cold, loneliness, and starvation. His father, discharged from Brompton Hospital, died, having succeeded in obtaining, a few weeks before his death, a situation for his son at Bradshaw & Blacklock's, at a salary of seven shillings a week.

Frederic Shields shall tell the story of this period in his own words.

"Here, in the extremest drudgery of commercial lithography, I endured daily torture of mind, suffering also from a disease, brought on by semi-starvation, which sapped my strength for four years, and made me of sad aspect. A broad black ribbon round my face supported the lint applied to a running ulcer which plagued me for many months. The kindness of Dr. Whitehead eventually cured me of this affliction, which had made me a shamed and marked youth wherever I went. Months passed in this new circle of misery and then I was dismissed for inability to execute, with sufficient nicety, repetitions of bobbin tickets; some eighty on one cold stone to be neatly painted with the brush for printing from. Conceive the dull round of agony; suffering as of the victim of Inquisition under the slow drops of water falling on his chest. In vain I strove to satisfy the foreman, for my heart loathed the task, so again I was without means of breadwinning.

"Mr. Blacklock, discovering after my dismissal that I had talents unexercised in his service, asked me to make two large drawings of the exterior and interior of McCorquodale's works at Newton. The interior entailed much intricate drawing of machinery, of the bookbinding and type-setting departments with the men at their employment. During the last three days of this work I had not a fragment of food, and worked in hope of the paltry payment I received from that wealthy business man—seven shillings. I re-

member tramping to Liverpool, thirty-two miles by road, with a few pence in my pocket, and back without any, in search of work. On my way a tramp begged from me: 'Master, I'm clemming.' I could but answer, 'So am I.' Returning, I reached Bootle (midway to Manchester) foot-sore and penniless. I looked at a wheatfield, stacked with new-cut sheaves, and thought to sleep among them; when a band of Irish reapers stopped me, demanding with half threatening humour, 'Are you a Ribbandman or an Orangeman?' I knew not the distinction, and could only reply that I was a poor lad, hungry, weary, and shelterless. 'Bedad, then, come along with us and get a plate of porridge into ye.' They took me to a large farmhouse kitchen, fed me as they had proposed, and then took me into the great raftered room above, spread with many mattresses on the floor, where, sandwiched between two strong harvestmen, I slept off my exhaustion; and after a morning plate of porridge and many hearty expressions of goodwill from my benefactors, I resumed my tramp to Manchester. My heart warms to the poor Irish from that day, and I have known many worthy of deep esteem. But still I had no employment. What to do? I thought of my father's friends at the Newton works—poor but warm-hearted; they might show me kindness. There, at the tariff of seven shillings a head, they found me physiognomies enough to keep my pencil busy for months. They were drawn on tinted paper, life-size, in black and white chalk with a little red. Excellent practice and joy delicious after the grinding bondage of bobbin tickets, daily to strive to catch something of the grace or strength of Nature's most exalted work. But the mine of the little town grew exhausted, and at this juncture old Bradshaw, the Quaker partner in the Railway Guide printing firm, sent for me and said, 'Dost thou think thyself able to design for Baxter's patent Oil Painting Process?' Mod-



SKETCH OF AN OLD MAN'S HEAD

About 1850





estly but confidently I replied, 'Yes.' 'What wages wilt thou require?' Seven shillings a week had I received at bobbin tickets, and I dared to ask ten shillings a week for the coveted post of designer, and returned to my old shop in honour. The despised became a head, with a little room to himself where no defilement of bobbin tickets ever entered; and I revelled in gleaners, and milkmaids, and rustic lovers, and a box of colours for the first time."

Out of this scanty wage he saved enough to pay the evening class fees for three months at the Manchester School of Design. An anecdote shows how overmastering was his habit of sketching. One night the "Perspective" teacher was demonstrating on the blackboard, perched upon an unsteady erection of boxes. This suddenly collapsed, and the lecturer lay stretched insensible upon the platform. Most of the students rushed to his assistance; but Frederic Shields, fascinated by the dramatic effect, remained in his seat carefully sketching the scene.

The comparative prosperity of Bradshaw & Blacklock's did not last long, for this firm also failed, and the boy began to fear that he brought ill-luck to his employers. However, having gained something of a reputation as a designer, he obtained another situation with a firm named Dubois, at the substantial wage of 25s. a week, to design for what was known as the ticket trade—tickets of various designs to be attached to textile fabrics. Some of these early drawings, which have been preserved, were shown at the Memorial Exhibition of Shields' work in London, 1911. At this time his mother's health was rapidly failing, the little sister had died, and the struggle to maintain the two younger children was daily becoming more acute. She seems to have made a desperate attempt to cure her illness by going for a few weeks to the Isle of Wight; and some pathetic letters, preserved by her son, faded and dim with age, tell their own tragic tale. The first letter is written

on a sheet of paper headed with a print of Carisbrook Castle.

NEWPORT, *July 25th, 1853.*

MY DEAR SON,—I should have written to you sooner, but I have been very ill ever since I have been here, most of my time in bed. But this day I feel a little better, and may it please that great God, Who is the best Judge for us all, to spare me a few years longer for my poor boy's sake. I cannot keep my mind easy about the children and home. Only think, my Fred, how my home is left with a few girls who mind not my interest, and if it please God to spare thy mother to go back that place will kill me. What am I to do? Oh God, direct me, for I am weak in myself.

Freddy, this is the castle that Charles 1st was confined in before he was taken to execution; and there is a well three hundred and fifty fathoms deep, it supplies all the town of Newport with water. You must write to me, and that soon, for I am very dull. Direct to me at Mr. Hansford, Castle View, Newport, Isle of Wight. I will feel disappointed if I do not hear from you in a day or two. Remember thy mother is ill and cannot bear anxiety. Take care of thy health. God bless you, my Fred.—Your affectionate mother,

G. SHIELDS.

The "girls" referred to were those apprenticed to her to learn dressmaking.

MANCHESTER, *July 27th, 1853.*

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I wrote to you on Monday to London, for I was afraid you were worse and could not write. Oh, mother dear, I feel so anxious. You never wrote either to tell me if you were not coming to Manchester, and I half fancied you meant to surprise me and come down without telling me; and I looked at every female I passed as if I expected every one of them was you. It is indeed as you say, mother, if you go back to that smoky, confined little crib of a shop it will kill you; now, mother dear, I have often talked to Georgiana about you coming down here. I do not know whether I ever mentioned it to you before. I told you in my last I had

taken a house, with a friend who was going to lodge with me. Well, it is what we call here a large house; it contains five rooms, a kitchen, a yard, three cellars. Well, Scott, my friend, is not going to stop in Manchester; and, of course, if you could come down with the children and stay here, there is room and to spare, I should say, for all of us. It is a very healthy part of the town. You might sell such furniture as you could easily replace here. I have said, I believe, for the best for us all. God order it so in His infinite wisdom. Write soon, I pray you, in order that I may know what you have determined on. The time and the hour demand decision. . . .”

The rest of this letter is missing. In the mother's absence the two little ones at home seem to have done their best to alleviate her anxiety. Edwin, the elder, writes as follows:—

LONDON, *Wednesday, July 20th, 1853.*

MY DEAR MAMMA,—I received your letter this morning, and am sorry to hear that it was such a bad passage. You did not say whether you were sick or no. Tell me whether you think the place will do you good and whether it is a nice place. You say that the expense was great; how was that? Is the things dear there? We are getting on quite well and are very happy. We shall be able to send you some money soon. Tell me how I am to send, if I am to go to the Money office and get the order; please tell me where it is. On Monday Mr. Collins called and said he had got a place for me at Mr. Smith's in the Strand, a newspaper agent. I went to school, and he gave me a letter and told me to take it to Mr. Ellerman the overseer. I took it in the evening, but the overseer told me Mr. Smith was not in. I am to go in the morning at 11; but Mr. Spiller does not seem to like to let me stay away a morning to go there, and if I don't look after the place I shall offend Mr. Collins, so that I know not what to do. Pray write and tell me what I am to do.

We have had three dresses in and a body, and a muslin one to repair. We have had the dress back from Poppy's to have eight yards of lace in it. Will you tell us in your

next letter what you charge Miss Broad for a barege dress, because Jane has got one to make on Tuesday. We have made the little frock for Burton's and they were very pleased with it. Rhoda works very nicely while you are away. Horace and I are very saving, and shall soon be able to pay debts, Jane says. Mrs. Parker don't get on so well as when you are at home. I hope that you will get well by God's mercy.—I remain, your affectionate son,

EDWIN SHIELDS.

It surely speaks well for the instruction at St. Clement Danes Charity School, that the boy—then aged about thirteen—could write such a letter as this without any mistake in spelling, in a neat, boyish hand. He evidently had his eye on the business and the apprentices in his mother's absence, and the "very saving" ways of the little brothers give a sad insight to the privations they all suffered in those days, and their precocious knowledge of the difficulties of life. The mother wrote again to Frederic from Newport.

"Now, my dear son, about my coming to Manchester, it requires some thought. First place, how shall we all live if I am not able to work? I might not be able to do so. The brokers give so little for what I might sell, it would be a mere nothing. If I could get a few pounds for the business it would pay my expenses down there. Horace is not done with his schooling, but we might get Edwin into something, and I might be better with the help of God. But I am very bad, dear Fred, I am afraid I shall not be able to the task of moving. You ask what the doctors say; one said it might turn to consumption, another says it is not. There is one thing I know myself, that this consuming fever is eating flesh and bones. I have lost all my strength. I am not so strong as a child, my bones are sore. I know not how to lie in bed, I turn and twist, seeking for rest and cannot find it night after night until daybreak. I have cramp in my hips and in my feet. My beloved son, I have only given you about the half of my ills—I think I hear you say I have said

enough, but you asked for it. I mean to wash my arms in the sea, it may put some little strength in them. If you think we could do, I think how happy I could be with my three sons, if it was the Almighty's Will. Oh, my son, pray for thy weak mother. I mean to try a place called Ryde, about seven miles from here, it is a small seaport. If I find I get better in a few days I will return home. Nothing in this world would give me more pleasure than to have you here. You would see mountains too high to climb.

"May God protect you, my good boy, is your poor mother's prayer."

The friend with whom Frederic Shields had taken the house was a young man named Eugene Montague Scott, whose acquaintance he had made at the School of Design. The son of a portrait painter, Scott was one of the first friends made by the lonely youth in Manchester. Shields was introduced by Scott to his sisters—Emily, described as "a charming personality with long raven curls descending in womanly winsomeness on either side her high brow," and Isabel, who had a rare gift for design—remembered always as the first ladies who had ever received him on terms of friendship. They formed a little sketching circle, each member engaged to produce an original design once a month. When the family went to London, the son proposed staying in Manchester, and as, in contrast to Frederic Shields, young Scott was of a gay and flighty disposition, his parents doubtless thought that the influence of a young man of such strict views might be good for their son. However, the arrangement fell through, and young Scott was eventually sent abroad by his parents.

MANCHESTER, 4th August 1853.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I scarcely know with what to begin first, I have got so much to say. But about your illness, I am so glad to hear the doctor said it was not

consumption yet, although it might turn to it; that, with God's help, must be prevented. O! what you must suffer with no friend or relation near you. . . . You ask, mother dear, how we should all live if you were not able to work. Since I have gone back to work, I have been getting 31s. per week, and but that I was in debt through previous slackness and bad wages, I should have been able to do much. In about a month I shall be completely out of debt, and then 26s. is yours every week, God pleasing to keep me in work. With that I think we might manage, and we might get Edwin, I feel confident, into many things here. As to Horace, you could get him out of school whenever you please, I suppose. If you could get a few pounds for the business, it would be a great help; you must try, I think it may be done. Would it be better to sell your things to a broker or to bring them down here by rail? The rent of the house is 7s. per week, including taxes. Coals are only 6d. and 7d. per hundred here.

I will take a walk over the house with you now, dear mother, by your permission. Cellar for coals, cellar for washing (of course that we would send out), with a boiler, and fireplace, and pipe water-tap. Back cellar with a shelf suspended from the ceiling to keep meat cool in hot weather; both cellars 12 ft. by 12 ft. We then go upstairs and arrive on the Ground Floor, kitchen, with rainwater tap, slopstone, fireplace, and oven, and small safe. Back yard, 13 ft. by 7 ft., with back door to step out by. Back parlour, with drawers, cupboard, and fireplace. Front parlour, fireplace and cupboard, large plate-glass window, and inside shutters; both parlours 13 ft. by 10 ft. We then pass into the lobby (in which there is a row of seven pegs for clothes) and upstairs. One small bedroom, one large bedroom with cupboard, large front room with cupboard and plate-glass windows. So now, dear mother, I have shown you our establishment, and you can tell me in your next what you think and whether it will suit you. . . . I trust you will try to write to me by Monday, for I shall be very anxious. My love to my brothers. May God restore you to health I pray, through Jesus Christ, Amen.—Your affectionate Son,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

A pathetic reply was written by the mother, in which she sadly inquires, "How shall I feel, dear son, to take thy wages, or how will you like to give them to me?" Her son replies:—

"I would have written an immediate answer to your letter, but that I have been very busy at home and in the shop. You say 'how will you feel to take my wages.' I don't know, but I know you ought only to feel that I am your son and that it is my duty. For myself, I shall but feel thankful to God Who has placed it in my power to aid my mother. You asked in one of your letters how we should all live if you were not able to work. I think, dear mother, we should stand as good or better a chance of living down here in such a case, than in London. As regards selling the business, £15 is certainly very little for it, but I cannot help thinking that it would be better to take even less than that, if necessary, than to postpone your departure from that little smothering hole. You say the suspense and excitement make you worse, ah! so it will! Tell me in your next what you wish on your signboard, if you please, dear mother, I think we had better put 'Mrs. G. Shields, dressmaker, from London,' and after that what you please. Heaven bless thee again, we shall soon behold each other face to face."

His mother writes again to say that she has not told him that all the streets in London are having new drains connected with each house, and that for three months Stanhope Street has been up thirty feet deep—she finds that it is hopeless to attempt to sell the business under these circumstances, and agrees to come to Manchester at once.

Frederic Shields had made a stipulation with his employers that when business pressure did not demand early attendance he should be free to arrive at work at any time not later than 11 A.M. Not that he had forsaken his habit of early rising, but that he might be free to sketch any incident or character that struck him in the

streets on his way to the shop. He used in after years to say that the streets were his school of art, and that to this habit he owed much of his swiftness of perception and execution. His firm was situated very near to the Theatre Royal, and in the theatre also he made many sketches until he began to fear that attendance at the theatre would imperil his soul, a conviction which he retained, more or less, to the end of his days. Late in life he wrote: "The evil seed sown in me when a child—a relative having thoughtlessly taken me to the pantomime in London—grew into an overshadowing passion for the theatre. The good seed of my godly old schoolmaster was not altogether expelled by it, sometimes I experienced searching heart questionings on this matter which would not be silenced, and gradually so worked within me that, as a young man, I have sat in the Pit, seeing not, hearing not, save the stirring Spirit of God bringing me into condemnation for refusing to yield up my darling pleasure, whilst I trembled with fear for disobedience. At last I yielded partially, making a compromise that I would cease regular attendance, and be present only on those occasions when Helen Faucit, that supremely gifted actress, came to Manchester. But the voice would not be silenced, and at last I utterly broke from the toils, and resolved to visit the theatre no more, no matter what temptation it held out. Then peace flowed into my soul. Few of this age will read this with any understanding, but I know this passion for theatrical entertainments was gradually eating away all spiritual desires, and that, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' and that indulgence in it would have made me unfit for the labour God purposed for His servant eventually."

Oddly enough, many years later, he showed his devotion for his friend, Rossetti, who was very ill at the





A STREET STUDY  
Manchester, about 1857



time, by going to hear Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, *Patience*, hearing it in misery and horror, no doubt, only that he might be able to relieve Rossetti's morbid fear that he was caricatured and held up to ridicule in the play. Probably no service ever asked of Frederic Shields by Rossetti cost him more suffering than did that evening's entertainment.

To return to Clopton Street, Manchester, in 1853. His mother arrived in September with the two little boys, but after a few months of patient suffering she died. The diary for this year is missing, but some pencil notes on a faded sheet of paper record the fact of her death, ending pathetically, "her last dear words, 'remember me sometimes.'"

## CHAPTER II

Trade lithography—Edwin and Horace—Stott Bros., Halifax—First book illustrations—"A Rache Felley"—Ghost for the landscape painter—First water colours—Sam Bough's commission—Drawing for wood engraving—Manchester Art Treasures.

FREDERIC SHIELDS was still working for the firm of Ernst in Oxford Road, and in 1854 had secured a place for his brother Edwin in the same firm in some humble capacity to do with trade ticket printing. But the boy—then aged fifteen—was evidently unable to adapt himself to his new surroundings, and doubtless the strict rule of his brother was a great change from the loving devotion of an indulgent mother. So Edwin ran away to London and sought work in the neighbourhood of his old home. Any efforts made by his elder brother to trace his whereabouts were apparently of no avail until the following year, when, at the end of April, the younger brother, Horace, also ran away to London to seek Edwin and employment for himself. Frederic Shields had evidently written to their schoolmaster at St. Clement Danes. This gentleman was apparently a stranger to him, his old schoolmaster, Mr. Thomas Davis, for whom he always cherished the deepest regard, having retired some time before. The following is the reply:—

ST. CLEMENT DANES CHARITY SCHOOLS,  
*May 27th, 1855.*

DEAR SIR,—About a month ago I received a letter from you, enquiring about your brother, Edwin Shields, formerly a pupil in the above school, and requesting me to make enquiry after him. I have done so, and with

success. I find that he has got a comfortable situation at Mr. Watts', 63 Lincoln's Inn Fields. I must beg you will pardon my seeming indifference to your letter, exemplified in the delay that has taken place, when I tell you that I have not only found out Edwin, but Horace also. I am trying to get him into the establishment of a respectable butcher in our locality, where, should I be successful, I am sure he will do well. Having known so long their poor mother, and knowing also her to have been a woman of a very superior mind, and one whose whole life was bound up in her children, I have taken more than ordinary trouble, and feel rejoiced in being able to give such information to you respecting them as may ease the harrowing feelings of a kind brother, and allay that intense feeling that you must have experienced at their departure from you.

It appears that Horace left last Thursday week with a shilling only in his pocket, that he was five days and a half travelling to London, that he slept in barns, stables, and outhouses belonging to different farmers whom Providence threw in his path. I have given him a pair of shoes, and his brother Edwin has supplied him with respectable clothes. May the God of heaven, Who is indeed the Protector of the fatherless orphan, watch over them and guide them safely through the waves of this wicked world, and bring them in His own good time to the land of everlasting life.—I beg to remain, yours very truly,

A. W. COLLINS.

So Horace Shields, aged thirteen years, tramped alone from Manchester to London, his heart sore, we doubt not, at the loss of the mother who had loved him so dearly, and who described him in one of her letters as "such a good boy, quite a little servant to me when I am ill."

Nearly sixty years ago, and yet who can think of it without a heartache for the forlorn child sheltering in the dark nights in barns belonging to the different—or rather indifferent—farmers "whom Providence threw in his path." Doubtless the little lad, with his mischief and

irrepressible spirits and pluck, had been a hard trial to his pious brother, but had he been given the training and environment which ought to be the birthright of every child, he might have made a fine citizen. Apparently the first situation found for him was not a success, for in June a brief letter from Edwin gives an account of him.

4 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,  
June 4th, 1855.

DEAR BROTHER,—I write to tell you, as you wanted to know, how Horace is getting on. I am very glad to say he is in a good situation, though he was very badly off at first. He is now at a printer and compositor's in Fetter Lane, and if he suits he is to be taught the trade and have his board and lodging.

I am very glad that you are busy and hope you will continue so.—Hoping you are well, I remain, yours affectionately,  
EDWIN.

37 ALBERT GROVE, MANCHESTER,  
June 25th, 1855.

DEAR EDWIN,—I should have answered you before, but I have been waiting in the hope of being able to send you some money for Horace, for although you have not told me explicitly how he is situated, I daresay he wants it, but for this last three weeks I have drawn so little money that I have not even been able to keep out of debt. I cannot get many people to pay me when my work is done. It is now so long since you saw fit to leave me in a most wicked way, as if at that time I had not sufficient to put me about, and to leave me for a year without the slightest information about you until a few weeks ago, and then I received half a dozen heartless lines notifying to me—and still without a word of information about yourself—that your young brother had followed the bright example you had set him, and left the house of the only person living with any right of authority over him. As I have never received any explanation of your running away, and am at a loss to conceive any, except it be my prohibition of such cups of iniquity as *Reynold's Miscel-*

*lany*, &c., and the substitution of works calculated to improve you, not to debase you, I shall be obliged if you will let me have those reasons, such as they are, detailed. I have only further to add on this unpleasant subject, which it was impossible to pass over in silence, that if you do not see the vileness of your conduct towards me, nothing that I can say more will expose it to you. On the other hand, I am inexpressibly overjoyed to hear from Miss D'Egremont that you have obtained so comfortable a situation, and that your conduct is so highly satisfactory to your employers. If there was one thing that grieved me more than another in the departure of both you boys, it was that, neglectful of the promise you made beside your poor dead mother, you both left your Bibles behind you. Oh, I implore you, Edwin, as you value God's favour, do not neglect His Word. I wish to know if Horace has kept his place. Compositors are wretchedly paid, if he is apprenticed to that, but he, like you, has made his bed, and so must lie on it. Did he bring you his prize books, Dale's Poems, and Bingley's Travellers? I know that it is foolish to allow myself to be troubled about your welfare when you fly in my face at every turn; but if you were ten times as bad even as you are, I could not help it. I see you take blindfold the first step to ruin and perdition, and all I say fails to stay you in your progress. When did I ever, in my hardest and most severe moments (and such I had, I should have been an extraordinary man if I had not, harassed as I was) seek anything but your temporal and eternal good? I assure you that the chief thing that has kept me in England has been the thought that I should be able to watch over you two boys, for in July last my friend, Scott, went to New Zealand, and his father offered (so high is the opinion he entertains of me) to pay my passage (£25) and set me up with his son in business there. The thought of your poor mother's children and my brothers restrained me, and I refused what might have been the making of me. My nightly prayer shall be what it has been ever since you left, that God will watch over you where I cannot, and incline your heart to remember your Creator in the days of your youth.—From your afflicted brother,

FREDERICK.

Poor Edwin replied :—

63 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,  
*September 6th, 1855.*

DEAR FREDERICK,—I received your letter, and am very glad to hear from you, as I thought you had forgotten me. I am very sorry that you have to work so hard and so late at night. I hope you will get paid for your picture and that it may be successful. I daresay you have a great deal to put up with, and are very much tried with one thing and another. I hope you are comfortable in your house. Horace is getting on very well, I believe, in his situation. I cannot get out but once in three weeks, and sometimes not that, so that I cannot get to see him as I should like to do. I believe he can do a little in his trade; he lives with his master, so that he has nothing to trouble himself about food and lodging. I went to the Exhibition last week, and a more splendid place cannot be conceived; it is far superior to the first. The different courts are beautiful, especially the "Hall of the Aberagynes" (Aborigines?), the roof being illuminated with gorgeously stained glass, which gives it the appearance as when they burn red fire at the theatre, and the ceiling hangs in drops of gold. The floor and walls are beautifully inlaid with white and black marble in small pieces of diamond shape. The sculptures there are very fine, the gardens are not yet finished, but what is done is very elegant; the animals in them are already on the banks of a stream, and they are of tremendous size. On one of the sides of the river there are represented the different strata of the earth, but whether they are real or not I do not know. There is a cascade and crystallised caverns. It is gradually improving, and of course next year it will be much better; I hope that some time you will be able to spare time to see it.

I am very busy all the year round, and especially so in the winter, as there are twenty-seven fires, and the lamps are on then, and it is very little time I can get to myself, as I can only get out once in three weeks, and sometimes not then. I am up at six and I cannot go to bed till eleven. I have £5 a year, but I expect to be advanced, or else I shall look out for something better. You



ask me to tell you why I left. I did not like Manchester, and not knowing anyone there I was very dull, and I did not like that business, and indeed if I had stayed in it longer it would have made me worse than I was, and I thought I could do better in London, and you know you often told me things I did not like . . . however, I hope all that is forgotten between us. I hope that, by the blessing of God, I may be spared in good health. I hope that you have plenty to do and that they pay better; trade is very bad here, and everything extremely dear. There are no news here. Jenny Lind is to sing at Exeter Hall. I daresay you have heard of the new spectacle at Drury Lane; they say it is very grand indeed but I believe it will not do.

Hoping that you are well, and that you will not make yourself uneasy any more,—I remain, your affectionate brother,  
EDWIN SHIELDS.

Edwin was at this time sixteen years of age. Soon after, his brother wrote again at great length.

MY DEAR EDWIN,—I am constantly thinking of you and wondering what you are doing. It is very hard for you to have to light twenty-seven fires, but I think it is a much worse and far greater objection that you only get out once in three weeks, no one should spend more than twenty-four hours without the inhalement of fresh air. But an even more serious objection exists in the fact that you are compelled to work half the Sabbath. Whatever else a master has a right to demand from his servant, he has no right to demand that he should disobey the commands of their common God. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day, in it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou nor thy servant." . . . For my own part I should not for one moment hesitate in throwing up the most lucrative situation rather than labour on the Sabbath. . . . Is there no business or profession to which you would like to turn your attention? If so I will do my best to aid you with my counsel. I have repeatedly asked you if you read your Bible every night, but you never answer me! I do wish you would relieve me by telling me; and

here, though I am far from counselling you either to gloom or fanaticism, I would have you beware of that dangerous and unrestrained tendency to wit, which you have indulged in; that delight and interest in trifles lighter than air which neither make wiser nor happier, nay are positively suicidal in their operations against the intellect, for wit so miscalled, talks the most and loudest, when she has the least to say. It is true wit may be sometimes used to assist sense, but it is so much more frequently made its substitute, that it becomes to the mind a dire disease. The world, the blind world, thinks wit rare. Wisdom is rare, Edwin, wit abounds. Wisdom is sacred to the few, while wit is the common property of all the gay thoughtless butterflies of fashion and the devotees of the wine cup. With them it is indeed wit, widowed of good sense, which hoists more sail to run against a rock—and it is especially with regard to the light and ephemeral literature of the present day, which weekly pours forth its poisonous cheap compounds of trashy novels, broad grins, and comic songs, and such like that I would have you beware of this rock. If, as I much fear, you have indulged in these, I do trust that what I have now said will induce you to consider the sinfulness of a rational creature, responsible to God for the right employment of every moment of his time, wasting any portion of it in such occupations. . . .

When did you see Horace, and how is he? I have had very indifferent health lately.—Believe me, dear Edwin, with ever increasing desire for your eternal happiness, your affectionate brother,

FREDERICK J. SHIELDS.

It must indeed have been a trouble to Frederic Shields to learn that his young brother had been reduced to working for more than a year in the service of a tavern-keeper, although the surroundings cannot have been so very terrible or Mr. Collins, his schoolmaster, would hardly have described it as “a very comfortable situation.”

Having nothing to bind him in Manchester, and the firm of Ernst having failed, Shields took an engagement

with a Halifax firm, Stott Brothers, at a wage of 50s. weekly. Twelve months in these improved surroundings invigorated mind and body, and here his first opportunity for book illustration presented itself in (incongruously enough) a comic vernacular record entitled "A Rachde Felley's visit to the Grayt Eggshibishun," of which this illustrated edition was first published in 1856. To this droll volume Frederic Shields contributed fourteen illustrations, admirably interpreting the spirit of the writer. In those days Stott's printing-shop was in Swine Market, a few doors below the inn where Defoe is said to have commenced writing *Robinson Crusoe*. The firm remained in existence in 1912, and, strangely enough, one of Shields' fellow-workers was still in their employ. Mr. William Hoyle, who had worked at Stott's for sixty-four years, remembered sitting, when a curly-haired boy, as a model for Shields, who had to design a large poster for "Dr. Marks and his Little Men." Dr. Marks conducted a pioneer juvenile band, and young William Hoyle had to perform—silently no doubt, for the sake of the nerves of the artist—on each instrument in turn, that Shields might compose an attractive picture of the young musicians. Mr. Hoyle remembered how proud he felt to think that his portraits were to be exhibited on hoardings throughout the kingdom. He also gave melancholy evidence of Shields' overworked and underfed condition. As a boy, when at Maclure & Macdonald's, his mother used to give him threepence a day for his dinner, but he usually saved half that, by dining on dry bread and coffee, so that he might spend his pence on prints and drawing materials. At Stott's his wages were good, but he still pursued the same course. "Many a time," says Mr. Hoyle, "Shields would bring a few pieces of dry bread wrapped in a newspaper, and have a pot of coffee made at the shop. He never had any meat, nor even was his bread buttered—he

did more reading than eating at meal times. His scant frame clad in shabby clothes, his long hair and unshaved whiskers, made him look 'half heckled'—but he had no liking for chaff, and an aversion for women."

The shop worked until 7 P.M. every day, including Saturdays, but Shields found time to go sketching. Mr. Hoyle lived just opposite the back door of his lodgings, and he was often awakened very early on summer mornings by the sound of the gate opposite. Often, says Mr. Hoyle, he jumped out of bed in time to see Shields setting out on a sketching expedition; some mornings he went as far as Hebden Bridge—a walk of fifteen miles!

On returning to Manchester Shields wrote:—

37 ALBERT GROVE, HULME, MANCHESTER,  
*December 7th, 1856.*

MY DEAR EDWIN,—You will wonder at my long silence, but, indeed, I have been worked so hard lately that I have scarce had time to eat my meals, being anxious to finish the work before me ere I left Halifax, which I did last Saturday week, and you may guess that what with getting the house (which, after my absence of near three months, was damp and dusty) cleaned and aired, and attending to the numerous commissions which I found waiting for me, it is but little leisure I have enjoyed since my return.

And now I know not what to answer you—you speak of want of amusements and inducement to keep you to your work at Ernst's (who, I am grieved to say, is recently bankrupt). I have but one thing to accuse myself of at Ernst's in my conduct to you, and that was an intemperate passion, continually roused by your opposition to my wishes for your good, more frequently than by any other cause. I was wrong, and if you knew the grief it has since caused me, and the caution it begets in me against passion, even when excited by a good cause, you would pity me. You say our tastes are different, so different that it would be impossible for us to agree. They are indeed different, but it would well behove you, dear Edwin, I say it in kindness, not in anger, to consider



“ Wat o yed E ad! un wat ure E ad uppo his faze—eh ! ”



“ Aw seed Lord Jon Russil, eh! wat a littul chap E is ”

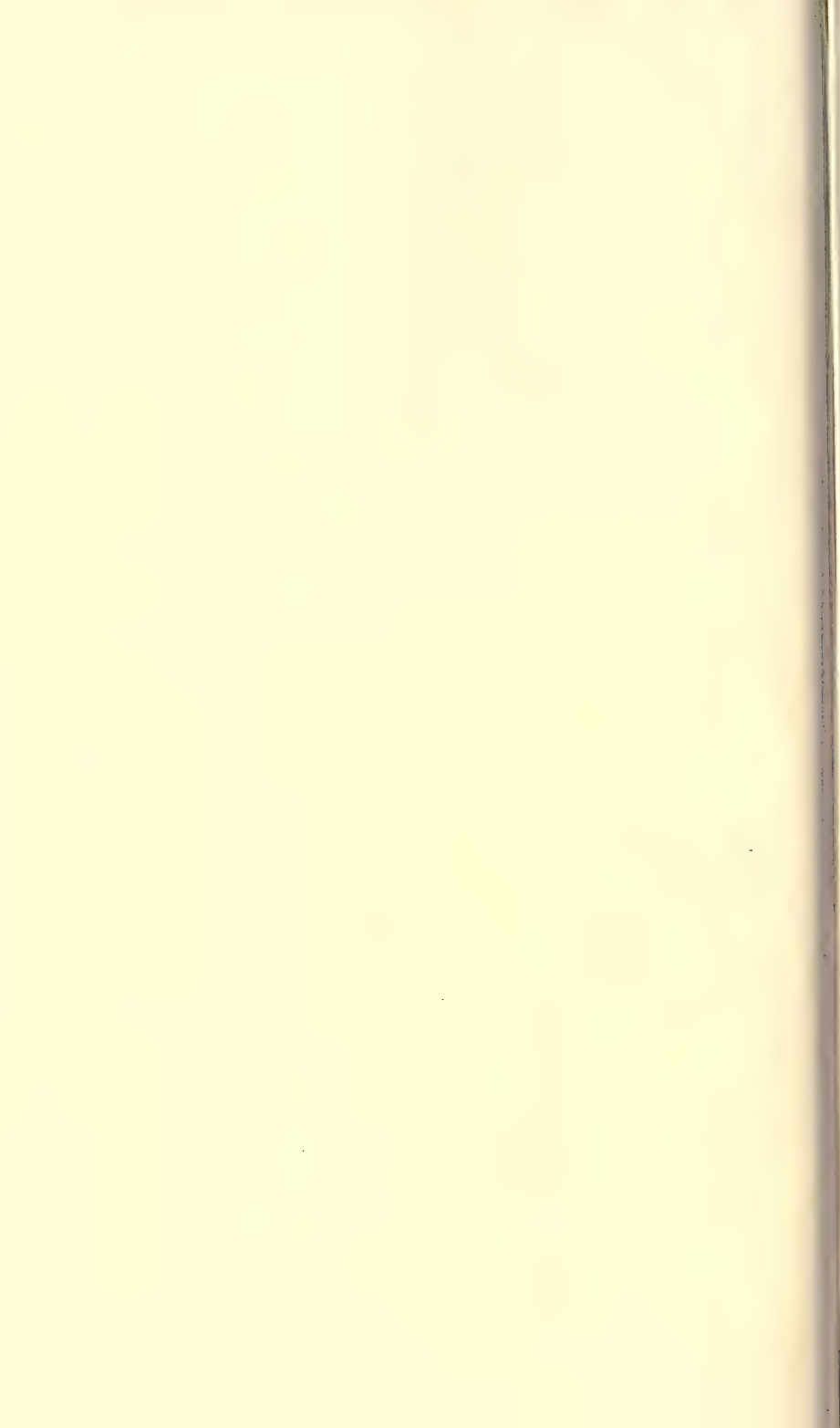


“ O, E sed, you're the last biddur ”



“ Un neaw fur wat aw seed ith Parleyment Heause ”

FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS FROM “ A RACHDE FELLEY'S VISIT TO THE GRAYT EGGSHIBSHUN,” 1856



whose tastes, yours or mine, are right in the question at issue. You, according to your own confession, have a taste for novel reading, insipid and trivial witticisms, and uninstructional, time-wasting amusements. I have a moral horror and dread of all these things, of some of them as positive sins against God, our fellow-men, and our own soul, and of the others as things upon which no rational man would waste the little time he has to live, and which we shall find short enough to accomplish our work in this world and prepare ourselves for that which is to come. You seem to promise that you will leave the business you are in as soon as possible. Oh, do not defer it one moment. Now! Now! Edwin, is the only time we have to do anything in; yesterday is gone, we know not whether we shall see to-morrow, whilst you are hesitating to do right the opportunity may be gone for ever. I will no longer press you just now to come to Manchester, as you seem to have so insurmountable an objection to it, and as there is certainly reason and kindness in what you say of Horace, although I doubt your capability to guide him, who are not able to guide yourself. Yet, Edwin, if either by influence, money, or advice, I can help you to do better, rely on me to the full extent of my power, for I feel toward you as St. Paul felt toward the Corinthians, that I "would most willingly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

With the kindest enquiries after yourself and Horace, to whom I will shortly write,—Believe me, your affectionate brother,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

Being weary of the drudgery of commercial design, and having a few pounds in his possession, Frederic Shields accepted with delight an offer from a landscape painter, C. H. Mitchell, to put figures and animals into his pictures. This more congenial occupation was only occasional, and he found it still necessary to make designs for commercial use, sold to the trade for a few shillings each. But the struggle for existence becoming less severe, he began earnestly to seek a field for his burning passion for art, so long held under by dire necessity. And now he made

his first independent attempt at a picture. Unable to afford adult models, he engaged an Irish child to sit for him, and so painted his first water-colour, called "The Toilet," the subject being a little girl doing another child's hair. Frederic Shields has often related how this picture was at once bought by C. H. Mitchell, and how it stood upon his studio mantelpiece one day, when Shields was at work embellishing a landscape for Mitchell. Sam Bough entered and his eye fell upon the little picture. "Hallo!" cried he, "who did this?" "This youngster," replied Mitchell, indicating the young artist. Sam Bough exclaimed, "Will you paint one for me?" and the delighted youth, who held Bough's work in high esteem, could hardly be persuaded that he was not joking. But it was not for some years afterwards that he painted a picture which he felt was worthy to be offered to Sam Bough. Another water-colour painted in this year was "Bobber and Kibs," a group of five children playing that oddly entitled game on some old stone steps. This picture was shown at the Royal Institution, and in the *Manchester Exhibition Review* for 1856 it is thus mentioned: "'Bobber and Kibs.' This drawing is by a Manchester artist named Shields, but it has no place in the catalogue. It is highly promising, and in parts the work is excellent. In composition it reminds us of the manner of Rubens." In 1857 Frederic Shields made his first acquaintance, at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, with what he describes as "a marvellous unparalleled gathering" of pictures. There first he saw Holman Hunt's "Hireling Shepherd" and "Strayed Sheep," some of Millais' best early work, and Arthur Hughes' "April Love," all revelations to his eager eyes. Here, too, he first saw "Christ Washing Peter's Feet," by the artist who was later to become so dear a friend—Ford Madox Brown.

His diary for this year tells much the same tale as did





BOBBER AND KIBS

(1856)



the earlier one, of strenuous work and rigid self-denial. An entry for a day in January, taken at random, runs thus:—

21st, *Wednesday*.—Rose at 6, lit fire, prayed, studied anatomy of arm until 8.30. Breakfast. At Mitchell's copying landscape for him till 1. Wasted an hour at Morton's talking of the pictures, &c. Nothing learned, came home and was in a hurry for the loss of that hour all night. I will spend no more precious time on acquaintances. Finished Fleming's drawing on wood, worked closely until 10 yet could do no more than finish the centre piece. After, fell asleep in my chair and woke feeling stiff and stupid at 11."

His brother Edwin, who was still in his situation in London, was now evidently showing signs of the dread disease which had already carried off their father, sister, and mother. One of Frederic Shields' numerous letters to him follows:—

37 ALBERT GROVE, MANCHESTER,  
*February 22nd, 1857.*

MY DEAR EDWIN,—Your last letter is to me indeed a mingled web of pain and pleasure. You must have grievously neglected the early symptoms of your cold to allow it to reach such a length, and it is indeed evidence of your needing someone to watch over you. Pray, Edwin, be careful how you expose yourself to draughts, a draught is the beginning of the most serious ills. I have told you, Edwin, that I am ready to serve you in learning a trade, something solid, upon which you can depend for a livelihood hereafter. I believe that amongst my friends here I have many able and willing to serve me in this matter. My whole thoughts are at present swallowed up in the necessity of helping you from the dreadful condition into which you have fallen. Last Sunday, as I was in church and thought of you and what I knew you must be engaged in, tears sprang into my eyes and I prayed God to enlighten you and to show you the sinfulness of the way in which you are. This shall be my prayer daily until it is granted. I will say to you as a friend said to the murderer

Dove, years before he committed the crime for which he suffered, when he saw him defying all attempts to reform him. "If," he said, "you will go to hell, it shall be over mountains of prayers and seas of tears." I trust I have no need to assure you of my sympathy with the accident you met with, but coming as it did, through the medium of the barrels, and therefore of the unlawful traffic in which you are engaged, I would bid you enquire how much it is probable it was a warning from that God without whose knowledge not a hair of our heads shall perish. Beware how you slight it. For what saith St. Paul in the 14th Romans? "It is good neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended or is made weak." And do you not daily, not even excepting God's day, pursue your unholy traffic, whereby thy brother stumbleth and is offended and made weak both in body and in soul, and can you expect God to bless you, or, as you say, "by God's help I am enabled to live very well"? Edwin, it is not by God's help but in defiance of His precepts that you are enabled to live sumptuously and clothe fashionably. I cannot see you thus without a strenuous effort to snatch you from the gulf that yawns open at your feet to devour you. Again, I implore you to determine whether you are prepared to defy God and to disregard the entreaties of a brother whose worst fault to you has always been a too earnest seeking after your welfare. . . .—Your affectionate brother,

FREDERICK JAMES SHIELDS.

In justice to poor Edwin, it must be explained that he was employed as porter at a tavern—doubtless a very unsuitable occupation for a delicate boy, though described by his schoolmaster as a "most comfortable situation." He had an excellent character from his employers, but was evidently terribly overworked until too ill to work any more. He apparently never received more than £5 a year, out of which he more than once assisted the younger brother Horace, so the sumptuous living and fashionable clothing could hardly have existed, save in the anxious brain of his devoted elder brother.

Edwin grew rapidly worse, though his letters show that he retained the hopefulness which is usual with sufferers from consumption. The following pathetic entry occurs in the diary of Frederic Shields:—

*March 12th, 1857.*—Rose at 7. Prayed. This morning came a letter from Edwin's master. O God, what must I do? Agonised in prayer to God to restore Edwin (if it be His Will). I have determined to give up painting and devote myself to the acquisition of money to support Edwin in his illness when he comes here. He must not die so. May God help and support me, for I am sorely tried—put away my picture for good and all at present."

Numerous letters passed between the two brothers during the next few weeks. Edwin's health seemed to improve, and he came to Manchester to stay with his brother, who now worked harder than ever to meet his increased expenses, still designing trade labels, copying, doing ghost for Mitchell and another painter named Rothwell, and drawing on wood for the *Manchester Art Treasures Examiner*. He used in after years to relate an amusing anecdote of an incident in the picture gallery. Each of the rooms of the various schools had its own numeration of pictures, and this led to some diverting errors in identification of the works. One morning when working in the gallery of the British School, he heard the ensuing conversation between an old farmer and his wife. The good woman's gaze became riveted near the roof upon the naked figure of a giant maniac, by Opie, sitting upon his hams, his face between his knees, gibbering in frenzy. "Whoever be he?" she inquired. Her good man opened his catalogue inadvertently in the portrait section; "No. 328, Lord John Russell!" he wonderingly replied. "Eh," she retorted, "whatever made him be taken in that mak' o' fashion?" Surely an insoluble problem.

### CHAPTER III

First sketching expedition—More water-colours—W. J. Linton's offer—  
"Whistle and Answer"—Ragged School teaching—Illness and death  
of Edwin.

C. H. MITCHELL was now starting upon a sketching tour in Devonshire and made an offer to Shields that he should accompany him, and assist him, as usual, by painting figures into his landscapes. The offer was joyfully accepted, and leaving his brother Edwin in charge of the little house in Manchester, Frederic Shields and Mitchell set off together. No doubt this introduction to open-air work, which led to his painting out of doors for many months after, had an incalculable effect in enabling him to resist the disease which proved so fatal to every other member of his family, as well as in removing him from the immediate danger of infection, which was little dreamed of in those days. Of this excursion he writes:—

"I drew all day unweariedly under the stimulus of the strange scenes and life about me. A rugged old fisherman attracted me, and in three hours I painted in water-colour a vigorous full-length which Mitchell sold on his return for £20. This opened my eyes to powers unsuspected by myself until placed in this hothouse of rich subjects, and to the market value of my brush, and determined me to work on my own account. Mitchell offered me £5 as a share of the price, but I replied that he had paid me the weekly wage agreed upon, and he had also borne all travelling expenses, so that I could not judge myself entitled to accept the gift. I bade my kind employer



EARLY PORTRAIT STUDY

Pencil. About 1856





farewell on his return from Manchester, and made my own way over Exmoor to Porlock, which I had noted in passing through it in the coach as rich in rustic wealth of personalities and subjects."

Thus he began those exquisite water-colour drawings of rustic subjects which were so soon to win him recognition as an artist. They found ready sale at moderate prices. The necessity of drawing for the trade was gradually decreasing; drawing for wood engraving seems to have offered a favourable field, though he never felt any desire to pursue this branch of art except as a means to enable him to live and to support his brother. In February 1858 he sends Edwin off to Jersey. This month he records cashing Mr. Falkner's cheque, £9, for his picture "The Holly Gatherers," a beautiful water-colour drawing of two children in snow, one of his earliest finished water-colours, very much in the style of William Hunt. This picture was engraved on wood and reproduced in the *Illustrated London News*, December 24th, 1859. He had received orders to draw on wood several pictures for the *Manchester Art Treasures Examiner*, including "The Three Maries" of Caracci, "The Return of Moses from the Fair," by Maclise, Gainsborough's "Blue Boy," and others. This led him into contact with W. J. Linton, the eminent wood engraver, and on Thursday, February 18th, the diary records:—

"Rose 7. Read I. Corinthians. Received letter from W. J. Linton offering me work on the *Illustrated News of the World*, and desiring me to go to London, a matter for deep consideration, especially as I have now so many commissions here, and my connection becoming extended. Worked at sky of Lindale. Design of Odd Fellows Card for Falkner. Read *Don Quixote*. Ernst's ticket to bed-time. Wrote to Linton, requesting to know the sort of work and wages. Think I shall stay here."

These are Linton's letters :—

6 LOWER CALTHORPE STREET,  
GRAY'S INN ROAD.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have just undertaken the entire management of the pictorial department of a new paper, *The Illustrated News of the World*. Would you like now to come to London? I can promise you work *to-morrow*, and regularly. Would be glad, indeed, of your immediate help. If you choose to come on the chance, come at once. If you would like more exact agreement—as a prudent man should—write me directly what sum per week would satisfy you. I do not mean therefore to engage your whole time, but only to undertake to find you at least work to that amount, at a not lower proportionate rate than you have been working at.—Yours in haste, very faithfully,

W. J. LINTON.

6 LOWER CALTHORPE STREET,  
*February 19th, 1858.*

MY DEAR SIR,—You yourself must be the judge of which is more to your advantage—to stay at Manchester or come here. The work I would have for you would be copying pictures on wood. I do not propose to fill up your time, but only supply you with a certain regular income in return for certain regular work. Think it over, and, recollecting the time occupied by the drawings you made for me, tell me what sum per week would satisfy you for what time; and how long you would need such an amount guaranteed to you, this if it seems desirable to you still to come to town.

If not, my proposition is at an end. Of course, nevertheless, I shall be glad at any time to put work in your hands, so far as the distance between us may allow.—Yours very faithfully,

W. J. LINTON.

The diary continues—

*“February 22nd.*—Rose at 7. Prayer. Lit fire. Read I. Corinthians, 9th chapter. To Mitchell's, put figure in his Pier drawing. Letter from Edwin. Lodging in Jersey dear, 6s. a week, food the same as here, so that it promises

to be a dear move. God help me to support it. Wrote to Linton declining his offer to draw for the new paper. God grant I may have decided for the best. Worked at ticket for Ernst. Sent £1 to Edwin. Stretched paper, put my study right for working in morning. Chilblains very bad. There is still much to do ere I shall be clear of odd jobs, and ready to paint."

An unusually interesting entry follows:—

"*March 1st.*—Rose at 7. Prayer. Finished Falkner's Odd Fellows ticket—thank God he liked it, though I was doubtful. To Dunham, as it was snow, to study for Lomax's picture, but when I arrived found there had been no snow there. Walked through the old park and fixed upon as much as I think would compose a picture, but could do nothing for the wind. Missed my way and got to Broadheath Station, waited an hour and a half for train, got into the wrong one, found out my mistake two stations off, and had to wait two hours for a return train. Saw there a capital figure, a donkey cart driver, with a green wide-awake and a red cotton handkerchief tied round and under his chin to keep it on—must remember him. Began to snow as I came back. Got off at Oxford Road. Called on Falkner; he said he had extraordinary good news for me; Edmund Potter, Col. Hamilton, and others of the Art Treasures Committee had expressed their approval of my picture and given their word for six commissions. I am really stupefied by this sudden change of fortune. God keep me humble under it. Wrote Edwin. Prayer and bed 11."

The first of these new commissions was "Whistle and Answer," a large water-colour, here reproduced by permission of the owner, Mr. James Parkinson.

"*March 25th.*—Rose at 6. Prayer. Letter from Edwin, he is better, thank God, but has no work yet. Went out again to look for a model and called on old Donnell about

my boots. He told me of a lad at a coal shed, whom I found the very thing. Little Patsey I shall try to make play the small girl's part. Worked at them till 6 and got the lad drawn in, drew his head whistling and succeeded moderately in the expression but the drawing is weak. Got out Thackeray's *Esmond*, tea. Tried to read Bible, but fell asleep twice. I should not have done that over *Esmond*. Shame. Paregoric and gruel, Ipecachuanha, hot water, mustard, Thomas à Kempis."

With this vigorous treatment the cold evidently improved, and work continued in much the same daily round. The ticket for Ernst, and the "Eagle and Lion" in the next entry, refer to designs for lithography.

"April 5th.—Rose 6. Prayed. Read Ephesians 4th. Finished Ernst's ticket and sent 'Eagle and Lion' to Stott's. I must have money and this is a ready means. My model, little Lucy, could not come until one o'clock, so feeling that I wanted air, I walked down as far as the 'devil's grounds'—the fair. Went into a sparring booth from curiosity—two mere lads put on the gloves and fought for a quarter of an hour. Was delighted to see a stall of the British and Foreign Bible Society placed in the middle of the ungodly throng—the man holding a placard 'For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.' Bibles 8*d.*, 10*d.* and 1/- each. Called for Lucy coming home and set to work, Sketched her feeling in her pocket for some crumbs to throw to the Robin, but I fear it distracts you and destroys the unity of the subject which ought to turn on the pleasure derived from the bird's answering. Miserably dispirited. Drew at School of Design in evening—outlined hands. Called on Mr. Barnes to ask for time to pay my rent, which he graciously accorded. Bed at 11."

A note early in this year mentions that he had asked Mr. Hammersley to allow him admission in the evenings



WHISTLE AND ANSWER  
(1857)



to the School of Design. We find frequent references to work done there, principally drawing from the antique.

Another picture, commenced in June, was a water-colour of children in a flowery field blowing dandelion seeds, entitled "What's o'clock?" On June 8th the diary records:—

"Letter from Edwin, God knows where I shall get money to send him, have but a shilling left."

The struggle to live, and to support his unfortunate brother, while endeavouring to carry on his pictures—which brought no immediate payment—was very severe during this year. Insufficient food and privation of every kind had played havoc with what must have been an iron constitution, and the long hours of work, the solitary life, and nervous strain, combined to produce constant attacks of weakness and pain. In spite of all this, we read on June 30th:—

"Was elected a candidate for teachership at our school meeting. Tea capital, stayed until 11.30, sang, prayed, home by 12.30, very tired."

Many spare evenings during the next few years were devoted to teaching in the Sunday-school, and in the Ragged Schools, which were founded by his friend, Edwin Gibbs, whose portrait by Frederic Shields now hangs in the Manchester Art Gallery. He and Gibbs used to spend many evenings in distributing tracts and visiting the sick and fever-stricken poor in the garrets and cellars in the slums of Manchester. Edwin Gibbs was by profession a music-teacher; evidently as highly strung, over-worked, and nervous as Shields himself, his too self-sacrificing labours eventually terminated in mental collapse.

Fortunately Shields had serious doubts as to his fitness for a teacher, having little patience or ability to control the very rowdy boys who frequented the classes in those

days. He realised that he could teach through his pictures better than by word of mouth, though at one period an evangelical preacher, for whom he had a great respect, tried hard to persuade him to forsake painting for preaching, "lest art should become his idol."

"*August 21st.*—Rose at 6. Prayer. To Withington for background, not the thing. Came back, found something nearer home, but by then the day so dull that I was only able to outline it. Looked for pink frock for child, got it from Mrs. Donoghue—stayed some time arguing and exhorting her husband, very ill—doctor given him up. Exhorted him to flee to Christ for salvation, and not to give himself up to self-righteousness as he was doing—sick, and a Papist. Called for Amelia to sit for hair of girl—they had cut it—so floored again. Painted child's boots. To School of Design in evening, drew child's head."

In September Frederic Shields had three pictures hung in the Manchester Exhibition. The diary relates:

"*September 8th.*—Rose at 5. Prayer. Read James 4th. Prepared for work and went to the Exhibition—Varnishing day—intending to be back at 1 to work. Some first-rate pictures. They have hung me, thank God, capitally—too well, better than I deserve. Feel much benefited by the sight, freshened for work. Called at Grundy's for colours. Smith showed me an exquisite Turner of Holy Island, a marvellous effect of Storm Cloud. Thank God Stanway bought my Etty. Letter from Edwin. Prayer. Tea. Old woman called and I had a talk with her against her Unitarianism."

A letter to Edwin follows:—

"You know so well the difficulties I have to contend with, in money matters, while engaged on a drawing, that it is not needful to apologise for not answering your letters before. Last night I got paid for my copy of



Etty's Sirens, and hasten to send you the enclosed thirty shillings. I am grieved that you are no longer employed to teach at the school; though intrinsically not worth thinking about, it helped a little, and more, it kept you from listless indolence—a state into which, unless you obtain some employment or apply yourself energetically to some study likely to be of service—arithmetic, for instance—you will inevitably fall. I am still at work on my ever work-exacting picture. I have over-estimated my strength in this attempt, and come very near failure, only vigorous exertion can save me from it. You will be glad to hear that I have three drawings well hung, in the Exhibition. I believe they are doing me good. One is 'The Holly Gatherers.' Robert Carrick has a most exquisite picture, the gem of the Exhibition—'Thoughts of the Future'—a mother bending over her sleeping boy. Ruskin praised him so highly for his Academy picture this year, that he could not have gone much further in his approbation. I hope this lack of money has not troubled you so much as to influence your health. I sold the ticket you did of two dogs to Wilcox last week for 3/6. Trade is very slack. Tell me how you employ your Sundays now. Have you family prayer every day where you lodge? Of course these things cannot save, but the neglect of them will destroy."

The brother's letters from Jersey are usually very hopeful; he is always expecting improved health, sometimes full of a chance of getting employment on a ship—now as steward on a boat going to the West Indies, now as a hand on board a fishing vessel, bound for Newfoundland—the great attraction in the last idea being that cod liver oil could then be procured more cheaply. Neither seemed to realise that the poor lad was within a few months of dying of consumption.

But at last the landlady at Jersey refuses to keep him any longer; he can get no reason from her except that she fears he will need more attention than she can give. In December, when Frederic Shields is staying with a friend,

J. Edmondson, at Queenswood College, Stockbridge, Hants, we learn that Edwin has returned to Southampton.

*January 24th, 1859.*

DEAR EDWIN,—If it please God, I will come and see you on Saturday next, and spend the Sunday with you. Am very sorry you had so rough a voyage. Do you feel better now, after the seasickness? The captain was very kind indeed—it is not what many of them would do. I hope your lodgings are in a healthy part of the town, not in a close narrow street. I am suffering from tooth-ache at intervals.

You must be wretched, so placed among strangers, but what can we do? Southampton is, as I told you, reported one of the healthiest towns in England, and those suffering from chest diseases generally find great relief from their removal there. If I were to take you back to Manchester with me, I fear it would be to repent it. Your illness is so prolonged as to be alarming, and you seem to have behaved with an ignorance at once fatal and astonishing. I must see you myself and so determine what to do. I thought you were getting strong and stout again, when instead you are thus prostrated. Do you feel your chest sore again, as you did last winter? But, it's no use asking questions, I pray shortly to see you face to face and have all my doubts resolved. You must go to a doctor, whatever it costs. He won't want paying directly, and, please God, against he does, I shall be returned and able to set my foot firm again. Remember your former dread experience in London with a chemist, and be warned in time. Don't go to the Homeopaths, I have been studying it lately and believe it an imposture. If they cure, it is by leaving Nature to herself. Their system is absurd, absurdity in practice must result. . . .

Dear Edwin, once more let me impress upon you the necessity for studying the Holy Scriptures. Look at 2 Tim. iii. chap., 15 to 17. . . . Look, too, at 1 Cor. xv., 1, 2. . . .—Your affectionate brother,

FREDERICK SHIELDS.

The diary records:—

“*Saturday, 29th January 1859.*—Rose at 8. Prayer. Woodford 10 to 12. Walked to Dumbridge. Raining heavily, cleared up so that I was dry by the time I got there. Thank God, I was not allowed to turn back, for when I got to Southampton I found a Ghost, rather than Edwin. O God! pardon me! He had not told me half, and I had been pressing him to work when he was not fit to move. My God, forgive me! Praise Thee for the friends Thou hast raised up in his extremity.”

The friends seem to have been people named Clarke, living at Southampton, who showed kindness to the invalid, and wrote to his brother almost daily after he had returned to Manchester.

On the advice of the doctor, Edwin was admitted to the Infirmary as soon as it could be arranged, there being no hospital which would receive him.

BROUGHTON, HANTS, *February 8th.*

MY DEAR EDWIN,—Miss Clarke’s note informs me that at length they have admitted you to the Infirmary. Oh, had this been done before, there might have been hope. But it is vain to repine and think what might have been. Let me know how you are, for you know how concerned I am and shall be, for your comfort; do not, I pray you, neglect any precaution or comfort attainable. Have I ever hesitated between my interest and your health that you should have forborne to confide in me? Oh, my dear brother, do agonise, pray and faint not in your endeavour to see Jesus as your Saviour. Let us remember that it is the Lord who killeth and maketh alive, and commit our souls to His keeping. I am glad Horace has written to you again, does he know how weak you are? Would you like to see him? If so, tell Miss Clarke, she will let me know. Why did I not know how sick you were long before? I had no idea you were so ill. You say you received some peace from the texts. Cling to it. Has it never appeared to you that God, in sending this disease at

the first at London, sent it in mercy to bring you to Him, to repent and humble yourself? And then when Dr. Mason thought you were at death's door, sparing you until now, giving you time and space to repent, "for He wills not that a sinner should perish, but that he should turn from his sins and be saved." And ought it not to be a strong ground of hope to you, that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth?" Blessed reparation for our afflictions, enough to make us rejoice under them. . . . I shall be anxious until I hear how you have borne the journey to the Infirmary. Mrs. Clarke understands and thinks it best that you should enter as a paying patient. They must make a difference, or they are very superior beings, not to be so influenced. I earnestly pray for you, body and spirit. Do write, if able, and tell me all.—Your affectionate brother,

FREDERICK SHIELDS.

Many letters in the same strain follow, with lengthy texts and exhortations, page upon page.

Poor Edwin's letters from Jersey had always shown pathetic anxiety that his brother's painting should not be interfered with, but every attempt at securing employment had failed—doubtless mainly on account of his weak health—except for one brief engagement as temporary teacher in the school at 5s. a week. Now, in the Infirmary, his pathetic letters still regret burdening his brother, he still hopes for work, work of any kind, and finds it hard, he says, to "pacify himself" with texts. But his notes get shorter and shorter, more and more illegible, until they are replaced by business-like reports from Miss Clarke. She writes to Frederic Shields about the state of the dying boy's soul, as well as of his fast failing body, and declares herself convinced as to his being in a proper state of repentant resignation.

And so dies Edwin Shields, aged nineteen years,

surely more the victim of the miserable social and industrial conditions of the "hungry forties" than of a remorseless Providence who is accused of deliberately chastening him with lingering disease and misery into his early grave.

## CHAPTER IV

Russell Street, Hulme—Picture hung at the Royal Institution—*Illustrated London News*—The *Pilgrim's Progress*—Charles Kingsley's advice—Poverty—Death of Horace—"Vanity Fair"—Ruskin's praise—Rowbotham the picture-dealer.

FREDERIC SHIELDS returned to Manchester soon after his brother was admitted to the Infirmary, and in the diaries there is no further reference to Edwin; for the day on which he died—March 16th, 1859—and for a week afterwards the pages are cut out. But neither grief, nor loneliness, nor want could still the inward fire which fiercely impelled Frederic Shields to devote every thought, every hour, and every spark of nervous energy to the fulfilment of his life's dream. In April we read of more commissions—one from Mr. Craven for a picture of an old beehive-maker at a price of £20. Another drawing of the same subject, painted in the previous year and sold to a Mr. Lomax for £5, was shown at the Exhibition of Shields' work at the Brazenose Club, Manchester, in 1889.

In June he is much troubled by the piano-playing of a neighbour, and decides that he must seek another house.

He is still obliged to draw lithographers' tickets and to work for Mitchell at intervals, for, as he pathetically remarks in a letter, "one can't *live* off pictures."

"*July 1st.*—Rose 5. Wash. Prayer. Bible. Feel very undecided about Russell Street house. £6 per year is a great deal more. Prayed to God to guide me and prevent my doing wrong or rashly. Put hens in landscape. Red chalk sketch of 'Fisher Boy.' Determined on Russell Street



THE BEEHIVE MAKER

Hampshire, 1858





house and went to see the landlord; arranged to give him an agreement for nine months. Drew a ticket for Fleming  $1\frac{3}{4}$  hours. Read newspaper account of this fearful battle."

On July 16th he moved to the new house, Russell Street, Hulme.

*July 28th.*—Rose at 4.30. To Mr. Falkner's, sketching on the way. Rough colour sketch of Master Charley Falkner. . . . Called on Letherbrow, and with him Will Lomax. Thank God, he bought my old woman washing for £4, and paid me. To old Donnell, and hair cut. Stayed to listen to a quack and a working man preaching with great power in Stretford Road.

"How evil ramifies. I have been unconcentrated and listless to-day, and I sin against Frugality in wasting time (that is, money); against Justice, because I might pay my debts with money earned in the wasted time; against Sincerity, because I pretend to be eager to pay, and so on."

"30th.—Rose at 6. . . . Got *Life of Velasquez* out of Free Library. Sketched two hours walking about streets; got two capital subjects. Sketched pump in Oxford Road for picture. . . ."

"*August 3rd.*—Rose 5. Wash. Prayer. Breakfast. Got ready to go to the moors; went by 10.20 train. Very windy when I got there, and the heather in flower only in small patches, so could do nothing. Made a sketch or two for 'Gems of the Emerald Isle.' Waited in cottage during rain and sketched the old Grandmother's head for them. Walked across moor to train 5 o'clock. Called at Grundy's; met Charles Ernst, and had a very earnest talk with him about his soul's state."

The inevitable beginning, "Wash, Prayer, Bible, Breakfast," is gradually abbreviated to "W. P. B. B.," though for years it is neatly written at the commencement of each day.

"*August 7th.*—Rose 6. W. P. B. B. To Mr. Falkner's;

painted Charley's head to 1. Dinner with them; very pleasant and social. Went to Royal Institution; my pictures too well hung—thank God—amen. I deserve it not in any sense. To Rowbotham's, and Lomax, to Mr. Rawson; went over to *Examiner* office with him; he wants cover designed for a new weekly of standard re-issue—'People's Library.'

"Wrote up outline of Ragged School address for Sunday; have proposed a Mothers' Meeting there, but met little encouragement."

Weeks go on in much the same round of work, study, and devotion.

In October he first saw the Pre-Raphaelite illustrations to Tennyson, and was immensely impressed by them.

On November 2nd a commission was given to Frederic Shields which was to change greatly his manner of work, and which for the first time gave him an opportunity in design in a subject which roused all his enthusiasm. In the diary the entry is as follows:—

"*Wednesday, November 2nd.*—Called on Crozier and saw his drawings, which are very clever. Took Old Ragman to Lomax to mount. To Morton's, *Examiner and Times* office, and saw Mr. Rawson; got near sixty designs to do for *Pilgrim's Progress!* God help me to serve in this, amen. Received from Orrin Smith to-day a block to draw 'Christmas Eve' on it. Asked Falkner, who was very kind and obliging."

The picture, engraved on wood by Orrin Smith, was reproduced in the *Illustrated London News*, December 24th, 1859, with the following notice, interesting if only as an example of contemporary art criticism:—

"Mr. Frederic J. Shields, of Hulme, Manchester (an admirable local artist, and particularly happy in domestic subjects), has produced a very pretty picture of Christmas gathering, now the property of George Falkner, Esq., of

Manchester, which we have received permission to engrave. In this simple production, so full of truly English nature, we have a couple of children, laden with their evergreen store, just emerging from the secluded copse where it had been gathered. They look healthy, happy, and proud—the little one especially—of their day's work, and in the reflection that they have done their share towards to-morrow's festive display. We wish Mr. Shields many happy returns of 'Christmas Eve,' and hope he will produce many more such choice and pleasant sketches of human life."

"Christmas Eve," renamed the "Holly Gatherers," was shown at the Exhibition of the work of Frederic Shields at the Brazenose Club, Manchester, in 1889; also in London at the Memorial Exhibition in 1911.

In after years he wrote of the *Pilgrim's Progress* commission: "Here was a mighty drama, its scene thinly veiling the invisible world—ranging from the City of Destruction through the Slough of Despond, the deadly fight of Apollyon, to the triumphant passage of the Black Styx and the welcome entrance into the New Jerusalem. Fearful of this chance fading, I tremulously asked £1 each for the designs, save the 'Vanity Fair' agreed at £2. The bargain was struck, and I went to my unlucrative task happier than if I had struck a gold mine. Now, at last, my life, I felt, had begun."

There had recently been published an edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, illustrated by C. H. Bennett, with a preface by Charles Kingsley, to whom Shields now appealed for advice. His kindly reply explains the nature of the inquiries:—

EVERSLEY RECTORY, WINCHFIELD,  
November 29th, 1859.

DEAR SIR,—Your letter is sensible and pertinent to the matter in hand, and I tell you at once what I can.

I think that you overrate the disuse of armour in

Bunyan's day. When the *Pilgrim's Progress* was written, it was much gone out; but in Bunyan's boyhood he must have seen everywhere old armour hanging up in every gentleman's or good burgher's house (he would to his dying day) which had been worn and used by the generation before him. Allowing—as we must in every human being—for the reverence for early impressions, I think his mind would have pictured to him simply the Elizabethan and James 1st's armour which he saw hanging in all noble houses, and in which he may have, as a boy, seen gentlemen joust, for tilting was not extinct in his boyhood. As for this co-existing with slop breeches (what we now call knickerbockers are nothing else), I think you will find that, as now, country fashions changed slower than town. The puffed trunk hose of 1580–1600 co-existed with the finest cap-à-pie armour of proof. They gradually in the country, where they were ill-made, became slops, *i.e.* knickerbockers. By that time almost loose and short cavalier breeks had superseded them in the court—but what matter? The change is far less than that during 1815–1855. The anachronism of putting complete armour by the side of one drest as Christian as in the frontispiece of the original edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is far less than putting you by the side of a Lifeguards officer of 1855; far less, again, than putting a clod of my parish, drest as he would have been in A.D. 1100 in smock frock and leather gaiters, by the side of you or me.

Therefore use without fear the beautiful armour of the later years of Elizabeth and the beginning of James 1st, and all will be really right, and shock nobody. As for shields, I should use the same time. Shields were common among serving men in James I. There are several in the Tower, fitted with a pistol to be fired from the inside, and a long spike. All are round. I believe that "sword and buckler play" was a common thing among the country folk in Bunyan's time. Give your man, then, a circular shield, such as he would have seen in his boyhood, or even later, among the retainers of noble houses. As for the cruelties committed on Faithful—for the sake of humanity don't talk of that. The Puritans were very cruel in the North American colonies—horribly cruel—

though nowhere else. But in Bunyan's time—the pages of Leger and Morland show us that in Piedmont, not to mention the Thirty Years' War in Germany—horrors were being transacted which no pen can describe or pencil draw. Dear old Oliver Cromwell stopped them in Piedmont when he told the Pope that unless they were stopped English cannon should thunder at the gates of the Vatican. But no bestiality or cruelty to man or woman, that you can draw, can equal what was going on on the Continent from Papist to Protestant during Bunyan's time.

I have now told you all I can. I am very unwell and forbid to work. Therefore I cannot tell you more; but what I send, I send with all good wishes to any man who will be true to art and to his author.—Yours faithfully,

C. KINGSLEY.

Most of this letter was printed in the *Life and Letters of Charles Kingsley*.

During the next few weeks the diary records much study of Bunyan's life, contemporary history, authorities on costume and accessories, searching for models, and preparing wood blocks. This ill-paid work was soon to reduce Shields again to the direst poverty. The diary for 1860 begins to record the expenditure of every hour of time and every farthing of money with even more rigorous exactitude than before.

In January he records:—

"*Saturday, 14th.*—Rose  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 6. W.P. Bkft. Read I. Sam. To Falkner's, Rowbotham's, Waterhouse's, Fleming's, and to Rawson's—thank God from my heart got him to promise £3 for the large designs. Reviewed last year's income from March 15th, being £91. 8. 5., and the outlay £91. 16. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ., showing a balance of 8/2 $\frac{1}{2}$  against me. Arranged the twenty subjects from *Pilgrim's Progress* for Rawson's, approved and settled what accessories, backgrounds, &c., I need in Derbyshire. Read Carlyle's *Cromwell*."

From the 18th to the 27th there are no entries. Presumably these days were spent sketching in Derbyshire, for on the 27th the diary records:—

“Rose at 7. To Railway Station 8. Manchester 9. Walk from Ardwick home, put on clean things, cleared my pockets of Derbyshire accumulations and put all things straight. Worked at Simple, Sloth, and Presumption. Proof of Christian reading the Book from Swain—unsatisfactory. Out to seek model for head of Presumption, got an old clothes man. Dinner at 4. Accounts  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 4. Dressed and to Armstrong to see his picture—had tea there and played Loto and Schimmel for the first time, left at 9.30, having been there from 5 o'clock, shameful waste of God's time entrusted to me. Read Bible, prayer, bed.”

Week after week passes in much the same round of work.

“*February 22nd.*—Rose 7. Traced Christian at Cross on wood. To Theatre to borrow dress. To Infirmary to see poor Jane Hoyle. How thankful should I be that God gives me health in spite of my sins and the hardness of my heart. To Ragged School at a quarter to 7—a rough night of it there, dreadful. Home 11.30. O Lord, crush and break my hasty, unmortified temper, Amen, for Thy Glory's Sake, that my light may shine before men undimmed. Wrote begging time to pay the Poor Rate. Prayer. Bed.

“*March 1st.*—Rose 7. ‘Vanity Fair’ to 3. Dinner. To town to see G. W. Edmondson about a model for Wanton in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Saw him and arranged to go with him the whole round of the scenes of Manchester dissipation. Got tea first, and then to the Canterbury Hall, next to the Dog, then the Shakespeare, and at 12 o'clock to the Egyptian Hall, where I staid sketching till 3 A.M. Having had a terrible row with two of the



STUDY FOR FIGURE IN "SLOTH, PRESUMPTION, AND SIMPLE," 1860

Now in the Victoria and Albert Museum





girls about it, I was most mercifully preserved from harm. To the Shakespeare again just as it was closing, and home to Edmondson's by 4.30. Bed. I could not pray, for I have sinned and I fear wilfully led both Edmondson and myself into temptation, and though the Lord has preserved us from outward evil, this lessens not my crime.

"*March 12th.*—Rose at 8. Out to look for model for Christian. Drew him until 2. Prepared blocks and traced. Morton called at 9 P.M. and brought a sketch he wanted making of Star the horse-tamer. Thank God, for I had no money left. Did it by 2.30 A.M. Got 10/- for it. Prayer. Bed at 3.

"*March 24th.*—Rose at 5. Lit fire. Made extracts from Bunyan's *Heavenly Footman*. Traced Faithful and Wanton. Sorted portfolio for drawings to finish, by which to make some money. Sketched Moses and Faithful. John Taylor called. Got him to stand for Faithful. Went to Ragged School in evening. Mrs. Poynter did not come, and I found myself left to teach the Mothers' class, an awkward place, but I received strength. Went to see Gibbs after, and we resolved to write seventy letters to the people around, on their souls. Bed at 12."

In May he is still working at the *Pilgrim's Progress* designs, notably the "Good Shepherd" and the "Man with a Muck Rake," finding the proofs from the wood blocks still unsatisfactory. Blank pages in June indicate another sketching expedition, this time to Disley. In July he begins the wonderful design of "Vanity Fair" and records "Failure after failure."

During the latter months of this year he heard of the serious illness of his young brother Horace, who had been working at his situation as compositor, but now developed the malady which had caused the death of all the other members of the family. Frederic Shields now sadly journeyed to London to visit the sick boy. Horace Shields

died in Brompton Hospital on November 19th, at the age of eighteen. Long hours of work in an ill-ventilated printing-room from the age of thirteen, with scanty pay and indifferent food, gave him little chance of resisting the disease to which he was doubtless predisposed. From his letters he would appear to have had a lively disposition. He seldom wrote to his brother Frederic, though he once returned to Manchester for a few days when his brother Edwin was ill. His boyish letters are singularly cheerful, although he was often out of work and always desperately poor. For his unfortunate brother, Edwin, he had a great affection, and whenever he had a few pence to spare from his wretched wages he sent them cheerfully to Edwin when he was ill in Jersey.

The pages of Shields' diary are again blank for several days, only the date of the youngest brother's death being recorded.

During the following year the entries continue. The first design for "Vanity Fair" was abandoned after six months' work for a better conception, and when this was finished the artist felt that he had accomplished something which showed he had higher powers than those required for "mere rustic subjects."<sup>1</sup>

In May 1861 we still see notes of work at "Vanity Fair."

"*May 18th.*—Rose 7. Practice from Holbein. Simplicity of shading, arranging ornaments for lady's dress. Wrote to Editor *Once a Week*. Sketched dress of court lady and two spaniels, fan, and wig of King. To Free Library.

"*May 20th.*—'Vanity Fair.' Legs of King. The poet's

<sup>1</sup> In 1912 a portfolio containing many of Shields' studies for these wonderful designs was offered for sale in the collection of the late Mr. Richard Johnson, an early patron of Shields. These drawings (of which two are here reproduced) were purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum, where the interesting collection can now be seen.



THE HILL OF CAUTION

*First sketch, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum*



CHRISTIAN AT THE CROSS

Two of the designs for the "Pilgrim's Progress," 1861



hair, face, and leg. To see Gibbs, very ill, rubbed him. Saw Dr. Brown who told me my lungs are sound. I have reason indeed to be thankful to God if it is so. Sinned by staying with William Gibbs too long and breaking my vow of work. Drew poet and University man.

"*Tuesday, June 18th.*—Finished 'Vanity Fair' by 12 o'clock. Rid up back room of prints, draperies, &c. Began letter to Ruskin, and prepared colour box to paint."

Swain had engraved several of the smaller drawings to the artist's entire satisfaction, but some had been proved to lose much by the wire-like line of the engraver. For this wonderful drawing of "Vanity Fair," on which he had lavished so much work and care, he felt more anxious and sought the advice of Ruskin as to an engraver who could do justice to the work. But Ruskin was abroad, and a faded letter dated "Denmark Hill, June 25th, 1861," signed "John James Ruskin," explains: "My son left home a week ago, exhausted with seeing people and writing letters and troubled with a cough. Having permission to open all letters addressed to him, I may say, in reply to yours of yesterday, that it will be laid before my son on his return from the Continent, which (D.V.) may be before October."

No doubt Shields felt bitterly disappointed by this letter, for October would be too late, and the engraving could not be delayed so long. Evidently Ruskin already knew something of Shields' work, probably from a visit to the Manchester School of Art, where Mr. Hammersley, the headmaster, might have mentioned the young man who came to study there in the evenings. In any case, Mr. Ruskin, senior, changed his mind and forwarded the letter promptly, for in a note dated "Poste Restante, Boulogne-sur-Mer, June 28th," Ruskin writes: "I have just received your note of the 25th from my father.

I have been going to write to Mr. Hammersley to ask about you, over and over again—you know you left several of your proofs and sketches with me, they were taken care of. Please write to above address and tell me what you wished to tell me, and let me hear about your work."

The photograph from the drawing on the wood was then sent to Ruskin, who again writes:—

BOULOGNE, 7th July 1861.

MY DEAR MR. SHIELDS,—I have the photograph quite safely. I think the design quite magnificent—full of splendid power.

I wish you could send me a photograph not enlarged, and more sharp, to give me some idea of the drawing, which I should think must be wonderful, and quite beyond the power of any woodcutter I know. I will think about it and write you more when I receive your second packet.—Most truly yours,  
J. RUSKIN.

F. J. Shields, Esq.

If there is any question about expense in the cutting, I shall be most happy to contribute towards having it done well. But I fear no money can get it done.

The diary continues:—

"*July 9th.*—Wrote seven page letter to Ruskin. Finished 'Robber Monk.' Altered 'Vanity Fair' previous to having a new photograph taken. To Rawson's, got £2 extra for 'Vanity Fair.' Thank God, what a relief.

"*July 15th.*—Finished Charley Falkner's portrait. Mr. Falkner paid me. Put away all wood drawing apparatus. Arranged fruit to paint. Cleaned windows. Read Matt. 13th.

"*September.*—Wrote to the papers against the Hulme Wakes. Put figures into Rothwell's drawing. Mounted



THE ROBBER SAINT

Drawn on Wood for "Once a Week," 1861





paper. Went to Moseley to sketch, very threatening, but the rain kept off, and I made two pencil sketches of heather and gorse. Rained pell mell on the way to Staley Bridge. The wakes on there, too. Waited an hour for a train, got off at Ardwick and forgot my sketching stool. Rushed back, past 10, but no use, someone had taken it.

Ruskin writes again:—

BOULOGNE, 3rd August 1861.

DEAR MR. SHIELDS,—I have not been ill; but idle— at least—I *was* ill when I wrote you last, and have been resting since. The photo arrived quite safe—but I have not been able to attend to any business since—and really getting this drawing engraved is no small piece of business. I expect my assistant from London very soon now, and will consult with him and write to you.

Nothing can be more wonderful than this drawing— but I think your conception of Christian false—Christian was no Puritan.

I consider Puritanism merely pachydermatous Christianity, apt to live in mud.

But you need study among the higher Italians—you have been too much among the Northerners.—Ever faithfully yours,  
J. RUSKIN.

Little did the great man know that the artist was starving in a mean lodging, living on a few shillings a week so that he might be able to devote himself to a task that fed his soul's desire. His entire expenses from March to July in this year—exclusive of seven shillings a week for rent—amounted to £4, 15s. 8d.—about 5s. a week.

Eventually "Vanity Fair" was engraved to the artist's complete satisfaction by Gaber, who reproduced so many of Richter's beautiful drawings.

The wonderful *Pilgrim's Progress* designs were published, to the artist's disappointment, not as originally intended, with the complete letterpress, but merely as a

series of illustrations, bound as a thin volume, with brief quotations applying to the designs. In this year Frederic Shields also contributed several drawings on wood to *Once a Week*. At the end of the year he went back to Porlock to recruit the losses incurred during so long a period of ill-paid work, by returning to the water-colours, which always found a ready sale. He remained at Porlock during the whole of 1862, except for a week's visit to London in June, producing many exquisite pictures of rustic life in its most poetic aspect. Its picturesqueness was vanishing even then, improved means of transit and communication had already begun to infect the remotest country village with the latest and most hideous of town fashions. The delightful rustics in their smocks, the innocent-faced children scaring birds, the placid mothers in their sunbonnets, the old beehive-maker, the romantic miller's boy, the girl handing straw to the thatcher,—these we shall see no more.

The diary continues its record of work day by day :—

“*January 9th.*—Rose at 6. W.P.B. Painted at small sketch of the Orphans. Made sketch of interior of cottage. To Luccombe, but on the way met with a girl keeping birds, so capital that I stopped at once, drew her until 4. Home. Dined 7. Prayer meeting for Missionaries, America, Jews, Religious liberty in Europe and East, and the destruction of all anti-Christian error. Had elderberry wine at Mr. Brown's—resolved to take no more. Decided to paint ‘Hide a stick in a little hole.’”

Copies of the *Pilgrim's Progress* woodcuts were sent to Charles Kingsley, whose advice had been so helpful to the artist, and were acknowledged as follows :—

EVERSLEY RECTORY, WINCHFIELD,  
*January 11th, 1862.*

MY DEAR MR. SHIELDS,—Business has hitherto prevented my acknowledging your kind letter and the



VANITY FAIR  
(1861)



drawings. Now I have time to say, that I cannot sufficiently admire them. With strong individuality, and varied imagination, here is real beauty of form, without which I care for nothing. It seems to me that you are about to become one of the first designers in Europe, and I trust that you will spare no time or pains to make yourself such. I think the period which you have fixed is quite the right one. It may be a little late, but it is the *Siècle Louis XIV.*, which endured through Cromwell's time also. It is "the world" against which Bunyan and George Fox testified. I hope to see and hear more of you. You must come down and see me here in the course of the Spring or Summer.—Yours faithfully,

C. KINGSLEY.

"What Mr. Ruskin says," alluded to in Kingsley's next letter, possibly refers to some theory expressed in his books, and not necessarily to any advice given to Frederic Shields personally, for though all Ruskin's letters appear to have been preserved, there are none between that of August 3rd and February 28th, when this next letter from Kingsley is written.

EVERSLEY RECTORY, WINCHFIELD,  
*February 28th, 1862.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Don't mind what Mr. Ruskin says. He is too apt to "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and touch them not himself with one of his fingers." The plain fact is, God has given you a great talent, whereby you may get an honest livelihood. Take *that* as God's call to you, and follow it out. As for the sins of youth, what says the 130th Psalm? "If Thou, Lord, were extreme to mark what is done amiss, who could abide it?" But there is mercy with Him, therefore shall He be feared. And how to fear God I know not better than by working on the speciality which He has given us, trusting to Him to make it of use to His creatures—if He needs us, and if He does not, perhaps so much the better for us. He can do His work without our help. Therefore fret not nor be of doubtful mind. But just do the duty which lies nearest—which seems to me to be, to draw as you are drawing

now. I showed your drawings to my friend Bennett, who lately illustrated the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and without rivalry or jealousy, he was astonished and delighted at them, and said he knew a great deal more excellent work of yours.—Yours ever faithfully,

C. KINGSLEY.

“*February 18th.*—So dark I could not work at Bird Keeper girl, so began crocus and withy. Difficulty in getting the purple colour—did all in body colour. Walked too much uphill, hand shook on return. Had I carefully set to draw this withy with pen and ink, and then washed it, and touched on the lights, I should have done it better in half the time, learned more, strengthened my hand, and had something to keep for my pains. All this I have lost by hurry.”

In the first few months of this year, columns of the diary are ruled off and headed Work, Walk, Dine, Read, Study, Letters, Omissions. Under these headings the hours devoted to each subject are recorded, and the Omissions include such lapses from the strict routine he had mapped out, as “read newspaper half an hour longer than I ought,” “stopped an hour instead of half an hour with Mr. Brown, very wrong, ought to have used that half hour for Sunday School lesson,” “Slothfully stood half an hour before fire—folly—sleepy in consequence,” “Coldness in prayer,” “Painted ribbon three times over through carelessness.” Mr. Brown, the same neighbour who supplied the elderberry wine after the missionary meeting on “religious liberty and the destruction of all Anti-Christian error,” was the local clergyman. Shields interested himself greatly in the Sunday school, which he mentions having found sadly neglected through lack of teachers. His friend, the Evangelical preacher in Manchester, had failed to persuade him to devote himself to preaching, but doubts evidently still occasionally entered his mind, which

the following letter from Ruskin surely did much to dispel:—

NORTHWICH, CHESHIRE,  
*March 28th.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I was away from home when your interesting letter came. No idea can be less justifiable than that you have of your own inferiority. I know no one in England who could have made that drawing of the *Pilgrim's Progress* but yourself. Even should you never be able to colour, you may perhaps be more useful,—and— if that is any temptation to you—more celebrated, than any painter of the day. What you want is general taste and larger experience of men and things. I cannot recommend you to pursue colour until I see some of your attempts at it. When you have leisure to set to work for a serious trial, I will send you anything you want of books, and a little bit of Hunt's to look at or copy, and we'll have a talk about it. Meantime, do put the idea of giving up art out of your head, as you would that of suicide, if it comes into it. I hope to be at home early next week.—  
 Most truly yours, J. RUSKIN.

This letter is printed in the *Life and Letters of John Ruskin* with the date given as 1865, but as a matter of fact the original letter is not dated at all, and it is obviously written in 1862, when Shields was in such doubt as to what to do next, and before he had met Ruskin.

"*May 1st.*—Began sketch of Carter's boy with baby. Painted boy in blue slop with pop-gun. To cottages to sketch backgrounds. To Mr. Floyd's, too much levity and griggishness. God forgive me.

"*May 11th.*—Walked to Minehead down the quay and to the church. Sketched backgrounds."

In June the diary is blank for a week, save for the words "week in London to see exhibitions."

The water-colours painted at this time found ready sale, either to private collectors, or through his dealer friend in Manchester, John Rowbotham. Mr. Rowbotham

was described in later years by Shields as "a man of sterling worth and simplicity of character, an upright Christian, a fair Greek scholar, and a leader in a little gathering of Plymouth Brethren. His wife overwhelmed me, then a lonely youth, with motherly kindness, and the elder daughter became a dear trusted friend, ever ready, in the business wherein she was her father's right hand, to speak in my interests with the wealthy buyers who frequented the shop." Many evenings were spent, when in Manchester, with the Rowbothams, and many are the entries recording "Stayed too late at Rowbotham's after supper." Shields had numerous anecdotes of the picture-dealing trade in those days,—he used to relate how Mr. Rowbotham attended a sale at a mansion some distance out of Bristol, and bought for a few shillings a large aquatint—as he supposed—obscured by a very dirty glass. The way to the railway station led by a muddy path, and in a storm of wind and rain the encumbrance of this large frame made him half inclined to cast it away. However, he struggled on, and it was duly put into the shop, where Frederic Shields saw it. One of Rowbotham's clients saw it, too, and suspecting it to be something other than was supposed, bought it for a small sum, and discovered, on removing the grimy glass, that he had a superb drawing by old Cousins, of the Tiber, with the Castle of St. Angelo for its dominant feature. Years passed by and Shields again saw the picture occupying a place of honour at the Grosvenor Gallery and a centre of interest in the Art world. Mr. Rowbotham's simplicity of character perhaps made him rather unfit to cope with some of his unscrupulous trade rivals. Shields had another story of how, in looking through the portfolios at the shop, he saw a brilliant study by William Hunt, of the vertical depth of a sand-pit, with a narrow slip of sky and a cottage seen above, evidently painted in pure delight of the golden



colour, but utterably unsaleable. It long lay in the shop and then disappeared. Some time after, Rowbotham asked Shields his opinion of an oval drawing, a sprig of holly and a snail shell, which he had bought as a William Hunt. At a glance, Shields exclaimed that it was not Hunt's work, then on examining it, that the shell and holly were not Hunt's, and yet he could swear to the background being his. Then he asked Rowbotham what had become of the sand-pit study. "I exchanged it," said he, "with some other drawings, to a Birmingham dealer." "Then, my friend," said Shields, "it has come back to you with the forged holly and the shell added." Rowbotham had paid £60 for the drawing, but the Birmingham impostor gave way in fear and returned the money.

To go back to the diary and Porlock.

The country children were not always the most docile models.

"*July 31st.*—Tried to paint baby in cart, only did a bit of its pinafore. Got Elizabeth at 11, obstinately lazy she was, could do nothing with her, gave up, fearful headache with the fight. Went for walk round Lord Lovelace's and back by the Linton Road. Visited the sick girl, Floyd. Read and prayed.

"*October 31st.*—Rose 6.30. W.P.B. Got old Jan from 9 to 11, only painted his hand in the time. Painted in piece of boat wreck until 1.30. Packed up traps to go back to Porlock. Terrible day to drive over Exmoor. At the bottom of the hill I was thrown out, the gig upsetting in the dark. A miraculous preservation. Let it make me thankful and watchful. 'In an hour when we think not.' Got a hearty tea and sat, much in pain, with four men who came from a day's hunting and had ordered a huge bowl of Punch.

"*November 1st.*—Rose 7.30. Very windy with fitful

showers of rain. Went to Porlock Weir, but could do nothing for wind. Made a sketch on road back of some boys with boats, playing in stream. Made sketch of girl with fork and straw at thatching. Made sketches of exteriors until dusk. Had a glass of cider at a farmer's invitation. Read Ruskin. Mended books and arranged things. Prayer. Bed 10.30."

Early in January 1863 he left Porlock with much regret at parting with his many humble friends there—the two maiden ladies, the Misses Pulsford, with whom he had lodged, the hospitable vicar, to whom he had given much assistance with the Sunday school, and many another kindred spirit.



THE DECISION OF FAITH

Designs for Defoe's "Plague of London" (1)

*From the original study now in the Art Gallery, Manchester*



## CHAPTER V

Return to Manchester—Sketching in Cumberland—Designs for Defoe's *Plague*—Visit to London—William Hunt sale—First meeting with Rossetti—Madox Brown—Butterworth and his landscapes—Rossetti's first letter—Description of "Vanity Fair"—Ruskin again—Charles Keene—Finding Professor Scott, his father's cousin.

THE house in Manchester had apparently been left empty while he was in Porlock, and the diary soon goes on much as before:—

"*April 10th.*—Began *Plague* drawings. Got Huddleston for model. Traced Hogarth's *Madhouse*. Tried to paint at Beehive, very low and dull. Gave up. Studied Burnet's *Education of the Eye*. So foolish as to call on Gibbs after 10 last night, staid longer than I meant, as usual, and so slept an hour too late this morning. Lord, forgive my manifold offences."

The diary is somewhat irregularly kept this year. A few weeks were spent at Walton, Cumberland, with his friend, Tom Rothwell.

"*Thursday, June 25th.*—Rose 6. W.P.B. To Mr. Pooley's. He bought drawing of *Wood Boy*, very kind. Promised I would call when I had another drawing. Finished *Plague Stricken Field*. Traced and began *Dead Cart*. Worked at *Plague* six hours. Wrote letters, Butterworth, Spottiswoode. Bed 11."

A grim little note, written about this time by a medical friend, requested admission to a "dead-house" for "Mr. F. Shields, an artist who desires to sketch some bodies."

"*June 29th.*—Traced *Solomon Eagle*."

This is considered one of the finest of his grand series of drawings for Defoe's *Plague of London*. A water-colour version of the same design is in the Manchester Art Gallery.

The series of designs for the *Plague of London*, which drew such praise from Ruskin and Rossetti, were unfortunately, in the opinion of the artist, ruined in the cutting. He had the drawings on the wood photographed, and they are happily thus preserved, though very few copies of the photographs are now in existence. The book was published in a cheap, paper-covered series, entitled *Laurie's Shilling Entertainment Library*, engraved by Swain and Morton. The book is not in the British Museum, and is apparently not to be procured. The disappointment at the reproduction of these wonderful drawings probably finally decided Shields against doing any more drawings on wood, and made him return to his water-colours again. In January 1864 he is working at "Bo-Peep" and the "Girl with Pickel," from a sketch at Porlock.

"January 25th.—Finished 'Boo.' To town. Sold it to Mr. Rawdon, £20. Looked for model, called at Agnew's, and Mitchell's. He showed me all Bradley's drawings—what a reproof to my indolence and fastidiousness. To Free Library, to collect costume, to Crozier's about dresses and armour.

"January 29th.—Got room cleaned. To look for old velvet frock at Knott Mill. Sold my Plague sketches to Mr. Barrett, £5."

This entry is especially interesting. The final drawings, as already mentioned, were ruined by the engraver. At the Memorial Exhibition in London in the autumn of 1911, all that could be shown was a set of photographs taken from the drawings on wood before cutting, kindly lent by Mrs. Fowler. A few months later, in January 1912, these original sketches were discovered in a Man-



SOLOMON EAGLE

Design for Defoe's "Plague of London" (2)

*From the original study now in the Art Gallery, Manchester*





chester sale-room. Two Manchester men (Councillor Butterworth and Mr. Roger Oldham) recognised them, and with fine public spirit surrendered their rights in the purchase to the Art Gallery Committee.

*“March 14th.*—Prepared new colour box. Study for ‘Cutting Loaf.’ Tried coloured sketch for ‘Turmit.’ To train to see Sheffield flood. Back at 11. Safe. Thank my Heavenly Father.

*“March 16th.*—Sketch of Sheffield Flood. Touched up Plague photographs for Sir Walter James and Dr. Whitehead. Painted background of ‘Cutting Bread.’ Out to sketch cat at Booth’s. Went to see poor old Stones. Ragged School 9.

*“March 28th.*—Models came. Worked at ‘Playing Toys.’ Finished ‘Cutting Bread,’ to town with it at 1. Mr. Salomons bought it £35, leaving me option of offering it to Agnew.”

In May 1864 he paid a memorable visit to London, and first met Rossetti. Apparently one object of this journey was to attend the sale at Christie’s of William Hunt’s sketches and pictures, some of which Shields bought for his friends Rowbotham and M’Connell, and one or two sketches he was able to purchase for himself, having been advised by Ruskin to study Hunt’s colour.

*“May 13th.*—To Station by 9. Too early. By God’s mercy preserved safe to London by 2.30. Straight to old Hunt sale. There till 6. Dined. Looked for lodgings, got very comfortable at 36 Norfolk Street,

*“May 14th.*—Rose 6. W.P. Out at 8. Breakfast at Coffee house. To see Swain. To old Hunt sale till 1. To National Gallery. To British Museum, made notes of Lycian Bas Reliefs. Tea Walked to City through Newgate.

*“May 16th.*—To Old Water Colour Society at 7.30 until 12. To Christie’s sale. Bought for Mr. M’Connell

£48, 10s., for Mr. Rowbotham £40, 10s., self £5, 5s. To Armstrong's at 5. Went to see Mother's house, 39 Stanhope Street.

"*Tuesday, 17th.*—To Academy, National Gallery. Old Hunt's sale. To G. Butterworth, Thornton Heath."

George Butterworth was originally a carpenter. He had been a student in Ruskin's classes at the Working Men's College, and was at one time Ruskin's assistant. This characteristic letter must have been written earlier in this year.

6 CANTERBURY TERRACE, THORNTON HEATH,  
LONDON, *February 7th.*

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—When was it I heard from you last?—certainly not since the last time! Has the iron of adversity entered so deep into your soul, or a plethora of success so obfuscated your mental vision that you cannot strain your eyes Croydonwards for a brief space, or is it only that, like Van Amburgh's lions, you refuse to roar without being poked up? Well, now, consider yourself poked up and roar accordingly. Roar as you like as Bottom the Weaver would have done—as gently as any sucking dove, but roar, roar, roar!!!

Are you ever coming to London again, or have you been and gone again, without the least intention of extending your journey to here? Answer me that, you —!!! It is astonishing how little I get to see of the Exhibitions now. I suppose if I were 200 miles away I should come up and see them all, but being so near you will at once understand how impossible it is to visit any.

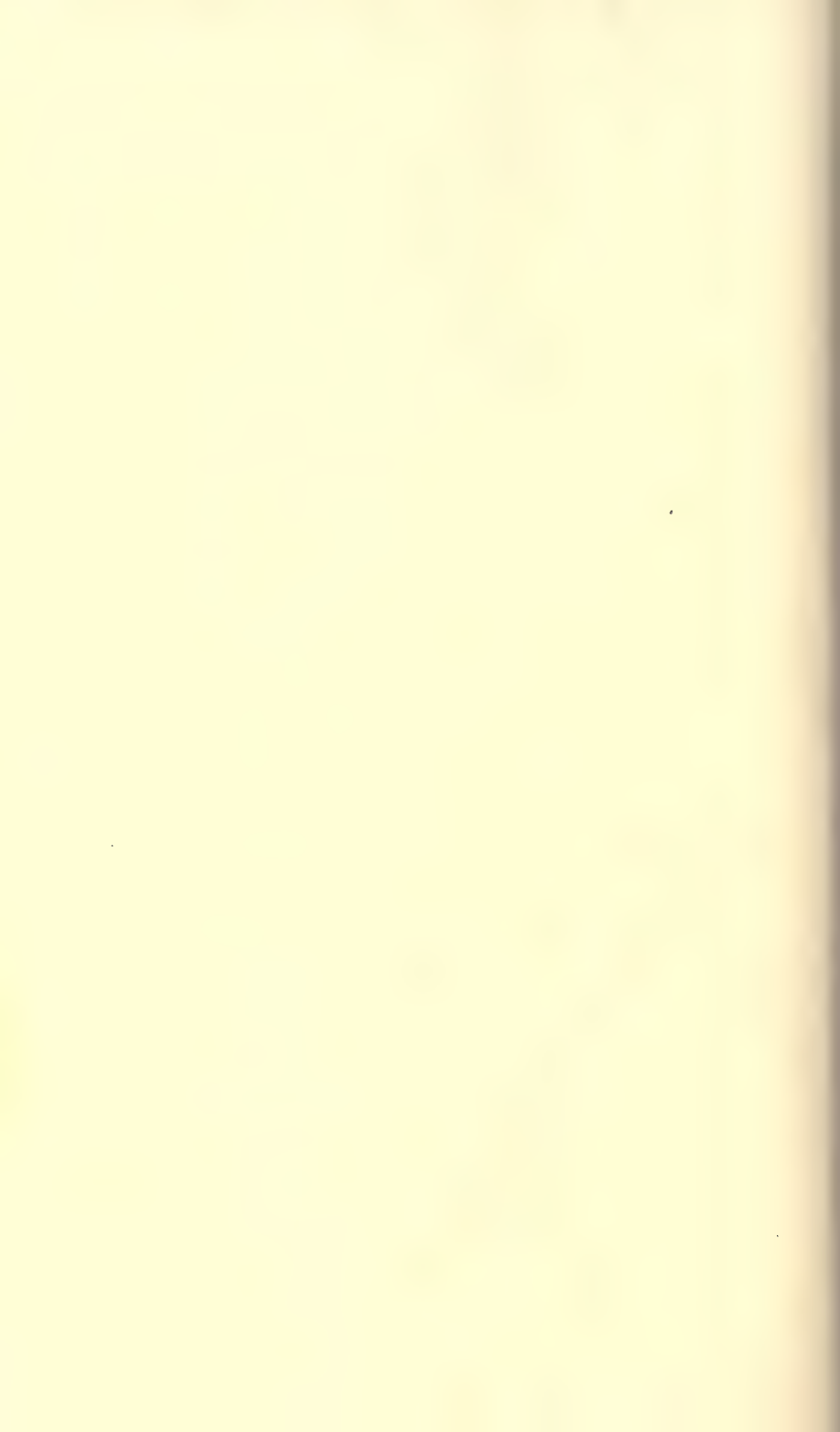
Well, now, what are you doing? I am just managing to keep my head above water, and only just. I think I am improving in my work, however, I am at any rate commencing a new game—a game that everybody else began long ago. I now keep my outdoor work to make clear and clean drawings from at the easel and find it very satisfactory. I am alas, however, occasionally bowled for want of a few *eyes* in my pictures, dots of figures, &c. Now I want to ask if I were to send down a few things occasionally, could you find time and inclination to do the



DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN

Designs for Defoe's "Plague of London" (3)

*From the original study now in the Art Gallery, Manchester*



necessary? I can always trust to your judgment and your work assimilates to mine in execution better than that of any of my friends who have hitherto obliged me. You have been a rare good fellow to me always in that respect, and I had nothing to repay you with but thanks, but now I should not permit that to suffice, and I can repay you in a way that you will, I think, have no compunction in according to. I have lately come into *collusion* with an old gentleman who *stupidly* took a fancy to a number of my things done within these last few years, and he raked out an old folio containing *treasures* and treasures! Prout, De Wint, Girtin, Robson, *Turner*, John Lewis!! Oh spare me—and he was barbarous enough to barter some of these old musty things for my beautiful clean drawings! Wasn't I an ass! Well, never mind, I've sold some of them for a *little* more than I could have sold my own drawings for, and some I have not—about a score or more. There are one or two among them would please you. I shall be happy, at any rate, to pay you in that way for what you do for me—don't say nay. All my work now is about fifteen inches by ten in size, and is chiefly old ruins, churches, abbeys, castles, &c. If I have ever anything more important, such as commissions, I shall feel bound to pay you in coin. Now are you coming up, and when? Remember we have a bed for you, no cock, nor sparrows now, go to bed at ten and oatmeal porridge for breakfast such as you get at ——!!

Now roar! Mrs. Butterworth desires her kindest remembrances to you.—Thine faithfully,

G. BUTTERWORTH.

Some months later, Shields, as we have read, was in London, and his diary records a visit to G. Butterworth.

“*May 18th.*—With G. Butterworth to Old Hunt's sale at Christie's. Ordered packing of drawings. To T. Armstrong's.

“*May 19th.*—To National Gallery, copied Memling's 'Holy Family' to 4.30. To train 5, missed it. Went up Monument. Glorious scene. Croydon 20 to 7. Stayed with G. Butterworth.

"*May 20th.*—With Butterworth, put in his cows and figures until 7 P.M. Had a short conversation with him on Eternal things. Train to London at 9.30. Terrible Thunder storm."

More than forty years later, in one of his loose sheets of notes, Shields wrote; "Butterworth essayed in feeble fashion to paint landscapes, these he importuned me to enrich with figures, and, unwillingly, I yielded. I visited London in 1864, and hearing me express fervent admiration for Rossetti's designs, he told me that, through Ruskin, he was sufficiently acquainted with him to dare to introduce his lowly worshipper. Rossetti was then busy upon his David; part of the triptych for Asaph Cathedral."

Evidently the visit to Rossetti was made on the very day after he left Butterworth, for the diary records:—

"*May 21st.*—To Rossetti's studio. He painting his David. A great day for me, to be praised by him. Introduced to Sandys and Legros."

The account written in later years continues:—

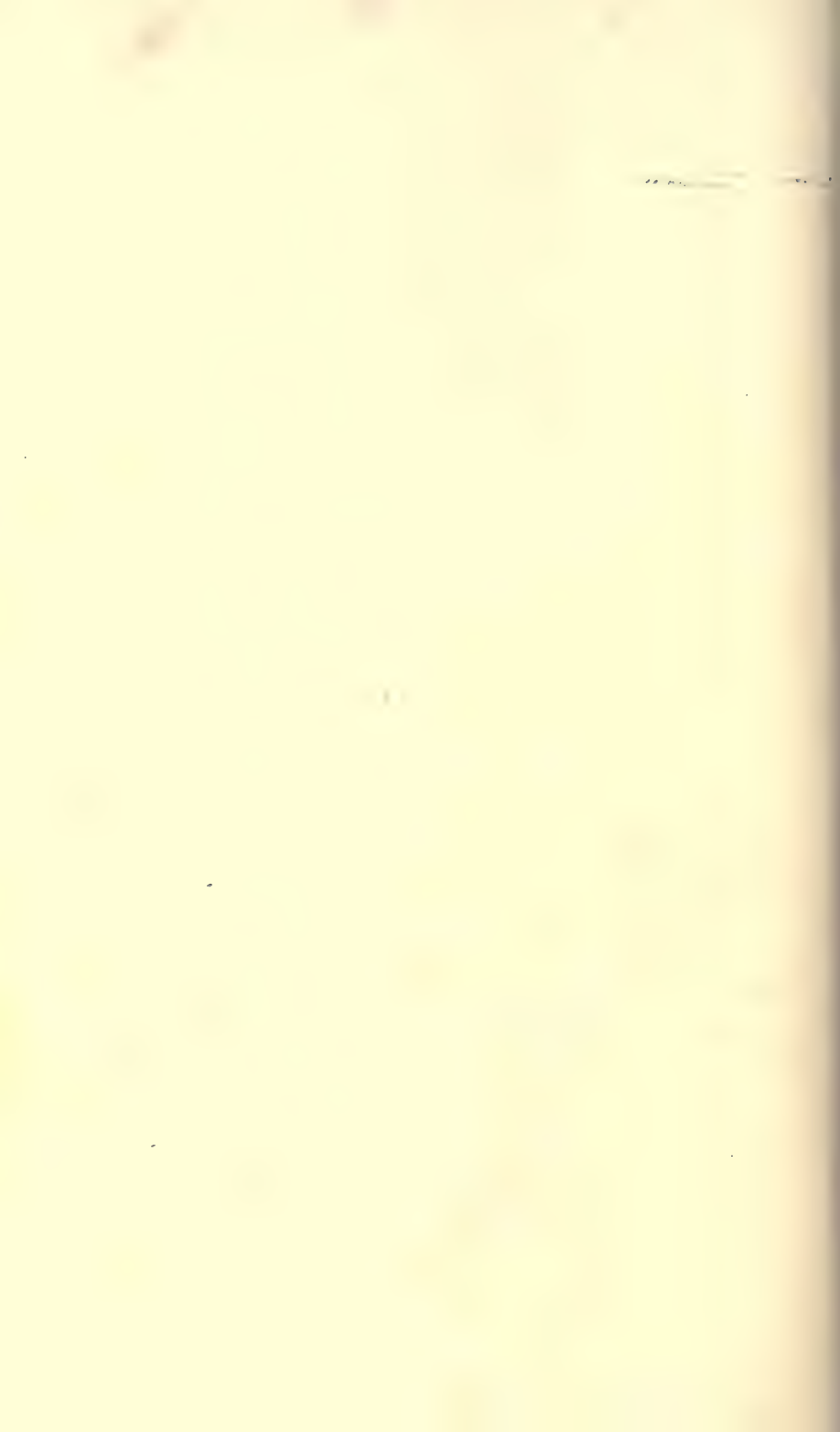
"Rossetti's graciousness of manner abides vividly with me. He left a small group of friends and drew me into an embrasure of the long room that was his studio, looking out upon the spacious back garden. Face to face, I felt such a sense of littleness as I have never experienced in contact with any man but himself. This, through the long years of intimacy that followed, never diminished but increased. With trembling I showed him a few designs, he expressing admiration that made me wonder. He accompanied me to the street door, and as we parted, I said something to the effect of the incompetency of my strivings—never can I forget the impulsive generosity that responded—'Tut, tut, you design better than any of us, but cultivate your imagination.' His freedom from envy of any of his fellows, either in Art or Poetry, singled



THE PLAGUE PIT

Designs for Defoe's "Plague of London" (4)

*From the original study now in the Art Gallery, Manchester*





him out. An introduction to Madox Brown followed, who said little to my work, and that wholesomely corrective of any feelings of elation."

"*May 23rd.*—To Sir W. James, Whitehall. To Madox Brown's. To National Gallery.

"*May 25th.*—To Kensington, Study of Hogarth, studied antiques there; to West Croydon with Butterworth.

"*May 28th.*—To Armstrong's, with him to Poynter's and Bridgewater Gallery.

"*June 4th.*—To Sir W. James, received commission for £100 picture. To Burne-Jones. Train to Manchester. By God's blessing safe home again at 7. To Rowbotham's. Bed 11.30.

"*June 7th.*—Mounted and packed three sets of photos of Plague drawings for Ruskin, Kingsley, and Rossetti."

The following appears to be the first letter received by Shields from Rossetti. It accompanied a copy of his *Early Italian Poets*, inscribed, "To Frederic Shields, with friendly regards. D. G. Rossetti. 1864."

16 CHEYNE WALK, CHELSEA,  
14th June 1864.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I should have answered your letter before, but had to send for the book, which has only just reached me. It goes with this, and as it is Dante's and other men's—not mine—I am happy in feeling sure that it is worth offering you. I should like much to have some day an opportunity of showing you various water-colour drawings I have made at different times from the *Vita Nuova*, but they are scattered in different hands. Perhaps I may yet do better ones from the same source if youth be not necessary to the illustrating as well as to the writing of such a book. I feel sure the book will be a new pleasure to you.

Many thanks for your admirable designs, which others will enjoy here besides myself. When I see you again, I hope I may have some photographs of my own to offer you.—Yours very truly,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

F. Shields, Esq.

*P. S.*—In Part I. of the volume, poems which I think would please you are to be found among those of Guido Guinicelli, Giacomino Pugliesi, Francesco da Barberino, and Fazio degli Uberti.

*“June 25th.*—Went down to Knott Mill Fair, back at 11. Worked at ‘Turmit’ and ‘Spinning Wheel.’ To Mr. Craven’s to see his drawings, great pleasure. Writing out ‘Vanity Fair’ description.”

“The period chosen for the illustration,” wrote Shields, “is the middle of the reign of Charles the Second. First, because it is Bunyan’s own time; second, because never was the Fair in England brisker or more bravely attired. The two companion pilgrims are supposed to be torn asunder in the tumult. This favours the division of the subject into two heads, under which, and holding out their peculiar temptations to diverse minds, may be included all the wares and delights of this world. Christian, who was led astray by Worldly Wiseman at the outset of his pilgrimage, is here exposed to the snares of worldly honours, riches, and the indulgence of so-called refined tastes. Faithful, who was before tempted by Madame Wanton and the Old Adam, is shown, subject to the like trial here. Christian, with eyes averted heavenwards, clutches fast that truth which he will not exchange for all the riches of the Fair. Then first, to Christian’s right, the soldier offering military glory—such as was then dispensed—to the bloody Colonel Kirke, whose horrible barbarities in Somersetshire, and his flag’s ensign, procured his ruffian soldiers the name of ‘Kirke’s Lambs.’ Next to him, the Duke, advertising titles, honours, &c., and offering for sale a patent of nobility. Behind him, the Lord Chancellor, displaying his placard, hung with bribes, and advertising lives, lands, &c. Above him, a Court Fool, elevated on a man’s shoulders, having robbed Christian

of his hat, indicates the world's estimate of the Christian pilgrim by crowning him with his own fool's cap and bells. Below, a courtier poet, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, proffers him the laurel crown. On the other side of Christian, a Bully Lawyer puffs tobacco smoke into his face. A Merchant, with his bale, cash bags, ledger, and file of accounts, thrusts back the Tall Jockey (they were not light weights), who would press forward in the interests of the Turf. Next are the Jew Usurer and the Jeweller; and immediately behind Christian a Trumpeter, who hopes to provoke a laugh at Christian's start from his rude alarm. Then is seen the Recorder of London in his fur cap offering civic honours; while above the Merchant another holds up his book, and offers the services of a venal pen. Next to the Merchant, the University Dignitary, with cap doffed obsequiously proffers university honours; and before him the Painter, enraged at Christian's refusal to so much as look on his unchaste picture of a classic amour. Next, a Sculptor, with a like lascivious group, and the Musician. Returning to the opposite side; the foremost figures on the steps of the Royal Show are the King, with a tray like a pedlar, hung from and filling which are orders, spurs (knighthoods), field marshals' batons, warrants, pardons, &c., for sale. The King's Lady Favourite is receiving from the French Ambassador a bribe, a Jesuit backing up the transaction. A black Page supports her train, and turns to laugh at the cruel amusement of the dwarf, who pinches the spaniel's ear. The Little Lady below draws nearer to her the jewelled Star of the Garter, and the boy, bedizened in the mode, rides his hobby-horse like his elders. Above, a lady, disguised as a page, overtly receives a kiss from a Courtier. Higher, a Bishop and a Roman Catholic ecclesiastic hand and glove together. Courtiers, ladies, and bullies crowd the steps up to the railed division; beyond

which bishops and collegians struggle for preferment; a noble above holding the archiepiscopal mitre for disposal. Mixed with these, and invited upwards by the Garter King at Arms, another set fight for the possession of coronets of all degrees—a duchess handing down an Earl's coronet to some bidder. The Royal Crown itself is in front, guarded by the Yeomen, and ticketed at £800,000 (Charles II is reported to have offered it to the Duke of Monmouth for that sum). Above, the Royal Show is hung with the Chancellor's bag, and other insignia of office, with the escutcheon of a member of the Royal Family, bearing the bar sinister. Beyond these is the Judges' seat, where the Butcher Jeffreys is receiving a bribe from a masked lady, his low companions carousing around him. This side being completed by the Theatre, with the crowd pouring in; and another popular spectacle, the Gallows, decorated with three dangling figures. Nearly lost in the distant crowd is Faithful, with fingers in ears, and eyes shut against the words and charms of the women who mockingly pull him; while one of their male companions crushes his hat over his face. Drunkards, one a woman, make the foreground of this group. Another has pawned all but his breeches at the sign above, linked in partnership with the Red Lion, for which the pawnbroker is the provider, as indicated by the jackal's head supporting the three balls. An overturned stool, cards, and money, with the bloody knife among them, show how this play has ended. Above the half-naked drunkard is Hopeful, himself as yet a slave to vice, but moved with sympathy for Faithful, which is noted by the Mountebank, who turns to jeer him by pretending that he too is going to pray. From the balcony above a female is setting fire with a lighted torch to the Bible, which a halberdier has hoisted up for this end. A carriage going to a rout. A bombastic statue, in periwig and Roman armour, tramp-

ling on the world. An auctioneer selling slaves (which was publicly done at this time in England). Dancing and other booths; a Tailor's display; a Rope Performer as Mercury descending; and Temple Bar adorned with grisly heads; the then new Cathedral of St. Paul's overtopping all."

A rough draft of a letter dated June 5th, 1864, shows that Ruskin sent a message through Butterworth asking Shields to write to him, and explaining that only illness had prevented his writing further about the engraving of "Vanity Fair." Shields says that Ruskin had declined to recommend him to pursue colour until he had seen his attempts at it (referring evidently to his letter in March 1862; but adds: "I think I might be able to send you one shortly if shame of the poor thing do not prevent me; yet Rossetti, to whom I showed two unfinished drawings, did not disapprove of their colour."

Whether this letter was sent to Ruskin we cannot say; but the document goes on to mention that as Ruskin attached so much importance to William Hunt's work, he determined to possess something by him if opportunity ever served, and had therefore bought, at the sale of Hunt's sketches, a small study of a boy's head and a nude life study, both most powerfully painted. Shields mentions his own designs for Defoe's *Plague of London*, photographs of which he seems to have sent to Ruskin, explaining that they were slightly executed for the engraver's sake, as he was to receive little for cutting them. No other opportunity, he says, has been given to him for designing on wood; but if it had, he would not have been eager to embrace it, so much does the work suffer in the reproduction. "So I have been compelled to go on with colour drawings of rustic subjects, in which I have been so successful as always to sell; my object being to gather a little money as a capital to fall back upon in the prosecution of more

important works, the beginning of which is the execution of a drawing for which I have received the noble commission of £100."

This evidently refers to the commission from Sir Walter James. Ruskin replied with a warmly enthusiastic letter, in which he says: "I do not know any modern work which has impressed me with so much sense of a sterling, manly power of imaginative realisation as these Plague woodcuts of yours. They are quite magnificent. I shall feel it the merest and highest presumption to pretend to any power of guiding or advising you. A designer of your calibre *can* only do what he ought, and *he* only knows what he ought."

Ruskin goes on to say that he may regret an artist's bias, "and I do regret yours to old Calvinism; but one need not hope that it can be changed." He asks whether there is any chance of seeing Shields in London, where he might possibly help him a little in colour.

In a much corrected copy of what was apparently a reply to the above, dated July 19th, Shields tells Ruskin that he prizes his approval above that of any living, and draws his breath deep and hard with emotion as he reads his letter over and over again each time with increasing wonder. He says: "Your strong words seem designed to encourage me, and I will carry them in memory, trying not to let my pride feed on them; but to think—This then is the deliberate given judgment of one whose judgment I most trust (on others' work). I will endeavour to act in reliance on it, and no longer doubting that God has given me a talent, only seek how I may best employ it—to Him Who has given it." Shields goes on to say how difficult it is to decide what to do next, drawing on wood is disappointing in reproduction, and etching out of date; he says he will come to London in October and bring some drawings, adding, "I would become a child under any one



ESCAPE OF AN IMPRISONED FAMILY

Designs for Defoe's "Plague of London" (5)

*From the original study now in the Art Gallery, Manchester*





fitted to instruct me in colour." Whether this letter was sent to Ruskin or whether it was again rewritten, we cannot say; but a little later Ruskin wrote: "I know well enough without looking at your painting that you can't paint, and have been wasting your time. No Puritan can paint, but also your drawing is all against it. But come up and show me."

Ruskin did not know—perhaps he never realised—how sad had been the colour of Shields' early days, and how—even apart from his depressing Calvinistic views—the joy of life and the physical vigour of youth were spent in fasting and prayerful emotion and the weary struggle for a scanty subsistence.

Later Ruskin says: "I am very anxious about your coloured work, and want to see it. I hope I may have been wrong about it." Finally, he sent a study of a herring by William Hunt for Shields to copy. In Mr. E. T. Cook's *Life and Letters of John Ruskin* occurs the following: "Mr. Ruskin," says Mr. Shields, "sent a fresh herring in water-colour by William Hunt, of exquisite colour; and I had the reward, when I took it and my copy to him at Denmark Hill, of hearing him say, 'Well, if you had brought back your copy and retained the Hunt, I should never have known the difference.' This settled the question of my eye for colour, hitherto in doubt."

The diary continued:—

"August 19th.—The skeleton came; obliged to rearrange room in consequence. Drew old ragman; enlarged the girls. Jane came to sit; very naughty; no work till 3 o'clock. Much upset in my work by accordion next door."

The Ragman refers to a picture called "Desire is Stronger than Fear." This was one of the pictures which won the artist admission to the Old Water-Colour Society.

"September 13th.—Sought out my diaries for eight

years past. What a review! Worked at William Gibbs' portrait. Katie sat for hair; made a mess of it. To Knott Mill Fair with Laresche to buy old clothes."

The annual fair at Knott Mill, held on the site of the camp of Agricola, said to have been named from the Mill of Canute and to date from the days of Henry III, was in later years described by Shields as "My annual sketching festival, rich in character never seen but at those old fêtes, where Wombwell's Menagerie vied in attraction with the strolling players who strutted upon the platform in paste-board armour and conventional robber costumes. In my early days I made acquaintance with Hanlon, father of the Hanlon brothers, gymnasts, afterwards famous on London boards. Their kindness to me during a sore crisis of my being deserves grateful remembrance. I tried to return it by designing a large poster for them."

Many years later—in 1893—he painted Knott Mill Fair, his largest realistic oil-painting, a replica of an earlier water-colour, using many old costumes and properties which had actually been purchased at the fair in those early days.

"October 14th.—To fruit market. Tried arrangements for fruit picture. Painted purple grapes. Wrote Charles Keene."

He had met Keene in London, and evidently sent him photographs, probably of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, about this time, which Charles Keene acknowledges:—

55 BAKER STREET.

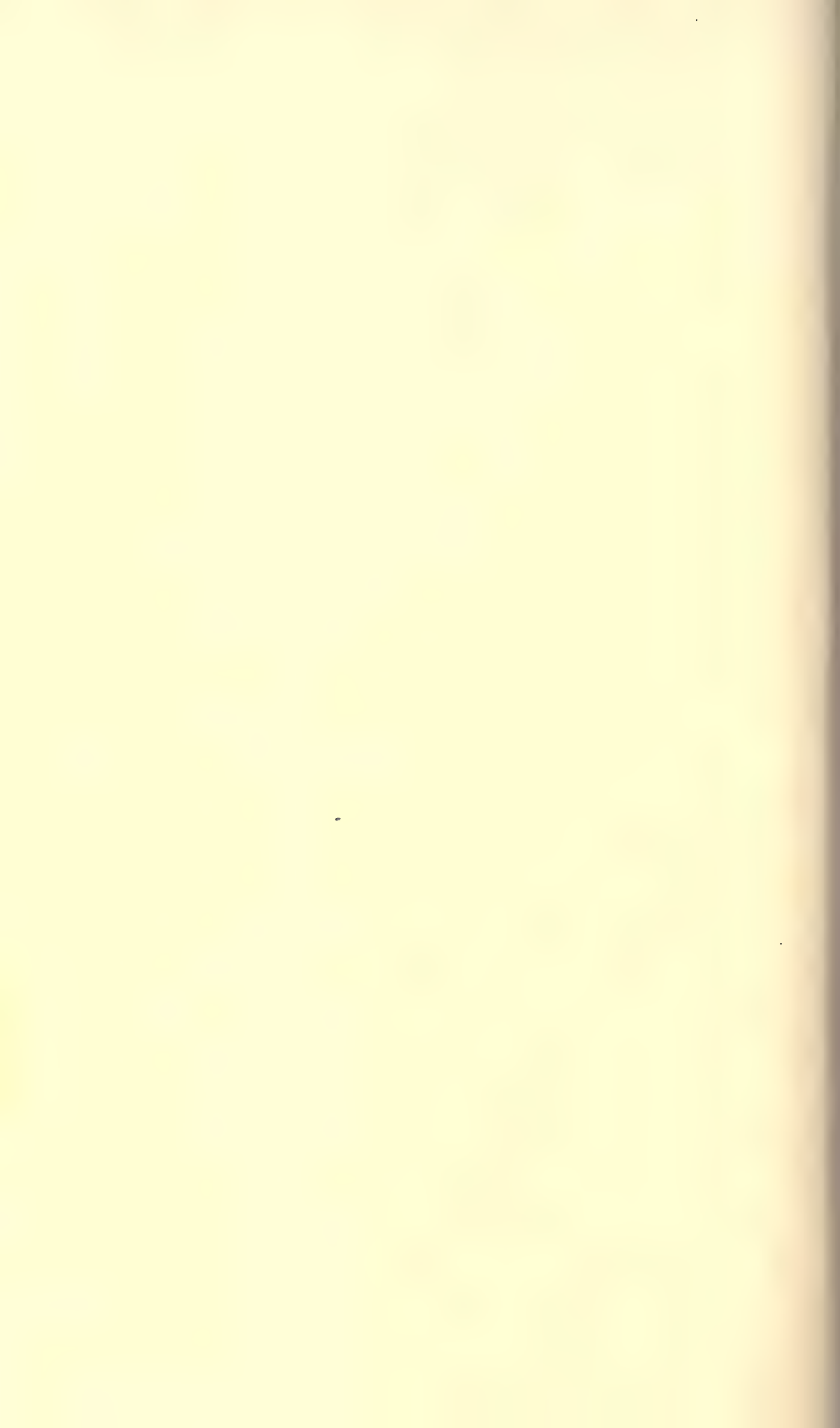
DEAR SHIELDS,—Many thanks for your noble present. I need not say how highly I prize it, intrinsically as an artist and proudly as a pledge of remembrance of the kindly donor. I wish I had some work of my own I could feel more worthy to offer you in return. I shall hope I may some day. I don't despair of seeing more of your



THE END OF A REFUGEE

Designs for Defoe's "Plague of London" (6)

*From the original study now in the Art Gallery, Manchester*



work of the same kind if the publishing world are not lost to all sense of taste.

I hope you will look me up whenever you are near here if you come to town.

Remember me to our friend, Tom Armstrong, when you see him.—And believe me, yours very sincerely,

CHARLES S. KEENE.

A letter from Rossetti, dated October 23rd, 1864, says:—

“I feel quite as neglectful as you can—and more so, not having yet answered your kind note accompanying the translation of *Solomon's Song*. My simple motive—if not excuse—for the delay has been that, having little eyesight to spare after my day's work for reading, I have not yet looked into it in any decided way. However, I still fully intend to do it justice.

“Thanks for your intimation of W. Craven's wish to possess a drawing of mine. It happens I have one just nearly finished whose disposal is yet undecided.

“I may perhaps drop him a line on the matter, as you have given me his address, this seeming the most direct plan and avoiding further trouble to you. The subject of my drawing is ‘Joan of Arc.’ Many sincere thanks for the photos, which I am sure will be as widely admired as the others have been.”

Rossetti's letter acknowledging the *Pilgrim's Progress* was friendly and encouraging.

16 CHEYNE WALK, CHELSEA,  
December 4th, 1864.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Many warm thanks for your “Pilgrim” with its generous inscription, of which I can only say that, taken in conjunction with the volume, it makes me feel astoundingly undeserving. I imagine you have published these designs thus separately in order to get some justice done them in the printing, as they have appeared (have they not?) in an edition of the *Progress*.

My favourites are still "Christian reading" (in which the idea of the crumpled burden shaping itself into a death's head is in admirable keeping with the spirit of Bunyan)—"Sloth," "Simple," &c. (unusually well cut), "Mercy Fainting" (ditto), and (for its great completeness) the "Good Shepherd," though I have always thought that this subject would be more properly rendered by giving to the Symbolical personation of Christ the character and costume of an actual shepherd rather than an uncertain and somewhat conventional drapery. "Vanity Fair" is an amazement to me, and an envy to my eyesight, though seeming to me to belong less to the highest class of design than some others. I do not see in the description any reference to the Banner of the Lamb surmounted by a severed human head, but presume that this probably symbolised corrupted Christianity. The "Hills Difficulty" and "Caution" are very perfect in style for the material. If you will allow me also to name the one I like least, I should fix on "Moses and Faithful," which seems to me too incongruous an idea to bear embodiment in a picture. Very fine as many of these designs are, I think there is immense progress—especially as regards power of striking execution—in the designs to Defoe's *Plague*. It is most fortunate that you had these preserved, as you drew them, by photography. I hope I may see you soon, and am meanwhile and ever, yours very sincerely,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Shields was so dissatisfied with the woodcuts of this *Plague* series, that he gave his friends not copies of the book, but sets of the photographs from the drawings on the wood before cutting. The diary continues:—

"*December 6th.*—With Butterworth to look out lodgings. To Mr. Ruskin's lecture.

"*December 10th.*—To Butterworth's until 10.30, put boats into his drawing. Mary came. Visited poor old Stones. Made his bed.

"*December 17th.*—To Professor Scott's, discovered that he was indeed my father's cousin."

Frederic Shields wrote, many years after, the story of his visit to the Scotts in these words:—

“I had always known that my father had a cousin, a Professor in London University, who had left him unanswered when he wrote to him during his last illness. When Ruskin came to Manchester to give his lectures on ‘King’s Libraries,’ &c., he stayed with Professor A. J. Scott, of Owens College, at Halliwell Lane, Higher Broughton. Robert Crozier, his son George, William Hull, and others had put into Ruskin’s hands examples of their work for his criticism, and I was deputed to call for these drawings, as I knew Mr. Ruskin slightly. On the morning of his departure I was at Professor Scott’s house early, and was told by the servant that Mr. Ruskin had left by an earlier train than he originally proposed. I, who had hoped to hear some expression of opinion about my friends’ works, was turning away, when I heard a sweet female voice from the stair landing enquire if some one had called for Mr. Ruskin, and I was asked in to stand before a presence that won fullest confidence at a glance. I told my errand.

“‘The drawings are here; Mr. Ruskin has been delighted with them. Are you one of the artists?’ ‘No.’ ‘Then what is your name?’ I gave it. The lady started, and with a strange light in her eyes said, ‘What was your father’s name?’ ‘John Shields.’ With loving impulse she drew me near to her, and kissed my brow, while the tears started to her eyes as she told me how, when my father’s letter had reached them, they were in the throes of removal from London, and how, over and over again, she had hunted persistently for it, lost in the confusion, without success. How they had grieved sorely, as they conceived how pained my dear father must have been at his cousin’s apparent disregard—and then last, she exulted that I was found, on whom to pour out the long pent kindness. ‘And now I must go and tell my husband.’

I was left, I, who had no relative in broad England, a lonely, unattached being, astonished under this strange uncovering. And then, wrapped in a grey Scotch plaid for warmth, for he was already failing in health, there entered the room alone he whom I was so anxiously expecting. The portrait that I afterwards drew of that noble head is the best witness of how he impressed me. He clasped my hands in silence, looking piercingly through me, and then asked me to sit down and tell him of my father's illness and death, and my own life since. As I recounted all—my sister's death, my father's, my mother's, my two younger brothers', and my own stern struggles with nakedness and starvation, he broke in with strong emotion: 'I cannot bear to hear it; tell me no more.' I less walked than danced my way back to Hulme in an ecstasy of unspeakable emotions. Not many months after that Professor Scott was taken away for change to Switzerland, and while I was at Porlock a letter reached me from Mrs. Scott that told me of the great bereavement. Many of the present generation know the worth of character of his only son, J. A. Scott—afterwards my firm and noble friend."

To return to the diary of 1864. On the day after the eventful interview with Mrs. Scott, the entry runs:—

"*December 19th.*—To Mr. Muckley's, painting Dr. Crompton's boy. To Professor Scott's at 5 until 10—met the Winnington pupils."



## CHAPTER VI

Visiting the sick—Sketching—Rossetti's "Hesterna Rosa"—Offer from William Morris & Co.—Alexander M'Laren—The Snow Picture—Farewells—Elected to the Old Water-Colour Society—Winnington Hall—London again—*Illustrated London News*—Ruskin at Denmark Hill—C. H. Bennett—Swinburne—Simeon Solomon—Sam Bough's letter—The "Nativity" design—Street music.

IN 1865 the diary continues:—

"*January 4th.*—To sketch snow. Victoria Station. Guard says No Snow. Not go. Back. Wesley design. To-day Joe Waring brought me the news of Jane Hoyle's death and of her father's on the same day. Have mercy on this foolish people, Lord, and let them take warning. And on me, to-day if Ye will. Thou Whose throne is Heaven, Whose footstool Earth, Thou awful God, have mercy for Thy Son's Sake."

Jane Hoyle and her father were apparently among the poor folk in the neighbourhood who were regularly visited and prayed with by Shields and his fellow-workers at the Ragged School.

In Mr. William Rossetti's volume of *Rossetti Papers* he publishes the following letter, which was evidently written in reply to Rossetti's letter of December 4th. The picture referred to is the water-colour "Hesterna Rosa." It was the first of several purchased by Mr. Craven, an early friend and patron of Shields in Manchester. Mr. Craven's collection then consisted of a fine group of David Cox's and a number of Fred Taylor's, and Absolom's. At the suggestion of Shields, he asked Rossetti to paint a water-colour for him, and this led to

the formation of his noble collection of water-colours by Rossetti, Madox Brown, and Burne-Jones, eventually dispersed at Christie's.

50 RUSSELL STREET, HULME, MANCHESTER,  
January 9th, 1865.

MY DEAR SIR,—On Friday last I saw the "Hesterna Rosa." What a blaze of glory I received as my first impression. . . . And I am not alone in this. Mr. Craven said, "I wrote very little more than an acknowledgment to Mr. Rossetti, for I was afraid that, if I attempted to write what I felt, it would appear fulsome." . . .

I was astonished that you should have dwelt so carefully on my designs in the book as your remarks made evident. I know the "Moses and Faithful" is a sad failure, but I cannot lay the blame on the unfitness of the subject for pictorial treatment. I think I could do it very differently now—for I feel the truth Bunyan would here convey better than I did when I made that design. I think it might be made so much of by one who could do it rightly. I also quite agree with you that it would have been better to have made the "Good Shepherd" in actual Shepherd's dress; but one can only bear to think of the oriental Shepherd in such connection, and this would have necessitated Syrian sheep, about which I know nothing; so that I thought it better to keep to my English sheep, and the old conventional *rôle*. You credit me with too much thought and intention when you suppose that I meant the lamb on the banner in the "Vanity Fair" to have any deeper motive than a reference to the ensign of that bloody mercenary of James II—Colonel Kirke—who so cruelly murdered the poor Somersetshire peasantry after Monmouth's insurrection. It is one of their heads that I suppose to surmount the pike of the flagstaff. Colonel Kirke seemed to me to supply a figure of that military life which seeks only its own emolument or glory at the price of the blood and tears of thousands. I should not like to be thought to make Christian turn his back on the soldier altogether—not whilst I remember men like Gardener and Havelock. . . .  
—Ever most truly yours, FRED. J. SHIELDS.

To this letter Rossetti replied :—

16 CHEYNE WALK, CHELSEA,  
11th January 1865.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Thanks for your letter. I am extremely pleased that my drawing of “Hesterna Rosa” should find so much favour with you. Mr. Craven had already expressed to me his satisfaction with it, and I judge from what you say that it does not lose in his esteem on better acquaintance, which gratifies me to know. I trust before long to be able to write him word of some larger work in hand, according to what you say, if you think his wish sufficiently definite to justify my doing so. At present I have several engaged pictures in progress which pre-occupy me, but I trust not for long. If Mr. Craven were equally willing to have a work in oil instead of water-colour, that material is the one I prefer for larger things, indeed I have never employed water-colour, except on a small scale. I had intended to write before this to say that, according to your wish, I spoke to my brother about noticing the “Pilgrim.” Unfortunately, though he admires the work as much as I do, and would have been very glad of a chance of saying so, the only paper which might have been open to him for the purpose (the *Reader*) he found, on enquiry, had already said something of the designs—I believe very inadequately in his opinion. Should any other opportunity offer, he will avail himself of it.

I have been asked by a firm with which I am connected (Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.) to ask you whether you would be willing to furnish them sometimes with designs for stained glass. The firm has now existed for some years, and includes in its Company several artists, whose names you know, and indeed themselves in some instances, viz.:—Madox Brown, E. B. Jones, and myself. “We” are stained glass manufacturers, and decorators of all kinds, at 8 Red Lion Square. The original plan was for all designs to be made by members of the firm; but the partners concerned are so occupied always with their pictures that it is often impossible, for long intervals, that they should work for the firm,

and it would be highly serviceable if the managers could rely on aid from without sometimes. Our endeavour has been to make all our work more truly artistic than such work has been hitherto. We have an admirable colourist, William Morris, who gives his whole time to the work of the firm, and all that is needed in the design is the drawing—the colour rests with him. Would you enable me to give him, as manager, an answer to the above question? The payment for designs would, I should think, be about equal to that for wood-blocks, but he would communicate with you if you are able to entertain the idea.—Believe me (still in hopes of seeing you), very sincerely yours,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

The idea of designing for glass did not commend itself to Shields. In the next letter from Rossetti, dated February 10th, after some reference to Mr. Craven and his desire for a larger picture, he says: "I rather thought that in all probability your engagements would prevent your entertaining Mr. Morris's wish about designing stained glass for him, but thought it better to ask you, as he desired it."

"*January 16th.*—To Town Hall to sketch Executive Committee for M'Lachlan. To Rev. A. M'Laren, not in."

It was in this month that he was introduced to the Rev. Alexander M'Laren, by a Mr. Richard Johnson of Fallowfield. M'Laren became his life-long friend and they corresponded until his death in 1910.

In *February* 1865, Frederic Shields was elected a member of the Old Water-Colour Society.

"*February 3rd.*—Worked at drawing for Rowbotham. Packing up for Old Water-Colour Society. Reading Oriental books for Beatitude."

Apparently he had arranged for some one at Burton to let him know when there was a fall of snow there, which it was necessary for him to sketch for his picture.

"*February 14th.*—Touched up Whaite's sketch till

11. Letter to go to Burton. Started. Walked from Camforth. Got to Burton at 5.15.

"*February 15th.*—Out to sketch snow, failed to find what I want. Feet cold and wet, water frozen at my side."

The next three days were spent in much the same way.

"*February 17th.*—Out to snow again, and got done at 3. Left dear Bentham and his wife at 4. Safe home by 8."

Rossetti wrote :—

"Thanks for your letter. If anything decided occurs to me on the subject in question, I will write to Mr. Craven. In any case I shall be glad to see him when in town.

"It is capital hearing that you have been elected into the Old Water-Colour Society. I hope you do not suspect me of any pigheaded or antagonistic notions as to the natural ways of coming before the public. I simply found in youth that the worry of getting ready for exhibitions was unsuited to my disposition, and also with rather misplaced pride (at that age) refused to submit any work to the Academy, which I considered (not untruly) unfair in its practices. I have therefore no personal cause of complaint against them, for I have never sent them a work. In after life I have adhered to my plan of non-exhibition, because I think it is well to adopt early a plan of life, and not lose time afterwards in giving second thoughts to it. It has come right with me—more so, perhaps, than I could expect. But I think that competition and appreciation are among an artist's best privileges, and congratulate you on securing them."

Shields now made preparations to leave Manchester for London, whether with a view to making it his permanent home, or merely for a visit, is not quite clear.

"*March 14th.*—Model disappointed me. Bentham came, went to Mr. Rawson to see if I could get my money for picture to lend Bentham £14. Worked at Beatitude.

" *Wednesday 15th.*—To see Mr. Rawson—got £30 from him. Lent Bentham £14. Lunch. Bentham sat for Beatitude. Prepared lesson and bade adieu to my dear lads, who presented me with a copy of A. M'Laren's sermons. Bed at 11. Never slept from excitement.

" *March 17th.*—To town with E. Gibbs to get his photograph taken. Called on Craven and Falkner. Our farewell meeting at Ormond Street. A most precious night in some respects, the good of which will, I trust, stick by me as long as I live. Bed at 12."

The farewells seem to have been somewhat prolonged, for a month later the diary records: "Very affectionate farewell from Mr. Falkner, very, very kind."

In April, being still in Manchester, he frequently visited Professor Scott.

" *April 10th.*—To Winnington Hall with Mrs. Scott, to meet Mr. Ruskin."

Winnington Hall, and its Principal, Miss Bell, were destined to long retain their influence over Frederic Shields. Forty years later he thus described his first visit: "Winnington well deserved its name, a house full of beautiful rooms, the chimney pieces of Italian work exquisitely carved, fine casts and engravings everywhere, many of Mr. Ruskin's most finished drawings of Venetian architecture, &c., together with a noble collection of minerals, all Mr. Ruskin's loans or gifts. He himself giving lectures or lessons on his visits there—his 'Ethics of the Dust' was prepared for the Winnington pupils. There was a fine library, rich in works upon Art, and beautifully wooded and extensive grounds bordered by the river Weaver, rendered always musical by the fall of its weir. Into this Eden I was introduced, a shy, bashful fellow, alone in the presence of many ladies, for I suppose there were usually seventy girls of varied ages being educated there, with their unique advantages."

No doubt the young artist felt shy and awkward in these novel surroundings, but he soon won approval by his sketches of some of the beautiful young pupils. He used to say that he profited as much by the instruction of the Principal, Miss Bell, as did any of the pupils, for this was only the first of many visits, and the beginning of a long, though not unbroken, friendship. It is interesting to compare the description of Winnington given by Mr. Ruskin in a letter to his father a few years earlier, quoted by Mr. Cook in his *Life of Ruskin*. He says: "This is such a nice place that I am going to stay till Monday: an enormous, old-fashioned house, full of galleries up and down stairs, but with magnificently large rooms where wanted, the drawing-room a huge octagon—I suppose at least forty feet high—like the tower of a castle, hung half-way up all round with large and beautiful Turner and Raphael engravings, and with a baronial fireplace; and in the evening brightly lighted, with groups of girls scattered round it, it is quite a beautiful scene in its way. . . . The house stands in a superb park, full of old trees and sloping down to the river, with a steep bank of trees on either side; just the kind of thing Mrs. Sherwood likes to describe; and the girls look all as healthy and happy as can be, down to the little six-year-old ones, who, I find, know me by the fairy tale, as the others do by my large books, so I am quite at home."

Strangely enough, many years later, Miss Bell, having fallen upon evil days, was teaching a little girl—a namesake of hers, though no relation—then little more than a six-year-old herself. Daily the old lady came, giving the child interesting desultory instruction, chiefly in painting and nature study, the latter then almost unrecognised as a part of the school curriculum. The little girl now remembers little of the subjects of the lessons, except that they included very careful and minute drawings of budding

twigs—it must have been in the spring-time—carefully set up in bottles containing sugar and water, and while the pupil painted Miss Bell would read long extracts from Ruskin with great earnestness. But one thing the little girl (who happens to be now the present writer) remembers—the lessons must have sunk deep into her childish heart, for Miss Bell having found a better post to teach a nobleman's children in Russia, the child was sent to a very ordinary school, where, from her spirited arguments with the somewhat unenlightened painting mistress, to whom she impertinently quoted her great authority, she was nicknamed “Little Miss Ruskin.”

Lady Burne-Jones, also a visitor at Winnington, says in her book, *Memorials of E. Burne-Jones*: “Miss Bell was an extremely clever woman, of a powerful and masterful turn of mind, evidently understanding that Ruskin was the greatest man she had ever seen, and that she must make the utmost of the intimacy he accorded her and the interest he took in her school.” Their intimacy terminated sadly many years later, and it may be said that the fault was not on Mr. Ruskin's side. But in the case of Frederic Shields the friendship only ended with his visits to Miss Bell during her last hours of life.

In April 1865 Shields made his first appearance at the Old Water-Colour Society, and the *Illustrated London News* thus describes his contributions:—

“Mr. Shields has a provincial reputation, but had scarcely been heard of in London. His election a short time since is said to have surprised the artist himself; it will, however, have a very different effect upon everyone else. All his four drawings are small or of very moderate size, and their subjects are of the humblest. One is called ‘Eleven o'clock A.M.,’ and represents a cottager's daughter, a strapping girl of ten or twelve, cutting with a will the huge luncheon slice of bread and butter;



another is 'The Baby-cart,' a third 'The Pop-gun,' and the last is entitled 'Desire Stronger than Fear'—two children timidly approaching an old pedlar, tempted by his basket of sweetmeats and gaily coloured paper wind-mills, yet terrified by his portentously ragged, grizzly, hirsute appearance, and possibly in mortal fear of the sack with which he is swathed, and into which they may, recalling some nursery legend, think his encouraging smiles are only designed to inveigle them. Humble, we say, as are the subjects of these drawings, they have rare and true qualities of art. We have no hesitation in saying that for happy rendering of character—and more especially of natural action, gesture, and expression—there are portions in them which will bear comparison even with such a master in similar subjects as Wilkie; and that there is nothing so good, exactly of their kind, in the exhibition. What can surpass the hungry eagerness of that girl with the loaf, or the impish delight of that boy, with his knees so strenuously clamped together, at having just discharged his pop-gun at the little frightened fellow he has persuaded or compelled to kneel before him to be shot; or the inviting grin of the old cadger, and the alarm of the child clinging to his elder sister's back?"

On July 17th Shields was again in London, studying Titian and Veronese in the National Gallery. He saw Ruskin on more than one occasion, and several kindly letters from him, undated, but evidently written at this time, are preserved. In one Ruskin says: "You may come whenever you like, and as often as you like." Again—

"You've just one thing to do—to take care always and first of your bodily health—amuse yourself and see the best work while you are in London. All this you must do—or you'll be getting on the wrong road—

and for you—the wrong road would mean—Miching Malecho.”

The diary, irregularly kept, continues:—

“*July 20th.*—To see Mr. Ruskin at 12.30, then to C. H. Bennett. Home at midnight.”

His friendship with C. H. Bennett lasted until the end of that artist's too brief career. This was their first meeting, but his work had long been known to Shields, first through Bennett's series of etchings for the *Pilgrim's Progress*. He had wandered through London streets seeking for heads that suggested the personages of Bunyan's Allegory. It was reading the preface to this edition that led the young Shields to write to Charles Kingsley for advice about his own project of representing the characters and incidents in the costume and surroundings of Bunyan's time, instead of with the ideal dress and features of Stothard's lovely designs.

Drayton Grove, South Kensington, was now Shields' home for many months. Here he renewed acquaintance with Robert Collinson, an old fellow-student in Manchester, and his wife, and owed much to their generous friendship; in this year also, he first met Mr. Arthur Hughes, whose friendship in after years was very precious to Shields.

“*August 3rd.*—To see Rossetti 12. To Museum, drew ‘Young Hercules.’ C. H. Bennett called, a very happy evening with him, looking at Tintoret prints, &c.

“*September 20th.*—To Museum till 10. Began ‘Nativity’ design. To see Jones, met Swinburne.”

This meeting was described in later years. “My first sight of Swinburne was at a reception at Burne-Jones's house. I saw an impenetrably close knot of listeners gathered round some central point of interest—what or who was it? A mass of rich auburn hair leaped up for a moment, disappeared and reappeared indicative of some

excitable being pouring forth unseen. This I afterwards learned was Swinburne."

"*September 30th.*—Rossetti called. 'Nativity,' study of old man's hands. To E. Poynter, Simeon Solomon and Armstrong."

For the work of that ill-fated genius, Simeon Solomon, Shields always expressed the greatest admiration. At this period he was advising his Manchester friend, Mr. Johnson, to purchase some chalk drawings by Solomon, who wrote a friendly letter of thanks. In after years, when nearly at the end of his tragic career, Shields came across him again, and would again have befriended him, had it been possible.

The diary is now very irregularly kept, but evidently some other exhibition was pending, either in London or Manchester, for which the early water-colour, bought by Sam Bough, was desired.

CHAMBERS, 2 HILL STREET,  
EDINBURGH, 20th October 1865.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Surely you can have the drawing to exhibit. Where is it to be sent to—and when?

I was very ill nearly all the time I was in London—couldn't tell what was the matter with me, but found out when I got home that it was Chronic Bronchitis, and from that cause you must perceive that I was in no condition to go anywhere. This has been a miserable summer with me, I have done nothing, but must now stick in and try what I can for the winter Exhibition here. I hope you have been well. I can't tell you how much pleased I was to hear of your success, and I am very sure that there is still greater luck in store for you. I can't make up my mind to leave Scotland. I have been here too long to like going, and, though I detest the people and wouldn't cry if the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah overtook the blasted lot, I can't easily hook it. If I came to London, I am pretty certain to fall into the Theatre again, and that my wife won't hear of.

Bradly was here two or three days ago; he is making some drawings down at St. Monace, on the Fife coast; he had been in the Highlands, and I saw his sketches, very good they are—he is a clever chap and will do well. C. H. Mitchell has been down in Scotland also, but I didn't see him. B. said he was ill the whole time he was here.

I shall be glad to have the photo from Duval, I expect the dear old boy down here shortly. With all good wishes,—I am, my dear Fred, yours very faithfully,  
SAM BOUGH.

The "photo from Duval" may perhaps refer to a photograph of the beautiful "Nativity" design, which was made at the request of Mr. Duval, a portrait painter, "for the frontispiece of a volume of poems by a widow lady whom he desired to serve." It was, for some reason, never used for its original purpose, though Duval expressed himself as being delighted with it. It is undoubtedly one of the artist's finest designs, quite unlike anything hitherto produced; it marks the commencement of an entirely different period of the development of his genius.

On receiving the drawing, Shields evidently wanted to touch it up, and also wished to know whether Bough would like it to be priced in the catalogue of the exhibition. Bough replies November 4th: "Let me say that I am perfectly satisfied with the drawing as it is, and I would really advise you not to touch it. State any price you like in the catalogue, but let me beg you not to sell it, I wouldn't part with it for any money—unless such parting was to do you a service, and then, my dear Shields, you are welcome to it." This must have been the drawing exhibited at the Manchester Shields Exhibition in 1875, catalogued as "In Mother's Absence; Somersetshire, 1865," lent by Sam Bough, "The Artist's first Commission."



THE NATIVITY

(1865)



The diary is blank for October and November, but shortly after the completion of the "Nativity" design he returned to Manchester, driven away from London by the incessant organ-grinding and street music, and in October he was at work on the portrait of Professor Scott at his house in Halliwell Lane.

## CHAPTER VII

Porlock revisited—Return to London—The Old Water-Colour Society—James Holland's generosity—Bands, organs, nerves—Sandgate—Boulogne—Military pictures—Chelsea—C. H. Bennett's death—Ruskin's help—Manchester again—The old house at Cornbrook Park—Rossetti's letters—Madox Brown and the condemned Fenians—Warwick Brookes.

EARLY in December he returned to Porlock, rejoicing to be again in that romantic region, where he could paint rustic cottages, picturesque fishermen and their surroundings, and the dear, troublesome country children, who figure so vividly in these early pictures. He remained there until April, when the diary records: "Left Porlock with much sorrow."

The months at Porlock were always a happy memory to Shields. All the peasantry knew him, and there were few dwellings into which he was not welcomed; he visited the sick, taught the children in the Sunday School, and made friends with some of the fine old fishermen. Doubtless this visit did much to restore his nerves after the distractions of London life. He returned to London in April, for the diary records:—

"*April 20th.*—To National Gallery. To tailor's to order new clothes.

"*April 21st.*—Not well, could not work. To Water-Colour Gallery. Introduced to Gilbert, Goodall, Burton, Fripp, Holland, &c.

"*April 23rd.*—Worked on Snow Picture all day.

"*April 24th.*—Snow Picture until 6. Butterworth called, went with him to his house."



The Snow Picture referred to was “One of our Bread Watchers,” now in the Manchester Art Gallery. Studies for this had been made more than a year before. At Porlock on one occasion the artist worked for three days upon a snow-covered ploughed field, sharing the privations which his little model and many other boys and girls endured for the poorest wage. The children were left from dawn to dusk, armed with wooden rattles, in shelters rudely constructed of gorse and hurdles, to scare the birds from the newly sown corn, a small fire being lighted on the ground, as shown in the picture, to keep the poor little bird-watcher from freezing. This picture, as the diaries show, was worked upon until the last moment, and when it was taken to the gallery on April 25th it was a day too late. The walls were nearly hung. An old member, James Holland, in his admiration for the new comer’s work, took down one of his own pictures hung upon the line and put the “Bread Watcher” in its place—an act of rare generosity never forgotten by Shields. The picture was rather well reproduced with an appreciative notice in the *Illustrated Times*, August 11th, 1866. It was sold at Christie’s in 1894 for £100 (Agnew).

“*May 1st.*—To City to meet Mr. Rowbotham, to sales, and Old Water-Colour, and New Society with him. To Charles Dickens’ reading. Home 1.30.

“*May 14th.*—Still unwell. To see Rossetti till 2.”

The diary is almost blank for several months after this entry, probably owing to the nervous breakdown he suffered at this period. Early years of privation had given Shields little chance to build up a physique of normal strength. His vitality was astonishing, but the intense nervous tension of years of overwork and under-feeding, his terribly depressing views of life, with his astounding energy and power of concentration, left him little strength to cope with the everyday distractions of

town life. No doubt the fact of his having lived alone for so many years made it more difficult for him to adapt himself to his new surroundings. He said of this time: "I have counted as many as seven organs in a morning at Chelsea, with German bands. It was this infliction that had brought me so low—nothing else."

Presumably the nervous system of a genius is always in a more or less abnormal condition; certain it is that to the end of his life even a distant organ-grinder would cause an amount of acute distress quite incomprehensible to an ordinary individual, while a barking dog, or even the twittering of sparrows on the studio roof, was distracting as the roar of a lion would be to most people. For six months he could do no work, and his medical advisers took a grave view of his case. One doctor ordered him to Ems, but to use Shields' own words, "he might as well have ordered me to the moon." He then asked his patient if he could afford to go to Boulogne, and this was settled. However, Robert Collinson and his wife were going to Sandgate, and persuaded Shields to go with them. A stay of some months, and the companionship of his friends, failed to restore him. The Collinsons left Sandgate in September, and after an attempt at sketching in the camp, Shields made up his mind to go to Boulogne. For the first time setting his foot on foreign soil, he found everything strange and of new interest. His worn-out nerves began to regain tone, and within a fortnight he was busily sketching among the French fisherfolk.

He had seen enough of camp life at Sandgate to interest him and returned there at the end of the year, making a stay of some months, and there producing his only military pictures, "The Bugler," sometimes called "Sounding the Retreat at Inkerman," now the property of Sir William Houldsworth, the "Drummer Boy's Dream,"



ONE OF OUR BREAD WATCHERS

(1866)

*By permission of the Corporation of Manchester*



and “After the Storming.”<sup>1</sup> The last named, a pathetic and realistic picture of a dying drummer boy, wonderfully vivid in colour, is unlike any other work by Shields. Of these pictures the artist wrote in later years: “I remember sitting beneath my umbrella, in a pouring downfall of rain, the day after a review, to obtain the look of the soaked ground cut up by the wheels of the artillery. ‘After the Storming’ was suggested by an incident of a review, where a drummer boy fainted and a comrade brought water to him in his bugle from a little stream near by.”

From Sandgate Shields returned for a time to London, where he lodged in Phene Street, Chelsea. “The Bugler” was finished there, and he records that Rossetti came to see it.

MANCHESTER, 27th April 1867.

MY DEAR SIR,—*The Manchester Examiner* of this morning gave me your address at the top of a letter of yours which Ruskin has printed in one of his to some working men. I daresay you have seen it.

I have long been looking for some way of thanking you for that very sweet and thoughtful and devout “Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other” which you were good enough to send me, and for the friendly words pencilled on the margin. I did not know whether you were in England, and had no means of finding out. I hope you are *growing*—which is what people mean, if they are wise, when they say *succeeding*. I for one wait to hear of your work and shall have fallen from a great hope if you do not become a teacher and a blessing to us.—With kind regards, I am, my dear Sir, yours truly,

ALEXANDER M'LAREN.

The letter referred to was probably one written to Ruskin on the death of C. H. Bennett, which was a great

<sup>1</sup> Now in the collection of Mr. Leicester Collier.

grief to Shields. The letter is printed in *Time and Tide*—the names being omitted.

1 PHENE STREET, CHELSEA,  
April 10th, 1867.

MY DEAR MR. RUSKIN,—It is long since you have heard of me, and now I ask your patience with me for a little. I have but just returned from the funeral of my dear friend C. H. Bennett, the first artist friend I made in London, a loved and prized one. For years he had lived in the very humblest way, fighting his battle of life against mean appreciation of his talents, the wants of a rising family, and frequent attacks of illness, crippling him for two months at a time, the wolf at the door meanwhile. But about two years since his prospects brightened and he had but a few weeks since ventured on a large house. His eldest boy of seventeen years, a very intelligent youth, so strongly desired to be a civil engineer that Bennett, not being able to pay the large premium required for his apprenticeship, had been made very glad by the consent of W. Penn, of Millwall, to receive him without a premium after the boy should have spent some time at King's College in the study of mechanics. The rest is a sad story. About a fortnight ago Bennett was taken ill, and died last week, the doctors say, of sheer physical exhaustion, not thirty-nine years of age, leaving eight young children, and his poor widow expecting her confinement, and so weak and ill as to be incapable of effort. This youth is the eldest, and the other children range downwards to a babe of eighteen months. There is not one who knew him, I believe, that will not give cheerfully, to their ability, for his wife and children; but such aid will go but a little way in this painful case; and it would be a real boon to this poor widow if some of her children could be got into an orphan asylum. If you are able to do anything I would send particulars of the age and sex of the children.—I remain, ever obediently yours,  
FRED. J. SHIELDS.

*P.S.*—I ought to say that poor Bennett has been quite unable to save, with his large family; and that they would be utterly destitute now, but for the kindness of some with whom he was professionally connected.

Ruskin replied with warm sympathy, sending £20 for the widow, and saying: "I never heard of anything more sad—though I hear of awful things daily."

A few months after this Shields again fled from London noise to the comparative quiet of Manchester. In October Rossetti wrote:—

16 CHEYNE WALK,  
23rd October 1867.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Sending off the drawing at last to-day to Manchester, to M'Connell (who, however, is in Wales), I am so forcibly put in mind of one of the best of fellows, now at Manchester, that I cannot help writing him this line. I should be very glad to hear how you are and how progressing. I myself have been mostly hard at work since seeing you, though I was away in the country for a short time, and may possibly go again.

I hardly know what news to give you of my monotonous proceedings, which have consisted chiefly of producing copies, for the last month or two, from my larger pictures in hand, with the exception of this thing, finished for M'Connell.

I am on the point of building a studio at last in the garden, and am negotiating for the stables, as Webb, the architect, declares it would be madness to begin building right out if I can get such a good beginning as they would afford.

I wish, if I can be in any way of the slightest service in London, you would let me know at all times, and believe me, ever yours affectionately, D. G. ROSSETTI.

P.S.—I find that you were really a shield to the neighbourhood, and are dreadfully missed when razzias occur on the part of organ-grinders, brass bands, *et hoc genus omne*. So say the neighbours.

Mr. M'Connell was another early friend and generous patron of Shields. He had just purchased his "Bugler" picture, and was introduced by Shields to Rossetti. Mean-

while, in Cornbrook Park, Shields had found an old detached house, long unoccupied, with a lovely overgrown neglected garden and a great walled open space in front. Far from organ-grinders and bands, here quiet seemed attained, and Rossetti, writing again on November 16th, says:—

“I congratulate you supremely on having attained at last to complete desolation as regards social propinquity. I suppose from what you say that you can even take good walks without seeing or hearing your kind. Nothing could suit me better, and I still hope to be an outcast from humanity one of these days.

“I have received a ticket for the Private View of the W.C. Sketches, which I suppose is another mark of your bearing me in mind.

“I do not know that I shall go on that day, as humanity will be rather too rampant; but sometime when the thing has proved a failure, to a sufficiently encouraging extent, I may seek it for a desert walk, and hope to meet you there in spirit. I have not heard from Mr. M’Connell how he likes the ‘Tristram,’ and have an idea he may not perhaps care much about it. This I should regret, but could not help, as I did my best for it and certainly came as near satisfying myself as I have done in most cases with water-colours—perhaps in any. If you have seen it I should feel more interested in your verdict. You are remembered and desired again by all friends here, and by none more than by your affectionate

“D. G. ROSSETTI.”

A few weeks later Madox Brown writes, evidently in great excitement.

37 FITZROY SQUARE,  
November 20th, 1867.

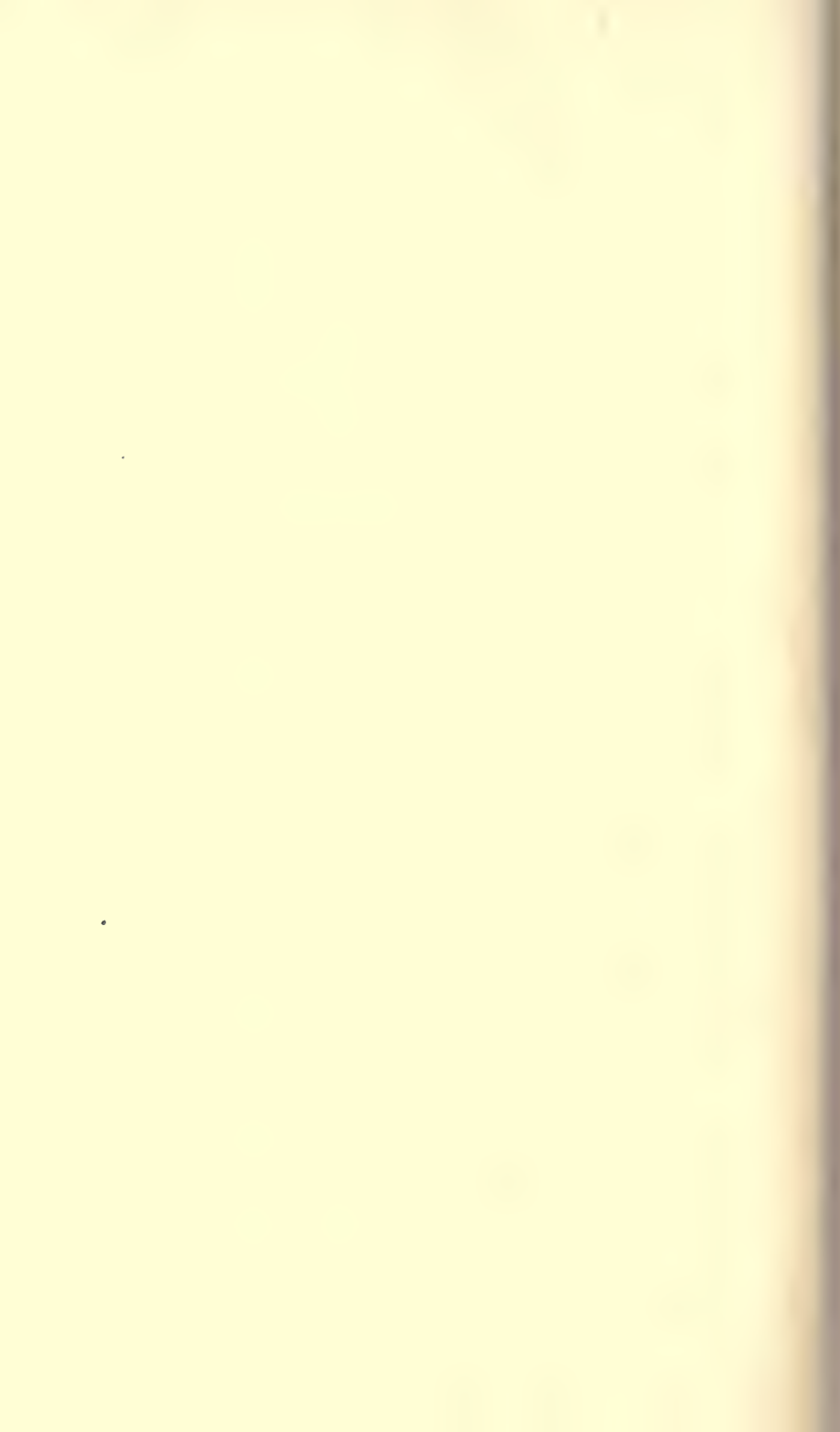
DEAR SHIELDS,—I have only time for a few words—Gabriel is here and it is 2 in the morning, and what I have to say is this; can you get the 2 names given in as signatures to the memorial now in course of being sent in





THE BUGLER  
(1866)

*By permission of Sir William Houldsworth, Bart.*



in favour of the 5 Fenians under sentence now in Manchester? We know your sympathies are in the right direction.—As ever yours,  
 FORD MADOX BROWN.  
 DANTE G. ROSSETTI.

A day or two afterwards an appeal from Swinburne for mercy for the Fenians appeared in the *Morning Star*.

37 FITZROY SQUARE, W.,  
 November 23rd, 1867.

DEAREST SHIELDS,—Thanks for your kind true-hearted letter. It is now too late for any of us to be of use in this black matter. This most egregious piece of Government folly is consummated, and I fear it will be long before the bitter fruits of it will be all swallowed and got rid of.

Your heart is in the right place, and Swinburne's too, bless the little man, and old Gabriel's too, thank heaven—few others that I can make out. I am at least glad that our opinions have been recorded—thanks to your prompt action in the case of Gabriel and myself. To you, susceptible and excitable as you are, the scenes and the suspense must have been most painful and exhausting. I only hope it may prove the downfall of the present bad Tory Government, good of any other kind to come from it one cannot expect.

Enough—one must try and forget it for the present at least.

Mrs. Brown was asking this morning if you might not be persuaded to spend Christmas with us. I wish you would. It will be a mighty sober affair with us, I expect, only one elderly female cousin of mine with us. Try and do it!—And believe always in our most affectionate regards and wishes for you.  
 FORD MADOX BROWN.

Among the pictures completed during the years from 1866-1869, may be named "Rahab awaiting the Coming of Joshua"—this was apparently painted for the generous commission of Sir Walter James, who left the choice of subject, size, and medium to the artist, "Wesley Preaching

at Bolton," "The Sisters," a very beautiful little water-colour called "The Nautilus," probably from sketches at Boulogne, the water-colour of "Solomon Eagle" now in the Manchester City Art Gallery, "Sappho," and others.

No one could have been more eager to help his friends or his friends' friends than Shields. Indeed, in after years he and Madox Brown seemed rarely to be without some helpless widow with a large family on their hands, or some unappreciated genius who had to be helped with a subscription, or an exhibition, or a raffle. A big commission either to Brown, Shields, or Rossetti usually had the immediate effect of making the fortunate one write at once with an offer of a loan of five or ten pounds to both the others—sometimes "the tin" was despatched without any preliminary offer—and on rare occasions was returned if there was no immediate need for it. Shields was perhaps the only one of the three who had a real horror of debt, and who would suffer any personal 'privation rather than incur it. Mr. William Rossetti includes the following letter in his *Rossetti Papers*:—

CORNBROOK HOUSE,  
MANCHESTER, 17th February 1868.

MY DEAR ROSSETTI,—For the past month—that is, ever since Mr. M'Connell gave me the opportunity of seeing the "Sir Tristram"—I have meant to write how great pleasure I enjoyed in hanging over it; and if (as you intimated) you relied in any measure on my poor opinion, it will satisfy you to know I *indeed* think with you that it approaches nearer to the highest standard than anything you have yet achieved in water-colour.

Let me say how much the subject of your last note gratified me, for I have known Warwick Brookes for some years, but not intimately, his disposition being too retiring for that. Your information concerning him is not very accurate, for he must be nearer fifty than forty, and has a family of six children, the eldest girl being about sixteen

years. With this young family he never dared to venture to give up a situation as *pattern designer for ladies' dresses* which he held in a firm here, and which brought him in a settled sum per week, for the uncertain and fluctuating remuneration attending the profession of art. So that all you have seen, and much more, has been done during the leisure hours of his evenings and Saturday afternoons. For two years back he has been lying sick of consumption; and his main, perhaps his only, source of income has been the sale of the set of photos, with which you are acquainted. Sir Walter James has most generously exerted himself to spread the circulation, and other friends have done their best also. He is too independent in temper to accept help in any other way; but I am certain would feel both grateful and pleased with such assistance as you can secure for him in this way. The price of the set is four pounds. I took the liberty, believing it would gladden his sick chamber, of showing him your letter on Saturday night; and though he was too weak to read it himself, he most earnestly expressed his estimation of your approval.

—Most truly yours,  
FREDERIC J. SHIELDS.

Rossetti replied:—

16 CHEYNE WALK, 21st February 1868.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Your letter calls for my thanks in various ways. First, about Warwick Brookes, whom I almost guessed to be more of a regular artist than had been represented to me. I shall be anxious to have a set of his admirable photo'd drawings, and will write him with this, enclosing the £4. When here I have little doubt their being seen must lead to further sales. Howell, to whom I spoke on the subject and who saw the photos at my mother's, at once said he would undertake that Ruskin would wish to have an original drawing. I will speak further to him when my own photographs arrive. It is melancholy to think that any aid and appreciation, such as the drawings cannot fail to excite, will come only at such a painful time. Is there really no hope of recovery? I cannot understand how such an artist can have failed so long to obtain employment from the dealers in Manchester. His babies are worthy of William Hunt, and have never

been surpassed. Does he work in colour? In such case I fancy employment in London as a copyist to begin with might easily be obtained. But I suppose the health question now quite negatives this. Now as to Mr. Johnson and the cartoons. I still have the Vineyard set, and though I have lately been asking more for them shall be happy to sell them at the price named to him. My own impression is that I must have said 100 guineas, not pounds (because I always do so); but if he and you are under the other impression, so be it. The frame will require to be written on, after which I can send the set. Where should it go to? I should have to charge the carriage and case to Mr. Johnson. What is his address? One thing more on this point. I have another set of six (the Vineyard is seven including a double-sized one) from the legend of St. George and the Dragon. They are framed to match the Vineyard set; and as it would be a relief to me to clear my walls and hang other things, I would part with the two sets together for 170 guineas if Mr. Johnson liked to have both. As I presume he must propose hanging the one set in some hall or suchlike place, the effect would be greatly enhanced by having the two sets, and one is quite equal to the other. If you can conveniently mention this to him, will you do so? Otherwise it does not matter, as also regarding the question between pounds and guineas, which must not be raised at all if you have to write or be in any way troubled about it. What you say of the "Tristram" drawing is very gratifying to me. As regards the application of the Leeds Committee for it, this makes me somewhat anxious, as it is the third application of the kind which has come to my ears. I had some time ago, and have since had renewed, a promise from Mr. Baring, the head commissioner, that no works of mine should be applied for, or even admitted if offered; but it is quite comprehensible that in such a multitudinous scheme of operations a slight matter of this kind might get overlooked. I consider the point all important to me now, as to which you understand my precise views. Only a thoroughly well considered and sufficiently important appearance in public, after all these years of partial reputation on grounds chiefly unknown, could do otherwise

than greatly damage me; and this could only be obtained by my having myself full control and selection. In short, at present nothing would be so discouraging to me as to be forced before the public in a sudden and incomplete way, and I am most anxious to do all I can to prevent it. Mr. Craven and Mr. M'Connell (thanks to you) have now been secured on my side. You know Mr. Long; shall you be seeing him, and if so, could you see whether he has been applied to and with what result? I would write to him if necessary. . . . Don't suppose that I mean to worry you about my trumpety thin-skinned interests, but a hint from you, if you possess the means, might enable me to act for myself. Do you know when the Leeds gallery opens?

Daylight at this distance from town being only available for painting, I have actually never as yet seen the Old Water-Colour sketches, though I have meant to do so and may yet. I am glad you will appear in the main exhibition; but you do not tell me much of your own doings. I heard from Chapman that your "Drummer Boy" drawing was exhibited at Manchester. I hope with good result, as it certainly ought to have served you well. . . . Have you continued on the tack of the "Rahab" in subject and treatment, or have you done subjects of the present day? I hope to have a full and satisfactory talk with you on all points of interest to both of us (and we have many in common) when you come again to London, and hope further that that may be soon. Old Brown is as choice an old master as ever, and all friends I think well on the whole.—Your affectionate  
D. G. ROSSETTI.

*P.S.*—You know I could always lodge you on a run to London.

Rossetti always made it a condition with the purchasers of his pictures that they should not be exhibited without his consent. It is pleasant to be able to record that through the enthusiastic support of Shields, Dr. Crompton, Rossetti, and others, Warwick Brookes received the recognition he deserved, and was enabled to continue his work

for many years in comparative ease and prosperity. Lord Northbourne brought him to the notice of the Prime Minister, and Mr. Gladstone took an active interest in him, inviting him to Hawarden. Through Mr. Gladstone, Brookes' work was shown to Queen Victoria, who purchased specimens; and she consented to Mr. Gladstone's proposal that Warwick Brookes should be granted a pension of one hundred pounds per annum, and that it should be dated from the previous year. His biographer, Mr. Letherbrow, himself a dear friend of Shields, relates: "For eleven years longer, hopeful and happy to the end, Mr. Brookes worked on at home, and making short excursions to beautiful country lanes and green spots, producing a series of exquisite studies." On hearing of his death, Mr. Gladstone wrote a most touching letter of sympathy to his son, and subsequently forwarded a donation of a hundred pounds to the widow from the Queen's Bounty. It is interesting to note the difference of spirit—or perhaps one should say nerves—between Brookes and his friend Shields as illustrated by the following anecdote. On the evening of Brookes' death an Italian woman came and played an organ in front of the house. Fearing the noise would disturb the dying man, they were about to send her away; but he reproved them saying, "Don't send her away; she is the countrywoman of Raphael!"



## CHAPTER VIII

M'Lachlan the photographer—Arthur Hughes—Madox Brown's advice—Chloral—Illness—Winnington—Ruskin's generous offer—M'Connell's invitation—Rossetti's method of chalk drawing.

IN the diaries and elsewhere has been mentioned the name of M'Lachlan, for whom Shields worked at several periods of his career, more from friendship for M'Lachlan than from any liking for the work entrusted to him. M'Lachlan was a photographer who was given to composing—with the assistance of Shields and other artists—large groups of celebrities—notably the terrible "Royal Group" which was afterwards the subject of much litigation, and of which we shall hear more later. At present it was a group of the Relief Committee for the Cotton Famine. From illness and other causes Shields was anxious to find some one to take his place in assisting M'Lachlan, and ultimately introduced his friend Arthur Hughes. Madox Brown wrote:—

1 BLENHEIM PLACE, APSLEY ROAD,  
GREAT YARMOUTH, August 10th, 1868.

DEAR SHIELDS,—I received your kind letter just as I was leaving for this place, where I am pretty well with but little traces of the old attack at present. . . . By the way, I forgot to answer your enquiry about Swinburne. The accident was not severe, and in spite of all the penny-a-liner could say, he was out the next day. But the worst of it is that the accident was caused by a *fit*—a slight one, no doubt, still a fit, which is not the first of the kind he has had. He is now with his parents in Oxfordshire and quiet and safe for a time.

I have written to Hughes, explaining as well as I could

the peculiarities of the case of M'Lachlan, also mentioning what you wished to know as to the prices of his water-colours. I don't know if he will answer me *here* or wait till I am back home, which will be in two or three days.

I am glad to hear you are at work again, because I conceive from that that you are getting all right again. I *must prescribe for you now*. Remember my old advice: when nervousness and debility supervene take *wine!* Begin with a glass the first thing in the morning and repeat the dose at intervals during the day, measuring it so as never to allow it to produce confusion, and never to let the spirits droop. If you can't sleep, *porter and biscuits*, or hot water and brandy; if you wake up with a start, more brandy and water—and wine the first thing in the morning—but—as soon as good ensues from it, begin leaving it off by degrees. This and change of scene—you know my course of tonics of old.

I think Hughes would be likely to photograph well if he will do the work, because his modelling is always *strong and dark*, and as he is a good worker he might possibly undertake the job with advantage. Robertson is, I believe, rather slow, very painstaking and slightly timid; and being used to portrait painters' prices, I fear he might scarcely see his way to undertake a work with thirty figures in it. But if Hughes cannot do the thing, I have the letter written out to Robertson.

Nolly shall make you some sketch before long. Mrs. Brown and Cathy join with me in kind remembrances and best wishes.—Always yours faithfully,

FORD MADOX BROWN.

The medical advice given in this letter was probably in the nature of a joke, for Madox Brown was doubtless aware of Shields' strict views on temperance.

Unfortunately he gave him some advice of a much more dangerous nature in a letter written soon after this. He says: "Stillman who is here has given me the name of a splendid sleeping potion—Hydrate of Chloral 1 dram in 1 oz. of water, and take one to four teaspoonfuls as needed."

Unhappily this advice was followed by Shields, and he was for years more or less enslaved by the drug, and only broke from it in 1874 or 1875. He wrote in later life, referring to Rossetti's illness: "Chloral gives only deathlike stupefaction without restorative power. The suicidal despondency produced by Chloral I know too well—only a resolute severance from it saved myself. No friend had the same experimental sympathy with Gabriel as I had."

Ruskin wrote more than once during this summer thanking Shields warmly for help he had given at Winton. He advised him about some casts of Greek coins, probably for the use of the pupils there, introducing him to Mr. Ready of the British Museum. Ruskin was also concerned by Miss Bell's reports as to Shields' health, and wrote in September the kindest letter, signed "Ever yours affectionately," in which he says:—

"I should be very grateful to you if you could trust my respect for your genius so far as to let me make you a little present of such sum as would enable you to take perfect rest during the remainder of the autumn. Please write directly to Poste Restante, Abbeville, and tell me what would enable you to do so."

In a note, years later, Shields wrote:—

"Let me also here record that twice in my life, hearing through friends that I was run down in health, Mr. Ruskin wrote to me, asking me to take from him freely such sum as would have given me change and rest. But I sought only his esteem and friendship, and therefore declined an aid that might have made me numbered with many, whom I knew preyed, leech-like, on his purse."

Madox Brown wrote on October 10th:—

"From M'Lachlan I have heard the most flourishing accounts of yourself, your house, and your work. As for

myself, I was ill twice this summer, but suffered more in comfort and looks than in work; for though I was in bed at least two months in all, I certainly did not lose more than three weeks of work. I was only too glad to be able to wile away the time in painting the moment it was possible. . . .

“As to Gabriel, he is, he tells me, much better as to health and sleep, and the air of the North seems to suit him, but the thing that troubles him is his eyesight; this, however, is at present a *strict secret*; it alarms him more than I can say; but, as far as I can understand, the case is a very common one, having to do with his general health and not the optic nerves—at least, both oculists and doctors agree about it. But as yet it seems he has found no relief, though improved in health. I have no doubt he will be all right in a few weeks, if he continues to rest as he is now doing; I don't think he has been overworking himself lately; certainly not at the ‘Perseus,’ for it is not begun; but for a long time—10 or 15 years past—his life has been one of perpetual toil and anxiety, and he is now beginning to feel it. I will write to you any favourable news as soon as it may come to hand. Hughes will, I hope, get on with M'Lachlan; I am sure if *he* cannot satisfy him, no one else will.”

A little later he wrote again about the photographic work:—

“Hughes has, I am happy to say, concluded a rather favourable bargain with M'Lachlan, which I trust will turn out to the advantage of both.

“He was exceedingly interested in M'Lachlan once he had seen him, though before that he was getting a little tired of his pertinacity I suspect. I told M'Lachlan that it was a chance in a thousand for him to have got Hughes, and that if he did not profit by it, he might bid good-bye to his undertaking. I saw Rossetti's doctor to-day—whom I wish, by the bye, *you* would consult. He had a letter later than I have had. Gabriel now begins to feel his eyes better in Scotland, and is convinced that it has to do with his general health, and has some thought

of wintering in Ayrshire. My 'Elijah' is progressing rapidly. Mother and son both near finished, only Elijah's head and the hen and chick not painted in yet. Those who have seen it seem to think it will be my finest drawing. What are you going to send to the Sketch Exhibition? I trust you will put in a good appearance though hindered by health."

Arthur Hughes undertook the work, which was apparently to copy the photographs, correcting the composition of the group and improving the portraits, the whole then being photographed again by M'Lachlan. On December 15th, 1868, Hughes writes:—

"Not having yet received the great group from M'Lachlan, I begin to fear that he is still trying to make some improvements in it, and if so, as I think, wearing himself out unnecessarily; for what points there are where improvement is to be done, will, I firmly believe, yield to me. I would like to tell you how very much I like your drawings at the Old Water-Colour Society. It is very seldom one sees such perfect pieces of drawing. The heads fascinate one from their individuality just as a face very full of character does in life, and do, and do not, most happily make one forget the artist, it is too rare to see such entire unaffectedness and loyalty to nature with such power."

M'Lachlan seems to have been a man of extraordinary pertinacity, and from subsequent correspondence it is evident that he was a somewhat trying person to work for. Some idea of the maddening nature of the task may be gathered from a letter from Mr. Hughes—undated—in which he says:—

"I am awfully sorry to hear that M'Lachlan is poorly, and greatly obliged for your work at the effect of the picture. I agree with all of it, with the exception of the Hayward waistcoat which I fear is calculated to pull the eye from Lord Derby—indeed I shall not wait for you

or Mac coming up, but to-morrow morning begin. This is not the eleventh hour, but the eleventh and fiftieth minute, and after all this coaching and experience of the damnable photography I really do understand it."

Mr. Arthur Hughes was proverbially a man of angelic temper and patience, and if the work evoked this expression from him, it can be imagined to what state of exasperation it must have reduced his nervous and excitable friend Shields.

The diary for 1869 is missing, but during that year Shields was in his big, lonely house at Cornbrook, working as before, chiefly in water-colour. In June he prepared for a visit to London, and was asked to stay with Madox Brown, who wrote on June 10th:—

"Just as you like—whenever you appear you will be welcome;" and adds the characteristic postscript: "In spite of what you say in the matter of 'tin,' should you fall short, we will manage it somehow."

His good friend Mr. M'Connell, purchaser of several of Shields' early works, wrote from Wales:—

*August 8th, 1869.*

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I am sorry you cannot come just now; but come when you can, sooner or later. I don't know of anything on our part to prevent you coming, but write as soon as you can fix anything, and let us know if you can come and when, and I will tell you if that will suit us. I am very sorry to hear of your not being well. Perhaps this air might do wonders for you, and if you like I could send you into the mountains for a few days. I have a room or two up at the quarry, right high up in the mountains and amidst beautiful scenery, good bread and splendid milk and Welsh mutton to eat. You have not tried such a place, perhaps it might quite set you up. It would be rather lonely, but only because you are a

bachelor, and I go there most days. Mrs. M'Connell desires to be kindly remembered.—Yours truly,

T. H. M'CONNELL.

*P.S.—There are no birds.*

*No Pianos.*

*No Babies.*

*No singing men or singing women.*

*Not even a clock ticking without ceasing.*

*There's Elysium !*

Whether this genial note induced Shields to visit Wales is not recorded, but in August he was at Cornbrook, giving much attention to drawing in coloured chalk, and the long letter from Rossetti that follows shows that he was anxious to study methods of working in that medium.

PENKILL CASTLE, GIRVAN, AYRSHIRE,  
27th August 1869.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I was going to write you myself on the two subjects of your letter. Not that I have really any word to say to such fateful horrors as the one which is now crushing poor Craven's soul. They leave me dumb with their anomalous enormity. But I wished to know exactly how he was; and may probably make up my mind to write him a word, though a stranger like myself naturally doubts his claim to speak at all at such a time. I had already heard something of this terrible circumstance from Brown since coming here, where I have now been over a week and am, I hope, benefiting by the change. I may probably stay two or three weeks longer. The surroundings of this house are most lovely and soothing—a glen which is quite private and gives pictures at every turn. The inmates are the lady of the house, Miss Boyd, a rarely precious woman, and our friend W. B. Scott, the best of philosophic and poetic natures—a man of the truest genius and one of my oldest companions. So you see I have peace, friendship, and art, all to help me. I wish you were here to share the pleasure and advantage of such sympathetic surroundings. Scott, who read your

letter, sends you his love which you seem to have secured, though I do not know how often you have met him.

You may be sure the dreadful tidings you give have furnished us with some sad thoughts and talk. . . .

At this moment I hear from London that Agnew has called and bought two chalk drawings I left to be shown him for eighty guineas each. If he will go on this will furnish some profitable pot-boiling; and I tell you, as you were the first to suggest a connection with him.

Could I be of any service in lending you a little money just now? Do, *do* tell me if I can. I have plenty of good opportunities of earning at present.

I have brought no work here with me; but am occupied lazily with the proofs of the poetry I am printing—mostly old things which I find sometimes going about in blundered transcriptions which might some time get into print to the affliction of one's still thin-skinned ghost. So I am putting them in a permanent shape, though I shall not publish yet, not having complete copies of a sufficient quantity of verse. However, I go on writing at times, and may soon break out into publicity. Incentives occur now and then. There is an article on me in *Tinsley's Magazine* for September, following one on my sister last month, and to be followed, as I judge, by one on my brother next month! I do not know who is the writer—so, after twenty years one stranger does seem to have discovered one's existence. However, I have no cause to complain, since I have all I need of an essential kind, and have taken little trouble about it, except always in the nature of my work—the poetry especially, in which I have done no pot-boiling at any rate. So I am grateful to that art, and nourish against the other that base grudge which we bear those whom we have treated shabbily.

However, I am adding you to that class by all this tirade about myself, and though I do not think the grudge will result on my side, I must beware lest it should on yours.

I hope if you have time to write me again it will be with good news after all the bad. Your health is a most anxious subject, and I cannot but think that the extreme excitement and exertion to which I know you subject



yourself in other kinds of work than Art should be remitted for a time as an experiment. Also, and above all, I am sure that the matrimonial question should be kept in view, though here I know one is far from being master of the situation according to one's pleasure.

Thanks for remembering about the Warburg tincture.

In the matter of chalk drawings I don't know what paper you use. The blue-grey is of course the one tending most to deaden redness; but it is apt to resist covering for a long time and leave the drawing cold, besides much increasing outlay of work to remedy this. I have lately adopted a very slightly greenish tint instead, which has great advantages; but, of course, requires caution as to redness. However, if you make a good progress with your tints by merely rubbing with the finger before you put white in at all this difficulty may be combated, as I think the white rubbed into the red is what chiefly reddens it. I have found the piece of grey chalk you brought me useful to deaden little rednesses in finishing, and have therefore got some more from Brodie. One objection to the greenish paper is that it is so light that the white makes at first little effect on it. I think not a bad plan is to make a mixture of black and red powdered chalk, dip a stump in it, rub it almost off the stump again, and then rub the stump *all over* the paper you are going to work on before you begin. The tint thus rubbed should be no stronger than a sky, but is *neutral* and pleasant with the greenish tint underneath, and gives a good ground to work into, as the white tells on it and you can bread out lights. I suppose, like myself, you hardly use the stump at all in actual work; but always rub with the fingers.

I will send you my privately printed poems when they are revised and finally struck off.

There is some chance, I hope, of Brown soon joining here. I know he would enjoy it enormously.—Ever affectionately yours,  
D. GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

*P.S.*—If you want grey chalk, or anything else, in London, write a card to H. T. Dunn at my address, and I am sure he will see about it for you.

The latter part of this letter was printed many years later in an article by Shields in the *Century Guild Hobby-Horse*, on Rossetti's chalk drawings. The article was inspired by a friend, who said: "If the conditions of the age in which we live are adverse to immediate tradition from master to pupil, surely we should at least, when so extraordinary an artist as Rossetti has passed from our midst, seek to lay up as a treasure every fragment of his methods that can be recorded."

This reply to the last letter appears in Mr. William Rossetti's book, *Rossetti Papers* :—

CORNBROOK PARK, MANCHESTER,  
October 29th, 1869.

MY DEAR ROSSETTI,—Last week I had a note from dear Brown in which he told me that you were not painting, but still writing or correcting poetry. This makes me fear that your stay in Ayrshire has done you no good; and that in some way, either in your eyesight or otherwise, you are still suffering so much that you cannot pursue the work you love. I am greatly your debtor for the long, full, kind letter you wrote to me while there, as well as for your good offices with Graham. . . .

How sad your thoughtful talks with W. B. Scott upon all that poor Craven's affliction suggested must have been! The philosopher is as blind here as the Christian, and, if he be not both, without the consolations which support the latter. I have seen but little of Scott, and that at your table; but I know and greatly esteem much that he has done, especially as one of the most original designers living, whenever he likes to put his full force into his work; and I beg through you to return, if I may, my love with my admiration, in answer to his own kind message. I wish that Brown had been able to join you as you expected. He is too much closed up indoors, and a blow of glen air would have done him great good, as his company would have done you also. He was like friend and father to me in London during my last visit. I am so glad that you have been doing business with Agnew profitably, for these

frequent illnesses of yours will inevitably bring down your purse and make the wherewithal an anxious subject in spite of all determination to hold up bravely. I know this too well in recent experience; and for this reason, as well as for others, I cannot consent to accept anything from you, even though pressed upon me with your generous impertunity. . . . The writer in *Tinsley* certainly appreciates your work in both arts, and I was on the whole thankful for the article. . . . The notice of your sister, Miss Christina Rossetti, was very disappointing . . . stretched out to its required length by pecking at slight faults in her poems. But he cannot spoil my happiness in them, which is as great, from some of her devotional pieces, as any that poetry has ever afforded me. "After this Judgment" and "The Martyr's Song" are not easily matchable in religious poetry. As I sit now, looking over her last volume again and recalling the impressions left on me by frequent readings of it, it appears almost invidious to select from these devotional pieces. The "Despised and Rejected" and "Dost Thou not Care?" must come from her deepest heart. The critic is deaf to all this, and so deaf to what is best in your sister and forces the sweetest notes from her. . . . It is so good of you to send me such plain and elaborate instructions about the three-chalk method on grey paper. The opportunity you allowed me of watching you at work was still more valuable to me; and I think, as a consequence, that the drawings I have done for Graham will turn out successfully.—Ever affectionately yours,

FREDERIC J. SHIELDS.

The terrible affliction of Mr. Craven, alluded to in this and in Rossetti's last letter, was the death of his little son, who was thrown from his pony and killed.

Arthur Hughes was in Manchester earlier in the year, but this breezy letter shows him again in London. "Adders" (grass snakes!) and other reptiles, being silent, were among the few pets tolerated by Shields. A letter from Madox Brown about this time says:—

"I bewail with you the loss of your snake and lizard,—Death has also been busy in Nolly's house—a shiny green

lizard, a flame-spotted salamander, and a slimy toad have stretched themselves out and bitten the dust; Nolly has become more careful in consequence and builds houses of clay and brick lined with wadding for his last lizard, the one you gave him."

Arthur Hughes writes:—

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—How are you, I wonder? and all your household—adders and toads. I have taken mine to the seaside for a week and came back most virtuously to my work. There's self-denial. Left them at Broadstairs all provided with spades, with which they make trenches and castles and graves in which they bury each other, all but the head, and they have already a collection of sea-monsters in a pail alive—a jelly-fish, a star-fish, some crabs, shrimps, winkles and whelks—and it seems to me a beach is a most interesting and proper place to spend one's life on, doing nothing in the sunshine and eternally doing still more nothing; but I am writing to say that Goodwin, to whom I mentioned some time ago that you thought your clergyman friend, whose name I rather forget, would perhaps like a drawing, tells me that he has some little ones ready, so I am writing you this scrawl, you see. Perhaps you will scribble a line to him to say if he may send his folio down to you; his address is:—

A. Goodwin, Esq.,  
10 Waterloo Street,  
Hove, Brighton.

I hope that you are keeping well and better than I have known your general health, and that Fortune has smiled also in other ways on you by this, and am, my dear Shields,—Ever yours,  
ARTHUR HUGHES.

A wealthy patron, Mr. Graham, then M.P. for Glasgow, seems to have been rather disappointing about a commission, and both Madox Brown and Rossetti did their best to clear up the misunderstanding, apparently with-

out success. The struggle with poverty and ill-health was again severe, and Shields' fiercely independent spirit doubtless kept most of his friends in ignorance of his difficulties. A beautiful study of a rose bush, painted in the gardens of Winnington in this year, was shown at the Memorial Exhibition. Long devotion to "Wesley Preaching at Bolton" and "Solomon Eagle" brought no immediate remuneration, and this was probably another reason for the straitened means evident from Madox Brown's letter, dated October 19th, 1869.

"Rossetti wrote *me* the other day that Graham had just been with him and talking about you, seemed as though ashamed of his conduct—in the matter of the commission. He said he had called upon you in Manchester but you were out. Rossetti assured him *he* was of opinion that 200 guineas was a very moderate price for such a work as you had proposed to paint for him, and Graham ended by saying that he repented and would endeavour to renew the commission. You will probably ere now have heard from him, but if not, you may feel sure you will shortly, and should you feel inclined to renew relations with him (and I have no doubt you are too much of a man of the world not to do so), it may be something to cheer you up a bit now that things seem so depressed; what you say about money matters grieves me more to think you should be bothered at all, than it does even to find you thinking about that paltry loan in the morbid way you do. Why, man, you have been the means of *putting hundreds into my pocket*. As to what I said about *our friend*, do not think too much of it. I felt obliged to warn you, on your account as well as my own. I have no proof, except that he is one of the biggest liars in existence—but he is half mad and one never can tell what he will be up to next; at the same time, he is very *good-natured* in reality, and I have known him take the greatest trouble to be of use to people whom at the present moment he was injuring in every way by lies and calumnies. He

is a perfect enigma. For some time past, the most astounding lies *in favour* of Burne-Jones and George Watts have been all his game. I heard him tell a string of them to *Rossetti* and Leyland, of all people, at *Rossetti's* the other night; we all knew it was lies, but Leyland next day called at Jones's and ascertained they *were* lies and went and told *Rossetti* the result of his enquiries, and still *he likes him better than ever*, and says so.

*Rossetti* is pretty well, painting little and writing much poetry, and pretty hard up in consequence. I did not go to him at Penkill, circumstances would not permit it—which was to me a disappointment, but I don't much care so long as I can prevail on myself to work, and the family get their outing, and things are kept square somehow. We are all pretty well just now. Nolly, Cathy, and Lucy beginning their season pictures. They would heartily join me in kind remembrances if they knew I was writing.—I am, as ever, sincerely yours,

FORD MADOX BROWN.

*P.S.*—Chameleon's dead. We painted him over with brandy and water for three days, which seemed at first to comfort him and revive him, but it availed not.

*P.P.S.*—I would paint as many Macbeths as any one choose to pay for—upright, lying down, or standing on their heads, if paid for accordingly, but this would be *an extra*.

Experiments with larger heads were made this year. Madox Brown, in an undated letter, writes again:—

“The Exhibitions are all in full swing, and the weather, though so fearful with north-east winds, is most beautiful to look at and good for much walking. I saw the chalk studies you sent to the Sketch Exhibition before my last letter; I omitted to say I had seen them, though knowing all the time that I had something important to say.

“There was one of a fine-looking girl with laurels which I thought very fine, the throat and head in particular admirably drawn and fine in expression, only the

hands seemed too lumpy. It was evident you had Rossetti in your eye, but he obtains such beautiful models to work from that the delicacy of their forms compensates for the apparent simplicity in bulk. With this exception, I thought the drawings very fine. I must, however, notice (which I trust you will take well from me) that the works I have seen of yours which are most directly under the *Rossetti* influence are not your successful ones. I have told him this also, and he agrees that I am right. No doubt there is a radical difference in your natures, and though the charm of his genius provokes sympathetic emulation in you of a quite legitimate kind, still it is disturbing you in your orbit—but we must *talk* this matter over at more leisure when you come here and when I have seen your last works. Come up soon and let us know first."

Curiously enough, many years later Cosmo Monkhouse, referring to the windows for Eaton Chapel in the *Magazine of Art* (February 1884), writes:—

"There is, indeed, a well-spring of life and sincerity in Mr. Shields' imagination, and it is to be feared that glass, even though painted with his own hand, can never do complete justice to the beauty and originality of the designs, or the vigorous thought and poetical feeling which has been literally lavished on them. With the exception of Burne-Jones, there is no instance in which the personal influence of Dante Rossetti has been at once so powerful and so wholesome."

## CHAPTER IX

Letters to the press—Madox Brown and Rossetti—Agnew and Rossetti's "blessed rhyme"—"Knott Mill Fair" reproduced in the *Graphic*—Matilda Booth—Visit to Scotland—Experiments in oils—Rossetti on Craven and Kelmscott—The Heywood Prize.

ON several occasions during his life Frederic Shields took up his pen—a formidable weapon in his facile hand—to defend his friends or his theories in the Manchester papers. Evidently a letter was inspired on Madox Brown's account, and Brown's unselfish heart being only anxious lest his champion should by this controversy himself suffer in popularity, he wrote on December 23rd, 1869:—

"Your welcome letter has come just as Craven called in this morning to complete, in the shape of a cheque, two fresh and valuable commissions which this truly satisfactory man has given me again.

"We have been so busy here, and somewhat anxious and bothered to boot, that we have contemplated the approach of Christmas with little thoughts of festivity. We have had no prospects of anyone being disengaged to dine with us that day, and this must to some extent account for our not thinking of you sooner. But indeed you *must* come yet. Mrs. Brown and all the family are quite determined that you shall. Put up a few things in a bag and come at once on receipt of this.

"Knowing how you have served us once before, when you let me know after, that tin alone had prevented you from coming, I make bold to enclose a cheque which I dare say you can get cashed at Manchester. So don't be grumpy but come; it will do you good, and you will work all the better for it on getting back to your studio.

"I read your letter to the paper with infinite pleasure



and gratitude; only if I had been present to be asked, I should have advised you not to move in the matter on your own account; but of all this and more we will talk when you come. Should I say too much now you will have the less inducement.

“I have had no time yet to go to your Winter Exhibition, so that I cannot speak of your works; but I have heard them spoken of by others, some of them with enthusiasm.”

Rossetti, evidently pleased with the letter to the press, stirred up Mr. Sidney Colvin to follow Shields' example, and wrote:—

“I was very glad to see your capital move in respect to Brown's picture at Manchester. I sent it on to Colvin at once, and to-day he writes me word that he has written to the *Manchester Examiner*. I sent on your letter to him in such a hurry (being at work) that I only read it once, and forgot what you said as to your health; but, in fact, do not think you said much about it. I hope there was nothing bad to say. Graham's conduct (this part I carefully scored out—so much as the first sheet contained—in sending your letter to C.) seems to me most extraordinary, considering how invariably and excellently well he has behaved to myself, and the personal and artistic esteem I have heard him express for you. He is, I believe, now permanently in town again with his family. . . . I shall be very glad to have the chance of telling him what I think. I have been in various queer states of health for some time past. My visit to Scotland seemed to do me no good this time. I have just lately been calling on doctors and oculists again, and the latter still say my sight is not really affected; while the former say much the same as to my health, but speak most warningly as to hours, exercise, and abstinence from spirits, for which Heaven knows I have no taste, but had for a year and a half just fallen into the constant habit of resorting to them at night to secure sleep. I have now relinquished them entirely, and take only at night a medicine prescribed by my last doctor (Sir W. Jenner)—not an opiate, against

which he warned me in all forms—and have certainly not slept worse, but rather better, since doing so. I also, when weather is fine, take day walks in Battersea Park; whereas my habits had long been to walk only at nights, except when in the country. For many months I have done no painting or drawing, but have just lately resumed work of this kind, and am proceeding as best I may against the stream of models, who cannot be got or do not come, pitch black days, &c., with such things as I want to be doing. These are chiefly the large picture of Dante's Dream, which I had not yet taken in hand since getting the commission from Graham; and (!!!) the old picture of 'Found' (the calf and bridge subject), which I am actually taking up at last. I have lots of time as yet in preliminary studies for both works; but hope to get the man's head done in the 'Found' next week, having found a splendid model, and have also made considerable way towards the bridge background. I am also beginning to make studies again for the picture of 'Medusa,' and hope to get that in hand as soon as the others are fairly under way. Had I a large fine studio, I should now get all my finest subjects squared out from the designs on canvases of the size needed, and take them all up one after the other whenever possible. This plan I shall pursue vigorously more or less now, as life wears short, and do I trust few single figure pictures except when shut out from other work by the chances of the hour. Studio-building I have funk'd hitherto, as the state of my health has induced me to think I might be leaving Chelsea, just after I had got the stables into my possession. I think it most likely, however, that I shall begin building shortly after Xmas, as the landlord has demanded that, failing that, I should put the stables in repair as stables, which would be simply throwing money in the dirt. I have been doing a good deal of work in poetry lately, and shall publish a volume in the spring. I have got 230 pages in print, and want perhaps to add about 100 more. This is hardly necessary, as it is all very close and careful work; but I daresay it may be some time before I print again, if ever I should wish to do so. At any rate, so much will be off my mind when the thing comes out, and it is certainly the best

work of my life, such as that has been. Have you seen Morris's new volume of the *Paradise*. It contains glorious things, especially the 'Lovers of Gudrun.' Tennyson's new volume does not enlist my sympathies, except a second 'Northern Farmer,' which is wonderful; and of course there is much high-class work throughout.

"I have not seen your heads at the Water-Colour; nor indeed do I ever go to any picture shows whatever now, except once in the year to the R.A. Old Brown is doing a water-colour (Don Juan found on the beach by Haidee), which will I think be almost the finest of his works, and certainly by far the most full of beauty. Indeed, to my mind all eight figures are eminently beautiful in face and figure, and the background of rocks and sea is most fascinating.

"Ned Jones is doing a crowd of splendid works, though he has sent no sketches to the gathering this time. He was one of the hangers."

Madox Brown's cheque did not avail to persuade Shields to spend Christmas in London, and the New Year found him still at Cornbrook, with an occasional visit to Winnington. In April Rossetti wrote asking Shields to help him about a photograph. All his toil with M'Lachlan had given Shields a really extensive knowledge of photography, and though he always professed his detestation of the art—he would not even have allowed it to be called an art at all—this experience was undoubtedly very useful, and enabled him to be of great service to his friends. In after years he took endless trouble for Rossetti, superintending the photography of his pictures and correcting negatives and proofs with the utmost patience and devotion to his friend's interest.

SCALANDS, ROBERTSBRIDGE, SUSSEX,  
11th April 1870.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Some time back I wrote to a Mr. Mitchell, of Manchester, who possesses that "Venus" of

mine with the roses and honeysuckles, to ask if he would object to its being photographed; and I ventured to name you as a friend who I thought would be willing, out of consideration for me, to superintend its removal, photographing, and return to its owner. I proposed to save you such trouble by having the loan of it in London; but to this you will see, by the letter I enclose, he objects. So if you will kindly undertake this for me, I will be much obliged. Any convenient moment to yourself would, of course, do. You will see I am writing from the country, and having none of my photos by me, cannot give you a precise idea of the size I want it done. But you have seen some of them and know the sort of size—fairly large, and, of course, deep tones. Your friend of the Lancashire Committee photo:would, I should think, be the very man to make a fine thing of it if worth his while to take the trouble. Of course it is at my expense, not Mr. Mitchell's. One difficulty occurs to me, and that is, that there is a gold nimbus round the head. I wonder if some white powder of some sort could be rubbed over this, or whether there is nothing for it but to let it come black. I hope you will get my volume of poems towards the end of this month, as I have given your name to the publisher. I shall like to know how it pleases you. There is one piece called "Jenny," which gave Smetham a shock when I read it to him; but I was sincerely surprised on the whole at its doing so in his case, though I know many people will think it unbearable. I myself have included it (as I wrote it) after mature consideration, and could not alter my own impression of the justness of my doing so, knowing as I do how far from aggressive was the spirit in which I produced it, as I should think the poem itself ought to show.

I saw your newspaper controversy about Brown some time ago, and thought your part in it excellent. You seem to have a large share of this sort of power, which has grown to be almost a national instinct.

I will not write more, as I am not given much to letter-writing at present. I need hardly say that my health brought me here, and that means that there is not much to boast of. I hope you can give a better account of yourself.—Your affectionate

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Rossetti had offered to let Shields work in his studio, and apparently Shields now contemplated a visit to London. Rossetti's next letter is undated, but was probably a week or so later than the last.

SCALANDE, *Saturday.*

DEAR SHIELDS,—I shall be delighted for you to work at Cheyne Walk, but am not returning just now. However, I shall be on a flying visit for an hour or two or a day or two (I don't know which) about Saturday, 23rd. I write with this to Dunn to expect you; he is doing some big work for me which may possibly be taking up the whole space in the studio, but in that case I dare say the little studio upstairs would serve you. However, probably the large one will be at your service. I don't think the "Venus" photo should be bigger than about the size of this sheet opened out at biggest. I see you're frightened of poor "Jenny," my poem, but I assure you I was surprised at Smetham's galvanic alarm, and shall be sincerely so if you share it. The poem was written in a far different spirit from any which should produce such results in thinking men, I believe.

Pardon haste, but I am very busy to-day.

There was evidently some difficulty about photographing the "Venus"; apparently through the fault of the owner of the picture, for Rossetti writes months later:—

*June 15th, 1870.*

DEAR SHIELDS,—Have you been able to do anything about the photo of that picture of Venus?—Your affectionate

D. G. ROSSETTI.

*P.S.*—Do you know if the brothers Agnew have really got to hear of that blessed rhyme? I might wish to be writing them, but shouldn't if I thought they were riled.

The "blessed rhyme" was one of Rossetti's nonsense verses—the slightly modified version of this choice specimen given by Shields is as follows:—

"There are two bad brothers named Agnew  
Whose lies would make e'en an old nag new;  
The father of lies, with his tail to his eyes,  
Cries 'Go it, Tom Agnew, Bill Agnew.'"

Very perfect of its kind, but hardly calculated to prejudice the picture-dealers in Rossetti's favour.

Shields was evidently suffering much in health and spirits at this period, and no doubt his inability to serve his friend in the matter of the photographer troubled him. Rossetti wrote again in August:—

"I cannot easily thank you enough for so much friendliness under such very troublesome circumstances. I now regret extremely that I did not write on receipt of your former letter, as I meant to do, to beg you to take no further trouble in a matter which presented such unexpected obstacles. But I delayed doing so through excessive preoccupation at the moment, and then thought that it was no use writing, as further steps were probably already being taken. I can now only say that I could never have conceived, from Mr. Mitchell's very straightforward conduct on former occasions, that he was capable of so much changeableness and disregard of his word. I do not like to make a cause of quarrel with him (after very agreeable relations hitherto) out of a matter which, in itself, is of no importance to me; but am excessively irritated at having been led on by him into causing you so much disturbance, and on that account write him with this to express my surprise at his conduct. As far as I myself am concerned, it is well the matter is no more important than it is; but I feel how much apology I owe you for this unpleasantness which I could not have foreseen.

"I wish I could say something to any good purpose on what gives me great anxiety,—the infinitely more im-

portant matter of your own affairs to which you make some allusion, and which, I assure you, already often occurred to my mind. . . . Nothing could give me greater pleasure than being able, should such opportunity occur, to be of any service to yourself who have so often served me so warmly and at the cost of so much personal exertion. Is there any way suggesting itself to your own mind by which I could be of the least use in forwarding any object you have in view? If there were, the very friendliest thing you could do would be to let me know. Of your health you do not specially speak, nor do I gather clearly whether what you say of your 'suffering' from this truly atrocious and insufferable war related simply to what all must feel, or to more direct influences of a baneful kind on your own immediate prospects. Such would doubtless be a possible result for any of us, as there is no knowing the moment at which entrenchment may be forced upon the wealthy classes of this country by the state of affairs abroad, or even at home, and naturally Art goes first to the wall.

"You allude in the kindest way to my poetry, and say also that you would like to write me something about 'Jenny.' Pray believe that anything coming from you could only be what I should sincerely desire to hear, whatever its point of view; only I really think there must be too many affairs of your own to attend to, for it to be worth your while to dwell on my verses except by word of mouth when we meet again, which it would please me much to hope might be soon. The book has prospered quite beyond any expectations of mine, though just lately signs of depreciation have been apparent in the press (*Blackwood*, to wit). I am only surprised that nothing of a decided kind in the way of opposition should have appeared before. However, I have also been surprised (and pleasantly) to find such things producing a much more transient and momentary impression of unpleasantness than I should have expected—indeed I might almost say none at all; particularly as I cannot help, in this instance, putting against the *Blackwood* article the fact that B. & Co. wished to publish the book and I went elsewhere. But above all, these things probably do not touch

me much for the reason that my mind is now quite occupied with my painting, and has been for some time past. I am making very rapid progress with my large picture of 'Dante's Dream,' about 10 or 11 feet by 7. A big picture is glorious work, really rousing to every faculty one has or even thought one might have, and I hope I am doing better in this than hitherto. In another fortnight or so, I shall have all the figures painted on the canvas, and only the glazing of the draperies left to do. The background is as yet untouched, and before I resume the picture, after bringing it to the completion of the figures as above, I intend to go for a month or so into the country to recruit. However, though I have been working decidedly hard, I find that it chiefly seems to have the effect of consolidating and steadying the beneficial results which my spring trip to the country had already had on my health. I am not at present sensible of any inconvenience with my eyes, though working good hours daily, and have not been for months past. I have often spoken with Brown about you, and I need not tell you what a constant interest he takes in all that concerns you. He himself is, I am glad to think, doing well at present, and is just thinking of an excursion to Newcastle, and perhaps to the Highlands, in company with his wife. He lately finished his large oil picture of 'Romeo and Juliet,' but I did not see it, as he would not show it while in progress, and most stealthily and surreptitiously spirited it away at the last moment to Leathart, who is its possessor. I believe, however, it is one of his best works. . . .

"You probably know of Burne-Jones' having left the O.W.C. Society, but probably will be surprised to hear that Burton has now done so also. I believe B. finds it necessary to take larger work, and thinks such scale better suited to oil; but his warm feeling on Jones' behalf in the differences occurring between him and the Society has doubtless led to his taking the step at this particular moment. . . .

"Let me again beg of you, before I conclude, that you will tell me without the slightest reserve of any way that may occur to you in which I could serve you at all. To know that you were happier would be a real encouragement to me."



In the autumn of 1870 was made the chalk drawing "A Royal Princess," the subject being taken from Christina Rossetti's noble poem. The picture was bought by Sir William Houldsworth. In the *Graphic*, December 17th, 1870, was reproduced the large water-colour of "Knott Mill Fair." On November 29th an interesting entry is on the only page preserved of the diary for this year:—"Alteration to 'Hide.' To town to see Agnew's exhibition. Mounted Falkner's drawing. Head of Matilda on green paper—rather a failure."

Matilda Booth, then aged about twelve years, was destined to be the artist's wife. "Hide" was a water-colour, bought by Mr. Craven.

In the New Year Rossetti writes:—

"Your letter was, as you knew beforehand, a real relief to me. It drives away the uneasy feeling inevitable lately whenever your friendly image recurred to my mind, and substitutes a satisfactory one. I can readily imagine with what joy you will attack your favourite subject after a long being kept at bay of it, and have no doubt of good results. As to the Water-colour Gallery, your work would draw me there if anything would, but I must say frankly that I do not expect to get there. I have got into such an absolute and undeviating habit of working all daylight somehow—whether on just the work I want to do or not—that I literally never go anywhere except once in the year to the R.A. modern exhibition, and once nowadays to the Old, which I have not yet accomplished this year. I lately saw at Graham's your two chalk drawings of Night and Morning, and thought them full of fine quality and more decided in sense of facial beauty than any previous work I had seen of yours. I find now that it was quite a mistake to draw on that dark blue grey paper. It necessitated endless work to keep the ground down, and even to the last it always came through. The greenish paper (from Winsor & Newton—specimen enclosed) is much the best for the purpose which the English makers afford—I have tried several. Unfortunately the rule is

that as in France they never make a bad tint whether cheap or dear, in England they never make a good one. This, however, has no decided objection when covered, except that I very much regret to say it has a tendency to fade and turn yellow in parts. I don't know whether this is likely to cause any decided injury to the drawing, or whether it would go further underneath the chalk. Sometimes the paper seems to hold out for good, and sometimes to go in this way in spots almost at once. I have complained to W. & N., and they said they had heard of it before, and referred to the makers, who say it cannot be guarded against with this tint. However, there is really no other tint fit to use, so I go on with it.

“I'm glad Mitchell has expressed to you some sense of his being in the wrong. I expressed to him very decidedly by letter the awkward position in which he had placed me towards you after all the trouble you so kindly took. I should really hesitate to mix you up with the matter again, even if you were kindly willing. Perhaps the best thing would be to see if he will lend the picture to show with the large one when finished, and a few others recently completed, when I shall be asking friends to come and see. It could then be photographed at the same time. I don't suppose I shall get up any kind of public show this year, but most likely next—only of a few weeks—and shall then have one other large one at least ready—I hope the ‘Magdalene.’ The big ‘Dante’ is approaching completion, but won't, I suppose, be done quite so soon as I thought, as I knocked off lately to finish several other things long on hand—viz. Beatrice, Sybylla Palmifera, and Mariana with boy singing (*Measure for Measure*), all of which, you may remember, begin as life-sized things. These three are finished, and I am now finishing ‘Pandora.’ I think all show great advance in colour and execution, and that the big picture will be much the best thing I have done, in spite of the dissatisfaction accompanying without fail the close of a work, and now beginning to set in with me. Perfect it won't be, but better it will be.

“I have heard from Mr. M'Connell about his water-colour, asking if it was sold again. I mislaid his letter

with address and have not answered, but it is no use my writing letters about it till sold, which is not as yet. Hardly any one comes to my place now, as I have so long been engaged on work which I decline to show, and people have got sick of my sulks.

"I've not seen dear old Smetham for centuries, but must try and do so. I'm glad he's stood by you, as I knew he would not fail to do if possible. I feel as if I chiefly among your friends had not succeeded in being of any service to you in your time of trial, after all the good turns you have done me. . . .

"Scott showed me a letter of yours in a Manchester paper sent to him, where his name occurred in a manner so well deserved, and I am sure gratifying to him. What a horrid set they seem to be there! Scott is my near neighbour now, having bought Bellevue House, a very fine old mansion twice as big as this and just opposite Battersea Bridge. He is a great acquisition. And by the bye, I may as well just mention, in case you had any thought of returning to London, that Scott has a separate building at the back of his house (very noiseless, I should think) admirably fitted for a studio, but which he does not use at all, having a good one in the house. I should think (though I don't know at all) that he might possibly be willing to let it to a quiet congenial inmate like yourself. Boyce, as I dare say you know, has built himself a house (by Webb) at the end of Cheyne Row, so Chelsea is gradually filling."

Depression and ill-health continued during the early part of this year; one great trouble was that the secluded old house in which Shields hoped he had found a permanent abode was wanted for Government offices. He began to be much agitated as to his coming eviction; this probably was the cause of the illness alluded to in Madox Brown's next letter, dated July 6th.

"I have this moment received your kind and sad letter. I shall not write a long one in return, but just tell you that I shall remember to communicate with Rossetti and

Smetham. You can imagine how much we are all pained at such bad news of your health, and how fervently we trust it will improve with the fine air of Argyllshire. . . . We are about to proceed to Dartmouth, in Devonshire, for four weeks. Once there, I will write again with our address. But cannot your friend who is with you write for you and say how you are? If it is M'Lachlan, give him my kindest regards, and say I should be much obliged by a line saying how you are."

There is no record of any Scotch visit, except two or three undated sketches of Highlanders, and Madox Brown's next letter, which seems to point to such a journey having been taken.

LYNN COTTAGE, LYNNMOUTH, DEVON,  
26th July 1871.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I feel very anxious to know how you are getting on, your last letter was so discouraging in tone. Please let some one write if only a line just to say how you are. We have been here just two weeks on the north coast of Devonshire. It is a most lovely spot, but we find it the reverse of bracing. . . . Rossetti is down in Oxfordshire, William Rossetti gone to Italy, Morris to Iceland, everyone somewhere. We shall be back in London this day fortnight. This is one of the places Shelley was at with his wife Harriet, when he was about eighteen and she sixteen. We have found an old woman who remembers them perfectly. I am going to draw her; Miss Blind is to make an article about her. We have got some new facts from her. All unite with me in hoping you may be much better by this time. Let me hear something before long. I have lost your Scotch address, so have to address to Manchester.

In October Shields was again searching for a new house, uncertain whether to stay in Manchester or again try London, which had now so many attractions for him. At one time Liverpool seemed a likely place, and various

secluded spots were recommended to him by different friends. To one of his temperament the fact of his being obliged to leave the house which suited him so well was quite sufficient to account for his having been "much disturbed," as Madox Brown says in his next letter, dated October 18th, 1871.

"Many thanks for your kind, long letter, which I am afraid cost you more trouble than I deserve, but I *was* just getting anxious at hearing nothing of or from you. I hope you will fix on coming to town, now that you have given up your lodgings—house, I mean. I do not see that you have any advantages in Manchester which you might not have in London, and I believe you might get chambers either in the Temple or some of the Inns of Court, where you might be perfectly quiet and at less expense than you have been in your house. Will you not pay us a visit before deciding? I ought to have pressed this on you before, but I did not know (from your letters) if it would have been good for you; and I have been very much absorbed of late in my own bothers, so that the time has slipped away.

"You seem to have been much disturbed of late in some way or other, but I shall not trouble you with questions and leave it to you to explain matters, if you care to do so, when we meet.

"Rossetti has nearly finished his great work and written a deal more poetry. The picture is, as you surmise, a perfect success; at least it is becoming so within the last few days. At first when I saw it, some three months ago, it was admirable as to the figures and in all separate parts, but the general effect was very unsatisfactory; now it is coming quite right.

"As to the Benzine process you ask about, I must tell you that it is quite given up by Gabriel and myself as a process. However, for rapidly *laying* in a large picture, *à la* Watts, it certainly does offer advantages, but not all those it was boasted of possessing. An absorbing ground is the *first* consideration, yet this is no absolute necessity; next, some white and other colours, rather stiffish, is con-

sidered desirable, but by no means *indispensable*. You may put such colours as you most use for laying in on blotting-paper, and so stiffen them. The most important matter is to mix your quantum of benzine for the day with one-eighth part of oil, and shake it well up in a little bottle. This prevents it all flying off into the air, to your danger and detriment. You must be careful with your benzine not to put it *open under a light*, as the whole may explode and burn you up.

"There is nothing else of much importance. If you trust too much to benzine and do not use enough medium or varnish, your work will either wash off or crack off, as many of Watts' have done."

The above suggests that Shields was now experimenting in oils, but he also produced several water-colours this year, including a portrait of Miss Carver, "Sweet Mary," and "Calypso" (both purchased by Mr. Mc'Connell), an "Angel of the Annunciation," and two or three drawings for *Punch*; the largest of these, however, was not published until 1875.

It must have been somewhat hard for him to decide the rights and wrongs of the "hobble" Rossetti now describes! Mr. Craven was certainly entitled to a little sympathy.

16 CHEYNE WALK,  
15th Nov. 1871.

DEAR SHIELDS,—I was very glad, as always, to hear from you at such friendly length and to such friendly purpose. I wish heartily you were here, for a selfish reason as well as for others; for I should take a thorough pleasure in showing you my large picture, as the only thing (with all its faultiness) in which I ever tried completely to test (by unflinching efforts to get a work on a good scale right in the end) what my powers for the time being might be. It is really much better, I know, than anything I have done yet, though I am very far from being blind to its shortcomings. I am about immediately



ILLUSTRATION FOR "PUNCH," 1870

From the Original Sketch

By permission of Messrs. Bradbury, Agnew & Co., Ltd.





to get on other large work, and hope to make a further step in advance.

Your mention of Mr. Craven induces me to detail to you (though distasteful enough) a stupid misunderstanding which seems to have arisen between us. I long ago engaged to do him a drawing of Beatrice, price 300 guineas, which (to make a long story short) was to liquidate to the extent of its price some advances made at intervals on work since abandoned, though on its delivery a sum (£70) would still remain payable by me, either in work (as originally intended) or in money. Craven behaved capitally in not troubling me in the least about this drawing for a long while (knowing that it could not be finished till the original oil picture, of which it was a replica, should be out of hand), but having some six months ago, or perhaps more, called here and seen the oil picture then just finished, he asked me when he might expect the water-colour, and I told him "before long." However, every experiment I have made for some time in water-colour has proved to me that it suits my eyes much less than oil painting; and some little time after, on his making further enquiry by letter, I told him that on this account I felt rather disposed to pay back the money instead of delivering the drawing, and proposed a plan of doing so by bills stretching over some time. This he declined, and proposed instead that I should pay him the sum (which was in itself larger than I, writing then from the country, had thought) by two bills *bearing interest* within a short time. This was out of the question with me, and I therefore undertook to finish the drawing and deliver it in three months from last 5th August (the date of writing). This I have done, with a few days' delay only, agreed to by him for the advantage of the work in finishing. At the same time I sent him a cheque for £30, thinking (mistakenly) that this was the surplus sum owing, which he now informs me (quite correctly, as I find) is £70. Of course I shall pay him the additional £40 as soon as may be, either by money or work; but he now, to my complete surprise, again raises the question of interest (a thing never spoken of at all when the advances were made), and actually proposes to charge it not only on the outstanding £70, but also on the

sum paid for by delivery of the drawing of Beatrice. Of course this proposal I cannot entertain for a moment. How he comes to make it I am at a loss to conceive, but must suppose that temper has somehow got the better of him. I regret extremely getting into these stupid hobbles with him—not from motives of interest (as I am not likely to be doing more water-colours, or therefore to have him as a customer), but because he always behaved in a friendly and liberal spirit all along, and it seems absurd that a reasonable intercourse should close in this unreasonable manner. Thus far this unpleasant business. The drawing of Beatrice sent to Manchester he has not yet seen, as he is at Brighton. It is probably the best water-colour I ever did, but I should not be at all surprised if, in his present mood, he were to prove dissatisfied with it. That, of course, I could not help, were it to be so.

What you tell me about the "Princess" drawing does not surprise me. I sold it to a dealer, and did not finish it in the way I should have done had it been for Craven, for whom I always endeavoured to do my best. As for taking it up again, life is short and might I think be better employed, though had Craven asked me to do so at any time, I would have looked at the drawing and worked on it if I saw my way to do so. This letter has got long already, and I don't much know what to write about, though there would be a thousand things to talk about if we were together. I was away in the country three months, at a house which I took jointly with Morris, on the banks of the Thames at Kelmscott, Oxon. There those verses you write so kindly about were suggested, with other writing of a more elaborate kind, and I also did some painting there. The house and its immediate belongings are a perfect paradise, and the place peaceful even to excess. It is an Elizabethan house quite unaltered, and my studio was hung with tapestry which no doubt had been always in it. I wish you could find such a place within artistic limits. It is a most anxious matter, with your special necessities, to find a new nest now you have unluckily lost the old one. Of course I feel *inclined* to advise London again, but the matter is much too serious for inclination to govern it,

and I am quite uncertain whether such a move would be good or bad for you.

You do not tell me of your work, but I judge you must be engaged on the good commissions you told me of some time back, and of which I then rejoiced to hear.

Things go on the same as ever in London. Everyone works, and hardly anyone sees the other's work more than if many counties lay between them—every man having his own daily groove, and the cross roads being somehow of rare occurrence. Dear old Smetham I have not seen for ages, though I did correspond a little with him when in the country. However, week by week I project tempting him from his distant entrenchment to see my pictures, and shall really do so ere long. Good-bye, my dear Shields, I hope our really seeing each other again before we are much older is not quite out of the question.—  
Ever yours,  
D. G. ROSSETTI.

In December Frederic Shields was awarded the Heywood Prize for his picture "After the Storming," then exhibited at the Manchester Institution. A rough draft of a letter of acknowledgment, dated Cornbrook Park, December 7th, 1871, says, "This resolution of the Council comes as a great surprise, rousing, I may say, shame in me that it is not better supported by the inherent excellence of my work. I beg to thank the Council and to express my hope that the principle of allotting the prize to a local painter may be tried for another year, in the trust that the experiment may prove stimulating to a noble emulation and the production of works of higher aim among our young artists, often struggling with poverty. To them such a prize would afford the leisure to work independently for a time, of the necessity for painting such subjects and in such a style, as to command the readiest market in a country where the average taste of picture buyers is very low."

## CHAPTER X

Ordsall Old Hall—Hermit life—Rossetti's illness—Crisis at Winnington—Holding and Davis—Modern improvements threaten—Insomnia—M'Lachlan again—The young model—The amazing marriage—Off to Blackpool.

AFTER much searching and doubt, Shields discovered another strange and lonely old house in Manchester called Ordsall Old Hall. In *Manchester Faces and Places*, August 1897, we are told "The hide of land on which Ordsall Hall stands was formerly the property of Edward the Confessor, and was bounded by the clear waters of the Irwell. It was once the home of the Radcliffe family, who took their name, it is said, from a red sandstone cliff which overlooked the river, and which was sometimes called Rougemont, a name often used by members of the family. A noble residence for a man of rank, in the days of Richard III., it had fallen from its high estate, but was (in 1872) still a thing of beauty, with four gables, oriel windows, great hall with magnificent open roof, and moat. The city has now closed in upon it; but happily it is being restored by its owner, Lord Egerton."

In one wing of this vast and dilapidated relic of the splendours of Richard III., Frederic Shields took up his solitary existence, an old woman daily was his sole attendant, though in a year or two she was replaced by various more or less incompetent successors dignified by the name of "housekeepers." Here he continued working, chiefly at water-colour, paying an occasional visit to London, staying for a few nights either with

Rossetti or Madox Brown, and visiting Ilkley in the spring of 1872.

Madox Brown wrote on July 17th:—

“I am quite overwhelmed with shame when I look at the date of your letter, but when I explain the nature of my silence, you, with your forgiving nature, will be more ready to excuse me than I can be myself.

“About the time you wrote (12th May), I had already lost a considerable amount of time, owing to repeated attacks of rheumatism, and before I had time to answer your long, kind letter, a matter of a quite new kind sprang up which completely shut up my time and attention. You know in your letter you ask for particular information as to Christina Rossetti, whom you had heard to be in the extreme or hopeless state; this was an exaggeration, she was not and has not been dying, so to speak, though as ill as any one can well be without being *in articulo mortis*, but since she has been better, but is now again worse. However, now I come to what must be a profound secret between us, and that is the state of her brother Gabriel. He is at present in Scotland with Dr. Hake, the poet, and his son. I and the younger Hake went down with him three or four weeks ago. I stayed eight days and left him with W. B. Scott and G. Hake. Now Dr. Hake has replaced Scott and to-day I have from him the first letter of a really hopeful kind that has reached us from Scotland. You must know that Gabriel for the last two years has been, without our noticing it, subject to slight fits of eccentricity, partaking of the nature of delusions, he had also been sleeping worse and worse and taking enormous doses of chloral every night—about the time of that horrid Buchanan pamphlet called the *Fleshly School of Poetry*. This state, owing to the irritation consequent on that libel, reached a state of development, accompanied by a kind of fit (which, by the bye, was falsely represented to us and his family as being *hopelessly irrecoverable* in its nature—you may judge of his poor mother's, and indeed all our feelings) that rendered it unsafe to leave him alone.

I was some days at Cheyne Walk with him. Some days ago we brought him *here* and then at last I got him off to Scotland and went with him. There his state physically did improve; sleep gradually began to return and with less chloral (for they dared not leave it off) his walking powers returned, for the fit had left him with a *lame* leg. The gloomy black temper and the delusions, which were to the purpose that the whole world was in a conspiracy against him, with the exception of a few friends, did not give way, rather the reverse—but to-day Dr. Hake writes the first hopeful letter and we have every reason to expect that as his mental state is not of the worst kind, that in three or four months he will be all right again and at work. . . .

“I have, perhaps, news of my own that might interest you, but I have little time left this morning to write it. I am painting Fawcett, the blind Member, and his wife in one picture for Sir Charles Dilke—quite a pathetic looking group. My large ‘Don Juan’ has also made some progress. Nolly has *written a novel* and is engaged on another, but this is strictly a secret betwixt us. He has developed an astounding genius in this line. He is only, you know, seventeen. Cathy is to be married the first week in September. We are all pretty well in health now—but I have not found time to go to a single exhibition, yours included. Craven knows that D. G. has *been ill* but nothing else . . . so be on your guard.

“Now as to yourself, my dear Shields, pray how goes it? Write, I beg you, at once on receipt of this and don’t imitate my bad example, unless, indeed, you have as good an excuse. I lost more than four weeks’ work with Gabriel and have been overwhelmed with business ever since.”

In September a more cheerful letter announced Rossetti’s recovery.

Early in this year matters at Winnington had been approaching a crisis. Many letters from Ruskin, in his most forcible style, were addressed to Shields on the subject. Shields, as he wrote to Ruskin, strove hard to



A WINNINGTON GIRL

Northwich, 1873





maintain his faith in Winnington, but he admitted his inability to understand legal matters, or Miss Bell's ideas of finance. He felt that, unlike Ruskin, he had no personal cause of complaint, having himself received nothing but kindness from Miss Bell, and as at this particular time of trial the life of Miss Bell's partner was—to use Shields' words—"hanging by a thread," he felt that he could not do anything but render them any encouragement and assistance that he was able to give. This probably led for a time to more or less estranged relations with Ruskin, who wrote exhorting Shields not to bother himself about anything but his work, and observed, "If I never hear anything more about Miss Bell or the money I shall be thankful." A pacifying reply from Shields drew a still more forcible note from Ruskin, and evidently "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

Winnington was reconstructed soon after on a much smaller scale, at a house near Brighton called Winnington Pines, and entered the life of Shields at a later date.

In the autumn of this year he was again plunged into another's woe by the death under very sad circumstances of a promising young Manchester artist named Holding, and at once solicited Madox Brown's help in getting up an exhibition of pictures to secure some provision for the widow. With his usual warm-hearted generosity Madox Brown replied on October 15th:—

"I have got answers from Hughes, Boyce, Jones, and D. G. R.; they will all contribute something, and now strengthened with their names I will apply to Antony, Wallis, and Linnell. Lucy, Nolly, Edward Hughes, and Dunn will also contribute something. I trust you are not overdoing it in your zeal for this affair, and that you will not make yourself quite ill. . . . The accounts from Rossetti still confirm that he is perfectly restored to health."

Much correspondence passed about the Holding Fund—the first of many similar undertakings originating with Shields or Brown. Early in the following year Shields again paid a visit to Fitzroy Square, and when he returned to Manchester, Madox Brown wrote on April 6th :—

“ You will be glad to know that Brockbank called here the other day, and commissioned me for the ‘ Cromwell on his Farm ’ for 400 guineas. At least I said guineas, but in his letter just received he puts it *pounds*, whether by accident or intention remains to be seen ; however we must not quarrel over this matter, so I have written to say that if he is quite of opinion that I said Pounds I must accept his impression as correct—but do not mention it to him should you see him. Have you been talking to him since your return and so hastened his return here ? In such case how much have I to thank you ! . . . I trust you are getting on all right with your pictures for this season’s exhibition, and that they will do you good. From your manner I augur good things from them. I see they have elected Tadema to your society, this is at least a step in the right direction—he was here the other night, a most genial Dutchman, and he did admire your Plague of London drawings excessively—the only works he knows as yet of yours.”

Another tragedy soon calls for assistance, the death of William Davis, a Liverpool artist. Madox Brown journeyed at once to Liverpool, whence he writes :—

“ I have been here a few days chiefly occupied about the death of poor ‘ Liverpool ’ Davis, who died suddenly in London last Tuesday week, and unexpectedly at the meeting of artists yesterday, I came upon your picture of the children and the new boots. It is the only really fine picture in the room, and everybody is remarking on it, and I cannot tell you how it pleases me to see the great progress you are making. I should like to run over to Manchester, but to-morrow I must return to London.

This affair of poor Davis is awful, leaving ten children, widow, and widowed mother of Davis (twelve in all) totally unprovided for, but I am glad to see that the example of the Holding fund is having a good effect on them here, and the artists promise pictures for an Art Union, and the merchants are subscribing. You have in all such cases done more than your share, and I abstained from troubling you with news about it from the first *intentionally*.

Shields had not waited to be asked, but had a picture all ready for the Art Union. Meanwhile, as the postscript to the next letter shows, he had another poor family on his hands in Manchester—a bed-ridden man whose wife died leaving four children.

In June Madox Brown wrote again:—

“Your silence, if it can be called such, does not surprise me—I know that whatever the cause it is hardly ever on your own account, it is always about others that you are engrossed. Your care in having your own work already prepared (amid all your gratuitous bothers) is most praiseworthy and generous. . . . Rossetti, with whom I have been staying ten days, has contributed a most lovely chalk head—Davis’ last sketches and landscapes are now almost ready for showing, and will be on view and on sale here soon. I must price them low, I suppose, but no doubt one day they will be thought much of. I suppose it would be of no use your speaking to the Agnews about them. They knew Davis and had even given him a commission, but I dare say they would not give a penny for these beautiful artistic sketches now. But should you know of anyone in Manchester likely to buy you might give the address. . . . Should Agnew care to call I am going away again to Kelmscott on Monday. Thanks for your most loyal pugnacity on my behalf, but for the present I think we had better both be peaceable like the French, for fear of worse. . . .”

“P.S.—I have again forgotten your most unfortunate family. I enclose a pound for them.”

This summer Shields again visited London, staying with the Browns, and a letter from G. F. Watts, dated August 16th, invited him to Little Holland House.

In September he returned to Ordsall Hall, evidently having expended rather than increased his means while in London.

Madox Brown wrote on September 24th:—

“I am very much obliged by your fiver received safe—the only thing that occurred to me at the time was that it was almost my last one, but you were welcome to it. The costumes are excellent and just what is required for Puritans—only almost too simple and severe, almost to theatricality—but I have no doubt correct. We hear this morning from Rossetti that George Hake was almost killed while bathing, by a young favourite dog that would climb on to his shoulders and bite his head. He was only saved by Nero, a large black retriever, which came and seized the other with admirable sense. The young one returned again and again to the attack—possibly with the intention of pulling his master out of the water. He was shot immediately after. Glad to hear you are at work.”

Ordsall Hall began to be more noisy, and the neighbourhood was being encroached upon by builders, to the detriment of the work and nervous system of the solitary tenant.

In December 1873, Madox Brown wrote sympathetically:—

“I am very sorry to hear of the disaster that encompasses you, and from the peculiar nature scarce know how to advise you. With one whose nerves were in a better condition I should say put up with it till you have done the pictures which require your presence in that locality, but in your case I suppose the noise and irritation is tantamount to a cessation of work altogether. In such case I can only speak as to what locality is likely to suit

you best, and it strikes me that your idea of Liverpool is by no means a bad one, for in the first place it is scarcely like leaving Manchester, and next it is making a lot more friends there, or perhaps only consolidating such as you know already—but I conceive I could introduce you to some few that you don't yet know. It may seem cool perhaps of me not to exclaim rapturously, 'Come to London at once'—but you have already had my views on that head, and I before impressed you with their validity and sincerity. I was asking young Davis here as to the quietness of different neighbourhoods in Liverpool, but could not get much that was satisfactory in the way of information. There is a village called Hale two or three miles further up the Mersey than Speke—same side as Liverpool, and just a short walk from the estuary, which there is like an inland sea. I am told this is a lovely spot, and its beauty decided young Davis to be a painter instead of a Catholic Priest, so it has some merits."

Insomnia was again troubling Shields, and young Oliver Madox Brown now writes him an affectionate letter of advice on the subject, and maps out a weekly table of varied soporifics which might indeed inspire horror in any normal breast! He cheerfully suggests "A dose of *Chloral* Monday, *Sour milk* Tuesday, *Laudanum* Wednesdays, on Thursday a little Spirits (Irish Whisky is best for sleep-producing purposes), while on Friday you might modestly content yourself with fifteen to twenty-five drops of *Chlorodyne*. In this way you would not grow *hardened* to any one of them, and each would retain its full power and proper efficiency." It is to be hoped that Shields did not follow the advice of his young friend, although much troubled at this time by various causes which gave him anxious days and sleepless nights.

Among other things M'Lachlan was again importuning him for aid over another still larger undertaking, the "Royal Group" at Windsor Castle. This was to

include Queen Victoria and all her descendants in one colossal photograph, which, it was hoped, would really make the fortune of the photographer and all concerned in the production. Arthur Hughes, on hearing some time before of the project, wrote, "Fancy Mac actually fighting another! I am almost breathless with astonishment." This terrible photograph absorbed much of Frederic Shields' time for the next two years, and he described the work as "hateful slavery," to which he was only bound by his rash promise to M'Lachlan, whose whole life seemed to be hanging upon the enterprise.

A diary was very irregularly kept for the eventful year of 1874:—

"*Dec. 31st, 1873.*—Went with Cissy to Watch Night service. Mr. Mason and Mr. Cousins spoke very earnestly on time and immediate decision."

"Cissy" in every case refers to Matilda Booth, the young girl who was very constantly his model at this time, and who afterwards became his wife.

"*Jan. 1st.*—No work. To exhibition with Cissy, dined in town.

"*Jan. 2nd.*—Worked at 'Girl with Ball' and apple blossom. M'Lachlan dined here.

"*Jan. 8th.*—Thankful for wet morning, began work. Cissy troublesome. Ogden with his cart casting down wood at my gate quite upset me. Went into fiery passion, quite ill after.

"*Jan. 9th.*—Too ill to work. No dinner. Going out met Ogden, warned him that I should take action unless nuisance ceased.

"*Jan. 12th.*—Worked at M'Lachlan's enlargement until 5. Reviewed my life by my diaries, would I had kept them regularly. Mac came and I went over the photographs with him, selecting the best, till 10.

"*Jan. 16th.*—All day at M'Lachlan's enlargement.

Then to town, afterwards to Ann Gibbs, very ill. She told me a terrible story of the mystery of her twelve past years. Is she sane? I came home exhausted.

"*Jan. 25th.*—To Gibbs just in time to see dear Ann alive. Her death scene most bitter. Stayed with them till 10—worn out.

"*Jan. 27th.*—Fearfully tired. Worked at background of Mac's enlargement till 5.30—dined. Read Ruskin to Mac. Out to look for new Housekeeper till 9 P.M.

"*Feb. 1st.*—To Chapel with dear Edwin Gibbs, a heavy crape band round my hat. Revd. Williams preached on 'Bring all the tithes'—a shocking worldly wise sermon.

"*Feb. 2nd.*—All day at Mac's enlargement. Young fellow called to ask my advice about his work. (Conscientiously dissuaded him from art.) Dear Smetham came from Southport to see me till 3. To train with him at 4. To Club and then to teachers' meeting. Outvoted by the British workmen advocates. Mostly females there. Hunted for housekeeper again.

"*Feb. 10th.*—Mac's enlargement to 11. Big drawing of girl with ball till 5. Mac came, out with him and Cissy. Read History of David with Cissy."

The diary continues irregularly until the end of the month.

"*Feb. 12th.*—Worked at Mac's enlargement. Cissy gone to Bolton, saw her to cab.

"*Feb. 28th.*—Started for the Isle of Man, from Liverpool at 12. A fine passage, and welcome from the Lewis family.

"*March 2nd.*—Saw Nicholson's drawings. To Lewis' Gallery and a walk on the iron pier. Dined at 1. Then for a row to the Northern point of the bay. Fine crags. Back at 6. Took my first lesson on violin."

The violin lessons were not continued, nor is it easy for anyone who knew Shields to imagine him as doing

anything but writhe in agony over the sounds unavoidably made by a beginner on that instrument.

He returned to Ordsall Hall on March 11th, and shortly afterwards his housekeeper, Mrs. Walsh, was taken to the hospital ill. The diary is blank until:—

“*April 10th.*—All the interval from my return from the Isle of Man at Mac’s group. To Brockbank. Saw Madox Brown’s grand picture of ‘Cromwell on his Farm.’”

The diary is blank until August.

“*August 10th.*—Mounted ‘Roundhead’s Wife,’ coloured ‘Knott Mill Fair.’ Made two designs for Abel Lewis.

“*August 11th.*—A day of anxious irresolution with Cissy. Resolved at last and went to Mr. Codling, the minister at Irwell Street. Tea there, home 7.

“*August 15th.*—Married at Irwell Street Chapel. Revd. Mr. Codling. Off to Blackpool alone with Mac. Did me wonderful good. Thank God.”

The young bride, so strangely left on her wedding day, in the great empty house, to the care of the old housekeeper, was a girl of unusual beauty, with abundant auburn hair, finely cut features, and fair delicate complexion, the model, both before and after their marriage, for many of his most beautiful subjects.

The previous year, when in London staying with Madox Brown, he wrote to her:—

*Sunday, August 4th, 1873.*

MY BELOVED,—I am anxious about you, surely I ought to have heard from you this morning if letters were delivered in London on Sunday—but they are not—the postman rests on this day, and so I must wait until to-morrow. You know how much I dislike writing letters, yet for you look how I have written this week. You might have spared me a few poor lines. I have just returned, having had to walk six miles to Chapel and back, and am too tired to write more than God Bless You. Take care of this poem, please, a good lady gave it to me and you will like it.—Ever your own  
FREDERIC.





THE ARTIST'S WIFE

Painted in 1874



When a year later they married, her age, according to the marriage certificate, was only sixteen, he was forty. A life of rigorous self-denial, intense religious devotion, seclusion from worldly frivolities of every kind, and a necessarily rigid economy in expenditure, could hardly have been ideal for a high-spirited, beautiful, but entirely uneducated child—for she was little more than a child in years or experience—and the mistake was dearly paid for by both the sufferers. The great disparity in age, education, and tastes eventually, though not for some years, caused what might have been expected to be the sad but inevitable end of such a marriage. It would be difficult to attempt to explain the circumstances which led to this strange union. Frederic Shields was no doubt actuated by the highest motives. He had known his wife and had much influence over her since she was a tiny child, and had given her much instruction, though probably little of a kind that she could assimilate. His feelings for her had possibly changed very little from those of a strict though very affectionate teacher who sought nothing but the spiritual and moral improvement of his beautiful little model. Probably some outside interference from her parents or others made him suddenly realise that the child was growing into a woman, very precocious for her years in some ways, and very devoted to the great artist who took her from her monotonous home surroundings, read to her, dressed her up in pretty colours, and placed her literally on a pedestal to be admired. But as time went on, from the point of view of the wicked world, and of the girl herself, the old relationship could not continue. The time came when it must cease, or become a nearer one, and the latter course was chosen. The diary continues on the day after the wedding:—

“*Aug. 16th.*—Blackpool. Good sermon. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.

"*Monday, 17th.*—Saw Mac to train. Alone in Blackpool. Walked much. Fine weather. Saw bulldogs in show, splendid beasts. Evening with Mr. Roberts and his family.

"*Aug. 20th.*—No letter from Cissy since I left home. Could rest no longer. Back by 4 train.

"*Aug. 21st.*—Boy nearly drowned in pit opposite, spent the morning trying to save him. By God's blessing succeeded. To town, back at 5.

"*Aug. 22nd.*—Worked at wave in 'Caught by the Tide.'"

The diary is blank for the rest of the year.

## CHAPTER XI

Ordsall Hall threatened—Letter to Ruskin—Sketching Queen Victoria's drawing-room—Death of Oliver Madox Brown—The Royal Jig-saw puzzle—Shields' Exhibition and farewell dinner.

ANOTHER distraction was now oppressing the artist—again his secluded old house was being beset by builders bent on developing the neighbourhood. A letter addressed to Mr. Ruskin described his woes in vivid language :—

“About myself—ere long I shall be driven out of my house, the happiest refuge I ever nested in. It is, like most old rooms, very lofty, is of wood and plaster, evidently of the Seventh Harry's time, and is most interesting in many ways. It belonged to the Radcliffe family, some branch, as I understand, from the scanty information I can scrape, of the Derwentwater family. Lord — owns it now, or did till lately, for I am informed he has sold it and the lands about it to an Oil Cloth Company, who will start building their factory behind it shortly and probably resell the land they do not use, with the hall, to be demolished as an encumbrance that does not pay. Already the 'Egyptian plague of bricks' has alighted on its eastern side, devouring every green blade. Where the sheep fed last year, five streets of cheap cottages, one brick thick in the walls (for the factory operatives belonging to two great cotton-mills near), are in course of formation—great cartloads of stinking oyster shells having been laid for their foundations, and the whole vicinity on the eastern side, in a state of mire and debris of broken brick and slates, is so painful to my eyes that I scarce ever go out in daylight. Fifteen years ago a noble avenue of sycamores led to the hall and a large wood covered the surface of an

extensive elevation of red sandstone, not a tree stands now, and the rock itself is riddled into sand and carted away."

So much of the letter is printed in *Fors Clavigera*, as "A letter from an old friend whose home, like my own, has been broken up by modern improvements," Ruskin having written to Shields asking permission to print it without name or locality, as it saved him descriptive work and authenticated facts.

Shields in the rough draft of the letter (preserved for thirty-six years), which may or may not have been sent to Ruskin as it stands, goes on to say:—

"If the Parthenon itself stood here, and these speculators could clear five pounds by its demolition, it would go. And I, poor snail, with a shell that fits me so, that I might have had it made to my convenience (so quiet from all the horrors which made London an unendurable torture-house of organs, pianos, parrots, &c.), when my shell is smashed, where shall I seek shelter for my tender body?"

Ruskin sent a rather doleful reply, and laments that he has never succeeded in repressing Shields' excitability or leading him into peaceful development of his powers. He suggests that an "almost cottage" life in the country would be healthiest for him.

Months passed in unsettled discomfort, visits to Blackpool and London on M'Lachlan's business, lessons in Scripture and grammar to his young wife, and occasional work at water-colours. To his friends, who thought of him as an ascetic, devout, almost hermit-like recluse, the news of Frederic Shields' marriage must have come as a great surprise. Apparently it was kept a secret for some months, for in October Madox Brown wrote:—

“Ever since my answer to your last letter, when you talked of coming to London to look out for a house, I have been thinking of you and wondering what you were after and intending to write to you again. What are you up to? I hope you are well. I am to lecture in Manchester, November 23rd and 25th. Brockbank has made me promise to stop at his house. . . . You will be sorry to hear that Nolly has been seriously ill now for three weeks, and it may turn to rheumatic fever or we don't know what. My wife and I have our health at present—but this illness of Nolly's puts us sadly out. I have been at work at 'Byron and Mary Chaworth' and can't get it finished, and on a portrait but can't get the man to sit—so that hangs fire. Altogether things are a great bother, but I shall be glad to hear that you are well. For some time I hesitated to write thinking you had moved, but Brockbank informed us you were still at Ordsall Hall.

“P.S.—Of course I shall see you when I come to Manchester.”

Evidently the secret could not be kept any longer. A little later Madox Brown wrote again:—

“I should have written to congratulate you at once had I not been so engaged. But I do now most heartily, and believe that the agreeable society of your wife (and let us hope children) will do much to alleviate the nervous troubles and anxieties you have suffered from—I shall have for your wedding gift that cartoon of 'The Way of Sorrow' that you liked so, framed appropriately. Your hint as to subject for Brockbank shall be borne in mind. Thanks also for what you kindly say as to the pictures in the exhibition. Nolly is not yet convalescent, I regret to say, and had a very sad night—but we hope for the best.”

• “The Way of Sorrow” strikes one as a cheerless choice for a wedding gift—only equalled by “The Sacrifice of

Manoah" which was the subject of the drawing given by Shields to Mr. William M. Rossetti on his marriage.

Meanwhile Shields was still struggling with M'Lachlan's Royal Group—a collection of sketches carefully preserved shows that he made a preliminary sketch of the whole composition, and journeyed to Windsor Castle, where he made drawings in colour of the drawing-room, its large patterned carpet and gold furniture, upholstered in green satin, all of which had to be arranged as a background to the twenty-two Royal personages who sat at different times to M'Lachlan or supplied their portraits, to be fitted together like an early Victorian jig-saw puzzle. M'Lachlan found the light of Blackpool more favourable to his operations than the dull atmosphere of Manchester, and they worked there for some time, also at M'Lachlan's house at Whalley Range. The young wife was at home, her loneliness occasionally consoled by visits from Miss Thomson, one of her husband's young pupils.

At times Ordsall Hall was deserted and Blackpool became their headquarters.

Madox Brown's visit was delayed by the illness and tragic death of his gifted young son Oliver.

37 FITZROY SQUARE,  
Oct. 30th, 1874.

DEAR SHIELDS,—I steal a few minutes from my night watch to tell you how Nolly is going on, and to speak to you about another matter. We have now a regular hospital nurse—Nolly has been ill within two days of seven weeks, about the third week he seemed mending, then he had a relapse which is a common feature of these fevers I am told, then his illness assumed the form of blood poisoning—recently it is more like enteric or gastric fever. He is no longer in pain and to-day a slight improvement has shown itself, which we trust may be the harbinger of ultimate convalescence when he would be



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out of danger. Of course I have lost three or four weeks' work, but that, and the expense, is nothing at all in the scale. No end of people keep calling and enquiring now that it is becoming known. But I can scarce see any of them. I pass the night in his room, sleeping but not undressing till six, when I wake the nurse and go to bed for two or three hours. The nurse is admirable in skill and tact. How get you on? And the lady? I trust as happy as you deserve—and I hope that Nolly may be so improved as not to stop my coming to the lectures and to see you both next month. (Nolly keeps talking in his sleep). . . . I have done a little to my "Byron's Dream," and a little to a large portrait—but so little. . . . Mrs. Brown and myself are well. Hoping as much of yourself and wife,—As ever, yours most sincerely,  
FORD MADOX BROWN.

Shields, working away at his uncongenial task, whether at Blackpool or at Ordsall Hall, was doubtless agonising in sympathy over his friends' anxiety, and the following letter shows that he was afraid that other worries might be still further depressing the anxious watchers. Part of this letter appears in Mr. Hueffer's *Life of Madox Brown*, but is in error addressed to Mr. Rae.

37 FITZROY SQUARE,  
Nov. 8th, 1874.

DEAR SHIELDS,—I have delayed too long answering yours of the 4th, though it be but for a day or two—but I determined to write to you myself and have had neither time nor heart to do so—and now I scarce can find words to convey the dreadful intelligence in—this black-bordered paper will tell you better than I can that our poor dear Nolly is dead—on Thursday at about twenty minutes to seven, and is to be buried this next Thursday about 12. Nothing that I can say can add to the impression which I know these words will make on you. The loss from every point of view is heavy—to me, to his mother, and even to all his relations, and the public perhaps more than any, though for the present it cannot be supposed

to judge of it. But being no ordinary loss, we have decided to bear it, if we can, in no ordinary way, and not to complain. I would have much more to speak about to you but cannot write more now. As to your own accident and proceedings I can only say that the first grieves me, and the second (your voluntary loan) makes me say you are one of the kindest souls alive—but though sufficiently drained, no doubt, by these expenses and hindrances to work, I am not yet at the end of my resources, so do not for an instant attribute my sending the money back to false pride, but to my not wanting it just now. The lectures must be put off, as well as thoughts about the Holding matter.—Yours ever sincerely,

F. MADOX BROWN.

To one of Shields' emotional temperament and fervid religious views, the calm, philosophic resignation of Madox Brown was probably incomprehensible. By an irony of fate Madox Brown and Rossetti, his two nearest friends during many years of his life, differed from him absolutely in their views upon religion. Probably very early in their acquaintance they agreed to differ on the subject, for although Shields could preach with great eloquence in pictures, by writing, and by word of mouth, his intense feeling made him almost incapable of arguing with anything like calmness or coherence upon any question of Christian faith. A cheerful and reverent Agnostic, whose whole life was one of unselfishness and devotion to lofty aims, who was tolerant and dignified in every relation of life, and who bore an overwhelming sorrow with more than the patience of Job, really gave painfully little opportunity for exhortation and prayer. The postponed lectures took place, and Shields invited Madox Brown to stay at Ordsall Hall, though evidently with some misgivings as to the draughtiness of the old house.

56 EUSTON SQUARE, W.C.

DEAR SHIELDS,—Your nice kind letter finds me here with William Rossetti, having just returned from staying with the Hueffers at Merton. I have been intending to write to you before coming next Monday, but have kept putting it off, because what *can* I say?

My wife has been rather alarmingly ill, and we had to sit up with her for at least a week, but she is coming round again, and I shall be able to leave her with her two daughters for the three days I must be in Manchester. . . . I shall arrive at 12.30 noon Monday, and if not putting you out shall be glad indeed to meet you at the station. Of course I would much prefer that it was to your house that I was bound (draughts or no draughts), but the possibility of a solid commission from Brockbank must not be overlooked. But I must try to be with you as much as he will let me; people who are your hosts are usually tyrannical and jealous. I have told him, however, that I cannot accept any public engagements of a festive character, and have declined the soiree of the Athenæum as well. Brockbank had sent me your article yesterday; it is very thoughtful and friendly of you to make a row about me in this way, and the article itself is proof that as a literary character you would have been as remarkable as in your pictorial one. What I shall tell the people in my lectures will (after this) perhaps tend a good deal to clear up misapprehension and induce people to look with the eyes of common sense.

You will, I daresay, expect me to write more about myself and ourselves at this melancholy juncture (I am just now finishing an oil picture of "Byron and Mary Chaworth," which has been of course much delayed, but which I hope to get done with before leaving London); but, as I said before, what can I say? We must begin soon to think of his literary remains, which I suppose William Rossetti and Hueffer will edit between them. It will be a sad task having to sort his books and look out his manuscripts, but sad is the complexion of the event.

I made a drawing of him after death, which I think successful both for likeness and as a pleasing piece of

expression. We also have a cast of his right hand, which is most beautiful, and a photograph was fortunately taken some months before his death. I must bring you one.

We must make your wife's acquaintance soon. You must bring her to stay with us, either at Fitzroy Square or wherever we may be. With our best regards to her,—  
Yours as ever,  
FORD MADOX BROWN.

Shields now definitely made up his mind to leave Manchester for London, and many were the letters received suggesting various desirable localities or houses. Early in February 1875 he went to London, principally on M'Lachlan's business, but also to prospect for a likely house. The young wife evidently found herself very lonely, and apparently wrote suggesting that if her husband did not return soon she would like to go and stay with friends. He replied:—

37 FITZROY SQUARE,  
Feb. 2nd, 1875.

MY DARLING WIFE,—If you are so ill that you must go away, this cannot and must not be till I return—neither to the M'Lachlans' nor the Rowleys'. The house *must not* be left to Mrs. Mahoney. If you are so ill you must go away, I will return at once; but do nothing without letting me know, nor without my approval. I expect I shall be quite ill myself after my return, with all the wearying worry I have gone through alone. If you are lonely, so am I. All these journeys must be made alone, and all ending in disappointment, only to start and try again. The expenses have been very heavy. Write to me at once. I will return on Saturday, any way, and before if you want me. Mrs. Mahoney should nurse you well. Write your grammar lessons if you can, if you are well enough.—Ever your true husband,

FREDERIC J. SHIELDS.

The journeys were in search of a suitable house. An undated letter written about the same time follows, hardly calculated to raise the young wife's spirits:—

37 FITZROY SQUARE.

MY DEAR OWN WIFE,—On Monday I had arranged to go to see Watson's beautiful place, but he said there was a shrieking parrot behind him driving him almost to madness, and a stable underneath the studio where the horses are always ringing their chains, and where they kill pigs. In short, it was no use going to see it, and so the great thing on which I depended is gone. I can't tell you how I felt it. There is no peace until we reach those mansions which Jesus has gone before to prepare for His people, and seeing what a place this world is, and how wretched I have been for so many years, I seek to settle my hopes on His precious promise as sure and certain. Watson said I should find more quiet in London. I don't know what to do, and can only pray God to guide me into some place of peace. Yesterday I found a place which would suit me, but it is so far from every one, so difficult to get at, that even Mac thinks it would be madness to take it. The expenses of travelling day after day are terrible, and all my work stopped besides. There's an organ just begun to grind, driving me stupid before nine in the morning. God bless you, my dear, and pray with me that I may be guided as God sees best for me and you. More than love to you from—Your affectionate hubby,

FREDERIC.

Meanwhile, on learning that he had decided to leave Manchester, his friends and admirers were arranging an exhibition of Shields' work, with a farewell banquet and conversazione. The exhibition was open from February 14th to March 3rd, and among the members of the committee were such well-known names as William Agnew, Thomas Armstrong (afterwards Director of South Kensington Museum), W. Keeling, then President of the Manchester Academy, Alderman King, the Mayor of Manchester, R. M. Pankhurst, LL.D. (afterwards counsel for M'Lachlan in his lawsuit anent the Royal Group), John Ruskin, George Richmond, R.A., L. Alma Tadema, D. G.

Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Charles Rowley, Clarence Whaite, and nearly a hundred others.

Evidently the success of the exhibition and the kindness of his Manchester friends made Shields take a rather more cheerful view of things in his next letter, which drew the following kindly advice from Madox Brown:—

“I am truly rejoiced to hear from you this morning that your exhibition *conversazione* was a success, and your wife admired as she deserved. From what you say I shall certainly come to the banquet, though I felt great doubts as to the propriety of this course, and indeed if it might not be the occasion of more injury than good to you; but as far as trouble or time goes, it is a compliment I owe you and a pleasure I shall enjoy. I do hope that after this you will give up gloomy thoughts and turn to enjoy life a little like a reasonable biped. Four-footed creatures never go about tormenting themselves when there is no reason, as we do. You owe it to your young wife to be uproariously jolly and hilarious on all occasions now. With our kindest regards and compliments to the lady,—  
Yours as ever, FORD MADOX BROWN.”

“*P.S.*—Some time ago Rossetti gave me two guineas to dispose of in charity—the remains of some money that he had given in excess of what was wanted. I have repeatedly forgotten about it, but send it to you now, because it will be of more use to your Manchester poor than when you come to London.”

Madox Brown came to Manchester and responded to the toast of English Art at the farewell dinner, which took place at the Queen’s Hotel on March 6th, with the Mayor of Manchester in the chair. The toast of the evening was proposed by Mr. Councillor Fox Turner, and Shields made an eloquent reply, urging the worthy decoration of their public buildings upon the Manchester men.

Soon after this Shields and his wife went off to Blackpool, making that their headquarters for the rest of the year, until the worry of the photographic white elephant should be lifted from his weary shoulders. Writing some time afterwards about this work he said:—

“I was foolish enough to yield to the reiterated solicitations of my friend Lachlan M'Lachlan, the photographer, and design for him a group of the Royal Family, twenty-two in all, as a basis for a picture to be produced by photography. It was a concession both against my judgment and feeling to an old friend's desire. At intervals during these years I have often at great inconvenience been summoned to aid him in difficult passages of his undertaking, which is on a large scale; and whereas I thought to be settled in London at my own work, all my other engagements have had to give place to M'Lachlan's venture, and I have been held in slavery to a most loathsome task, endeavouring to bring into pictorial harmony for him a huge mass of heterogeneous photographic material, at a cost to myself of daily crucifixion. Every week it has seemed to be approaching completion, only to sink into littered and inextricable confusion again. The putting together of hundreds of fragments of photographs, the delay attendant on the chemical operations and measurements of proportion in the camera, ere all would cleave together into patchwork consistency by aid of pins and paste, has left me unable to do anything else so completely that I count this year of my life lost to myself, a veritable sacrifice to friendship. Having sworn to my own hurt, I may not change when the consequences prove heavier by far than I anticipated.”

In June Madox Brown wrote warmly inviting them both to Fitzroy Square, but the visit was again postponed. A little later Shields, in Manchester with M'Lachlan, writes to his wife at Blackpool. There is quite an *Alice in Wonderland* suggestion in the description!

MY DARLING WIFE,—We have got the Duchess to-day—right, I believe. I am more tired than I can tell you, though I am glad to say we have done the Princess of Wales's dress to-day, with Mrs. Bartlett's help. To-morrow we do the Marchioness of Lorne, and there is still a model to find for Princess Helena's body. On Friday, God willing, I may get back to my own dearest wife again. What a hideous place this Manchester seems to me now. Mac has been better than usual; not so mad—quite. . . . I send you a pattern for your upper skirt, and a sketch of how it will look which I made from the fashion book. I also send you a bit of silk braid or trimming which might suit your dress. Tell me if you think it will. Write to me at once, for I may not be able to get back on Friday, and I shall be disappointed if I don't hear from you. Address the letter care of L. M'Lachlan, 92 Bishop Street, Whalley Range. God bless you, my sweet one; what a shabby, short letter you sent this morning.—Your loving husband,  
 FREDERIC.

The summer passed, and still the Royal Group was uncompleted. Madox Brown wrote in September:—

“It is really time for me to write again and repeat, ‘What has become of you!’ I am aware, however, that the last letter was from you to me, so that you might retort, ‘What has become of’ me. I fancy, however, that you are tolerably certified as to the fact of my being *here*, or not very far away. I suppose you are still on the great work, let us call it the *tunneling* of Mont-Lachlan to avoid terms of offence. Swinburne writes me that he and Professor Jowett have seen more than one laudation of me in the Manchester papers recently—to what pitch of electric commotion have you frictioned them that these sparks are elicited?

“Here there is nothing new with the exception that Rossetti has received a commission for two thousand guineas from a photographer! So that *your* friend may turn out a blessing in the end instead of a cause for curses. But where are you? Still the same ‘Prospect Cottage’—



which same prospecting has not revealed the nugget success photographically? We have still got the place ready for you; but do not hurry or consider that one moment will be more appropriate than another for your visit, for you will put no one out."

The pertinacity of M'Lachlan and his dogged perseverance, in spite of all the complications attendant upon getting sittings from Royal personages and fitting them all into the composition as designed by Shields, were really becoming very wearying. The following letter vividly describes his condition:—

PROSPECT COTTAGE, BLACKPOOL,  
*November 1st, 1875.*

DEAR MISS THOMSON,—Dreary days here are less dreary than in town; indeed, I am quite enamoured of the moaning wind at nights, its soothing melancholy of tone, and shall ill brook the change to the streets, where it is prisoned in brick channels. We have longed for and in vain expected your promised advent. But I rejoice that you are working indeed. . . . What an amount of envy you have created in my bosom for your beautiful days at the Aquarium. Make much of this young joy in all beauty. Such days of leisure grow rarer, and the power to enjoy them with unrestricted mind weaker as age creeps on us.

All our house salute you. My wife specially, who would write to you in gratitude for the pleasure which your letter afforded her; but that its brilliant excellency of descriptive power and perfect caligraphy have abashed her soul into silence and her pen into rust. But she desires me to say that if you will get her the aforesaid number of yards of the "bobby fringe" she will be your obliged and faithful servant, if not correspondent, all the rest of her life. Life, said I? What is mine now! A slavery too cruel to bear, the iron (or collodion) really entering my soul. By this time this vile picture has got unendurable, and its end is hidden in fog yet. My heart is weary. —Ever yours faithfully,

FREDERIC J. SHIELDS.

Arthur Hughes, who from experience could sympathise perhaps even better than any of his artist friends, writes on November 9th:—

“I am very glad indeed to hear of you and our friend M'Lachlan; but indeed sorry that the great work keeps such a hold upon you, keeping you from other and pleasanter work I presume. Of course, it will have to be done whether pleasant or bitter, when two such men have taken it in hand; but I look to see you both white-haired old men when next we meet, and M'Lachlan will certainly when he dies (which I trust will be a long time hence, and may his shadow never grow less!) have to be wrapped up and buried in all the big black and white pictures he ever had a hand in! I hope Mrs. Shields is with you to cheer you up, though it's getting late for the sea—if Blackpool *is* by the sea. Not found a house yet?”

An amusing letter from Madox Brown recounts a commission from a Mr. Pooley to paint “Elijah seeing Elisha ploughing at the head of twelve yoke of oxen—twenty-four in all, besides the men and landscape.” More letters from various friends suggest possible houses and localities; but Shields and his wife remained at Blackpool. In November Madox Brown wrote:—

“I am very sorry to know by your letter that both you and your wife have been ill again; I daresay the worry of this *black art* affects you, but I trust you may soon be out of your trouble now. . . . As to Pooley, I wrote him a longish letter some weeks ago, to which he never replied, and I began to think him offended at my not jumping with delirious joy over the twelve yoke of oxen. However, I have again written him to-day. . . . It has struck me that I might perfectly place the twenty-four oxen all in perspective behind the two prophets and their *mantle*, which, after all, might screen a whole army of cattle. I shall be very glad to make Mr. Pooley's acquaintance.”

Whether through the friendly services of Shields, who knew Mr. Pooley, or not, Madox Brown was relieved of the troublesome necessity of painting twenty-four oxen all in a row, or even so many of them in perspective as could not be concealed by the mantle of the prophets; he wrote in December:—

“Some days since I received a very kind letter from Mr. Pooley in which he hands over (in a manner) the choice of a subject to me. . . . How get you on with your Mac? Is there any chance whatever of your getting done with him and coming here according to promise, and his making his thirty thousand pounds and then starting the English Photographic Picture Company with three shop windows full of them in the City, the West End, and over by Westminster in Palace Yard? It must be done; the foreigner becomes more rampant daily in the matter of photographed pictures. All this time I am forgetting your having been poorly again. I am a perfect brute.”

In 1876 the diary begins again, kept very irregularly at Blackpool.

The following entries give some idea of the fearful task the photographic puzzle must have been:—

“*Jan. 17th.*—Royal Group. Finished pinning up the second board, began pasting Princess Louise and background with vase. Reading *Henry V.*

“*Feb. 3rd.*—Royal Group, Fighting with Lorne and Hesse. Got Prince of Wales pinned up.

“*Feb. 8th.*—All day contriving Crown Prince Helena and Princess Royal with pins. Got down Lorne entire, cushion pasted up—eleven pieces in it.

“*Feb. 15th.*—Got Princess of Wales down, and three children in corner after a struggle. Measuring bust for new negatives.

“*March 6th.*—To Mac to square out Royal Group for

enlargement. Two hours. Tried to draw children in red chalk in afternoon, could do little, weak and nerveless.

“*Friday 17th.*—To London on the ‘New Company’s’ business, with Milner and Rowley, to arrange terms of partnership, &c. Stayed at Mrs. Scott’s.”

During a visit to Mrs. Scott, Shields was invited to Westminster by Charles Kingsley, and a letter to Mrs. Kingsley from Mrs. Scott gives a glimpse of a cheerful break in this rather dreary period.

Madox Brown wrote on March 6th:—

“I hear from Rowley that he and you are to be in London on or about the 17th, and so I suppose that you will at length be free to come up on your search for a house as before proposed, and that you will bring your wife with you here, as we have so long been expecting. We shall be ready for you both, and very happy to see you again and know you are free of the lunatic business. . . . Smetham, who called here some weeks ago, was telling me of a house for you, but I did not write about it, as I well knew it would only add to your feelings of hopelessness and helpless rage.

“I hear Rowley and you have had a recent confab about the new company and that you were going to write to *Ruskin*. I felt bound to express my views to our ‘pardner’ Rowley in clear and forcible terms as to that determination, and I have not yet heard as to results—but I believe I convincingly showed him that if the course decided on was looked upon as imperative I would not stand in the way of the prosperity of the business—but one thing that must be a *sine qua non* is secrecy. *Our* names will not appear—nor be hinted at even. Of all this we must talk at much length on meeting, in expectation of which pleasure I remain as ever.”

M'Lachlan's work really seems to have come to an end at this juncture, leaving Shields exhausted in body and mind. An undated letter from Rossetti refers to one of

these visits to town about the proposed photographic company.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I really feel answerable for your cold (with much sorrow therefore) as I induced you to overstay the train. But you should always put down the glass of a hansom on a cold night—then it is safe enough. I should be very glad to see you on Saturday. . . . As for that blessed fellow Ruskin, I'll really beg you, as a friend, to refrain from naming him. I daresay old Brown has desired the same kind forbearance from you. The influence he retains over you is a mystery to me. If I am supposed included in any "realistic" school, what can the fellow mean? If I have any share in originating anything, it is whatever there may be of *ideal* in English Art just now.—Yours affectionately, D. G. ROSSETTI.

In April Madox Brown wrote :—

"I am quite concerned to hear of your being ill again, and getting very anxious that you should come here at last. Everything awaits you, and Rowley saw a house that would exactly suit you at Bushey, where Herkomer lives. As to the Town Hall affair it must now take its chance, we can do no more that I can see, and we shall be singularly lucky if we get it, I think. I have nearly done Pooley's drawing, and Rowley wants one of the 'Jesus and Peter' of the same size. . . . I have just heard that a confounded Parson managed to get a certain article put in the *Saturday Review* (I call it the *Latter Day Spew*) accusing the Blake exhibition of being all indecency and rubbish—being a member of the Burlington Club, he was to move that the Exhibition be closed on such grounds. Did you ever hear the like?

"Sich is Philistia, and it seems we can't alter it."

In another interesting letter from Madox Brown about this picture he says :—

"Originally in the large oil picture of 'Jesus washing Peter's Feet' the figure of Jesus was girt about the waist

with a towel for all clothing, in illustration of John xiii. 4-5: 'He riseth from supper, and *laid aside his garments: and took a towel, and girded Himself.* After that He poureth WATER into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and *to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.'*

"Of course with all the flesh painting the picture was far fuller of artistic material, but for which I should never have chosen a subject without a woman in it. Of course the intention is that Jesus took on Himself the appearance of a slave as a lesson of the deepest humility—and with the gold nimbus round His head, the impression was very striking. People, however, could not see the poetry of my conception, and were shocked at it, and would not buy the work—and I, getting sick of it, painted clothes on the figures. I should now like to revert to the original drawing—but not certainly should Rowley object."

## CHAPTER XII

At Madox Brown's—Bride at boarding-school—To Italy with Charles Rowley—Letters from Italy.

AFTER weeks of ill-health and indecision, during which the diary is blank, Shields made up his mind to go off for a tour in Italy with his friend Charles Rowley, and to leave his young wife in charge of Miss Bell, the erstwhile principal of Winnington Hall. Some time before, as already mentioned, financial and other difficulties had arisen, and Miss Bell, assisted by her partner Miss Bradford, was conducting her school upon a less imposing basis at a house near Brighton, also called Winnington. To the care of Miss Bell and Miss Bradford, and to the very alien atmosphere of a select finishing-school for young ladies, the high-spirited young wife was committed. Miss Bradford was tall and thin, with an aquiline nose and beautiful brown hair coiled in severe Grecian plaits, her health was delicate, and she was a living embodiment of the essence of refinement and grace. Miss Bell was short, stout, grey-haired, wearing spectacles, an eminently correct and zealous instructress, a widely-read woman and a splendid teacher to the end of her long life, but favouring a system of espionage which one hopes would not be tolerated by English girls nowadays. A short stay at the Madox Browns' house was apparently made before leaving England.

37 FITZROY SQUARE, *May 3rd, 1876.*

DEAR SHIELDS,—Just a line to say that you will find your rooms ready for you and your wife, and I trust comfortable. . . .

I have heard nothing from Waterhouse again as yet, but I don't think we need trouble about the matter much should we *not* get it, for it will have its disadvantages—as well as its advantages. For instance—the moment we get this commission we shall, you will see, be getting all sorts of better things thrust upon us and no time to do them. On the other hand, should we not get this, we may also get nothing else—so we must “open our mouths and shut our eyes and see, &c. &c.”

The diary records:—

“*May 16th.*—Left London for Brighton—saw Cissy to school. Parted with darling at 8. To Newhaven. Boat cold, no sleep, very sick, morn at last.

“*May 17th.*—Dieppe. Church of S. Jacque—fine exterior, flamboyant, funeral service inside, solemn dirge of priests—run to train. . . .”

Frederic Shields wrote regularly to cheer the drooping spirits of his young wife, and of the letters written during his Italian tour, all carefully preserved by his directions in a leather case, the following are characteristic specimens:—

PARIS, *May 19th*, 1876.

MY DEAREST WIFE,—First my thanks are due to God on reaching Paris safely, my next duty and pleasure is to write to you. I am very happy so far, for everything is so new and wonderful that already I feel as if poor dear old M'Lachlan and all his vexations were out of my mind.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and when I am away from you I love you more and more, for I can think of your best things without being vexed at those rude little ways and sayings which so often cut me deeply when we are together. I feel as if I had been parted from you a year already, and I shall be as impatient as you can be to see your face, my sweet one, in peace.

Paris is a city of wonders. Deluged with blood only four years ago, it bears scarcely a mark of the awful struggle now, so hard have they worked to restore it. I hope you are as happy as you can be in my absence.



How strange it was that I should open, the first morning I was here, at the xviii. chap. of Revelation and cast my eye upon the 15th verse—For if any city in the world lives as Babylon, without God, it is surely this. When Rowley comes to-day, we shall leave for Italy at once, and I will write to you as soon as ever I can.

The Lord preserve us both from the worst evil, a sinful, disobedient will; all will then be well here and hereafter, come what else will. Ten thousand kisses, my own love.—Ever your true husband,  
FREDERIC J. SHIELDS.

My very kindest regards to Miss Bell and Miss Bradford, and the lady with whom you have a bedroom—I forget her name.

One can imagine with what very mingled feelings the young wife laboriously deciphered this next letter.

FLORENCE, *May 28th*, 1876.

MY DARLING WIFE,—It was a pleasure to find a letter waiting for me here. I was glad and thankful to hear that you are well and as happy as you can be in my absence. I am also pleased to hear of your daily Bible lessons and that you enjoy them, only don't let them satisfy you so that you neglect reading it in private—as God's message to your own spirit. Think what privileges you enjoy over the people here. At a street corner to-day I saw a shrine to the virgin—her painted figure in it—with roses offered to her by the passers-by, with the inscription upon it in Latin, "Refuge of Sinners, Mother of Consolation, pray for us." It makes me very sad amid all the glory of this land of Art—and the wealth of this city in that kind is indescribable—though in the great Gallery of the Uffizi Palace I saw more pictorial rubbish than I ever saw in one place together except at this year's Salon in Paris. The noble pictures are few out of the great number. I have made notes of many things, and I will tell you more when it pleases God to bring me back to you—and I will see if I can't bring some little thing you will like from Italy or Paris. Write again at once as before, and may He who is the only refuge of Sinners—

the God of all Consolation—cleanse and deliver you from all sin and comfort you with His Holy Spirit. Pray for me that I may be preserved to see your face again and see it brightened with intelligence and gentleness. I am in hope that this thorough change will really do me good. It would do me much more good were it not for these stupid and insufferable women who can find no other means of enjoyment in an evening (when one wants quiet after the day's work) except squalling enough to lift the roof off your head, and strumming at the vilest of Barbarian instruments—the piano. Nowhere can I get away from them, they are at it now, till I sweat with suffering as I write this.

Tell Miss Bell and Miss Bradford that I hope to have much to interest both them and their pupils when I return.

Behave as my wife, so that in all things I may hear such an account as shall make me proud of you, in attention, in seriousness, in courtesy and obliging behaviour. You must not think Miss Bell too severe, a mistress must often look hard, and hold things with a tight rein, when she does not feel anything but love to those under her care. You must remember, my dearest, that at school you must expect to be treated as a scholar, and I pray you, my love, as you love me, show a pattern of submission and obedience to the rest. Hush and put down every fretful thought, think for what purpose you are at school, consider how great will be your loss if you neglect this opportunity, and how much it will grieve your husband if you show any self-will or disobedience; as my wife, it will reflect shame on me if you do. Be humble, my dear, do just what you are told. "Except a *man* humble himself as a little child, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Consider Him for He is lowly and meek, and you will find rest in obeying for His sake, whose bride you shall be if you follow Him. And for my sake too, my love, I know you will give up your own will. There is no peace for any of us until we do.

*Not till we crucify ourselves can we have any real life.*

I wish you could learn to spell little simple words better than you do, for you spell worse than you write.

I could make a dreadful list of your wrongly spelt words if I chose, from your letters, only I have not the heart to pull them to pieces, seeing how full of love they are, my darling. So try better, dear, and let me know what you are learning every day. Above all, *obey* and submit yourself to the School rules as if you were my child whom I had committed to Miss Bell's care. There is nothing in life without discomfort. The noise and discomfort I have to bear on this journey is very hard, but to get what I wish to learn from the works of the great painters in Italy I must endure all this patiently, and to get any education you must endure the troubles and learn the subjection of a school-girl to those in authority over her. We have changed into a boarding-house kept by a widow lady who was once a member of Mr. M'Laren's chapel. For his sake she is kind to me. The food is better than I have had anywhere else, and Rowley and I are both better for it, though we only changed our lodgings last night. May God keep us both to meet again.—Ever your husband true and faithful,

FREDERIC.

While Frederic Shields wandered about Florence, distracted by the noise of the town and complaining much of American trippers, his friend Rowley went on to Venice alone, leaving Shields to follow later.

The diary records:—

“29th.—Anniversary of the battle of Curtatone, 1848. Saw the veteran volunteers of the Florentine contingent going to St. Croce, and after on returning to St. Maria Novella, got excited and cheered, ‘*Viva l'Italia.*’

“To Spanish Chapel, noisy with carpenters, could not think, came away.”

And presumably spent the evening writing to his wife at Brighton as follows:—

VIA MAGGIO 28, FLORENCE,  
29th May 1876.

MY DEAREST WIFE,—This is the anniversary of the battle of Curtatone in 1848, and a grand mass for those who fell there was held in Santa Croce—and after the

service was over, as we were in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella, the veterans who had volunteered from Florence into the Piedmontese army under Charles Albert, marched in with a military band before them—each veteran with his medals. It was a touching and stirring sight to see—these men who had formed the very van of Italian liberty—though the blood then shed had to wait eleven years more before it bore the fruit desired. I wish you would read this to Miss Bradford, for she will be interested. I spend every hour carefully, knowing that I shall most likely never have another opportunity of learning what I am learning here about painting—and now that Rowley has gone, I can give better attention to the work I have to do. And so, dearest, you feel about your one chance of learning, I am sure, and you are doing with all your mind and heart. As Simone Memmi paints Grammar in the Spanish Chapel here, pointing three pupils through a very narrow gate—for Grammar is the very beginning of all learning—to know the meaning and the method of words—so make it a particular care to learn all about it. . . . Tell Miss Bell and Miss Bradford that I often think of them, and make a note for their school uses which they shall have on my return. Tell Miss Bradford that Dante's house—or birthplace—has been so shamefully restored that it is not worth drawing with any care—and that I have got, for the school's use, a photograph of the great fresco in the Spanish Chapel, which forms the principal subject of Mr. Ruskin's *Mornings in Florence*. I am leaving Florence sooner than I would, because I can get no peace day or night, in any spot of the raving place, and so I must needs leave it with much unseen and unstudied which I wished to do. I would not spend another Sunday here for much, especially as next Sunday there is a Regatta here on the river, and the shrieking and roaring will be at its culminative height. I will write to you when I get to Siena, God willing. There is a canary shrieking now enough to cut your head in two.

—Ever your own hubby,  
FREDERIC.

It is to be feared that the young girl who read these closely written pages with some difficulty, wondered a little at their contents.

A canary bird and a regatta would have appealed to her—and to most girls of her age—more than Simone Memmi pointing his three pupils through the very narrow gate of grammar—and it must have been hard indeed for her to adapt her little replies with any sincerity, to these lengthy epistles (which hardly vary at all in style), even when aided by her enthusiastic teachers.

SIENA, *June 4th*, 1876.

MY DEAREST WIFE,—I reached Siena safely last night, thank God, at 11 o'clock, having left Florence at 7, which is just 4 hours for about 50 miles. Travelling is very slow and tedious on these railways, but much safer than in England. It was moonlight, and the country was very fine. Almost every town set on a hill and the hills clothed at their tops with stone pines and cypress,—at their bases with vines. This is Sunday, and I do not go to see buildings or pictures, but I can't stir out without seeing how picturesque a place Siena is—and I should have missed the greatest treat I have had yet, if I had failed to include it in my list. I went to the English Church, a little room in an hotel, this morning, but I was obliged to leave the service on account of the piano which was used in place of an organ. It was too painful to bear, and as there is no other English place of worship I found a Roman Catholic one, where all was empty, and there, in quiet, I knelt to God who knoweth all hearts. When I got out a military band was playing in the Loggia, and all Siena as gay as flags and colours out of every window, with coloured lamps ready to light up at night, could make it. For this is the 15th anniversary of the proclamation of Victor Emmanuel as King of Italy, and this morning as early as 7 o'clock I was wakened by the blast of bugles, and out of my window which overlooks the public gardens I saw fifteen hundred soldiers marched and manœuvred about, the officers all gay in blue and silver uniform which looked too pure ever to be stained with blood. And this is Whit Sunday, the day of the coming of the Spirit of Peace upon the Church. How long yet will it be before the nations yield to that blessed influence and learn to beat their sharp swords into

pruning-hooks, and to make war no more? How long, O Lord, how long!

Your letter has caused me much anxiety, and much gladness. Anxiety that you are so unhappy, gladness because of your sorrow for sin, a mourning which will turn to joy, Jesus says, and so thousands of sinners have found it come to pass. If I do not care for your happiness, who should?—and I well know that all that people enjoy in this world, whether innocent or sinful enjoyment, does not, and cannot, satisfy the soul. With all the pleasures of the world at our command there is always a miserable feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction which nothing can take away but the surety of being at peace with God. . . . And to whom next to God should you look and tell your heart's desire but to your husband? . . . My dearest wife, the sorest sin we can commit, is unbelief in God's words. The Scriptures tell us we make God a liar by such feelings. Take the words of Paul in the 4th of Hebrews, 14th, 15th, and 16th verses. . . .

It is to be hoped that this letter, which continues in this strain for eight more closely written pages, afforded some comfort to the young wife, who was evidently finding life at school very depressing to both health and spirits.

“*June 7th.*—Returned to Florence.

“*June 12th.*—Started for Bologna.

“*14th.*—Went to Hospital St. Anne. To Ariosto's house. At Duomo painting lion.

“*16th.*—Venice. To Academia. Walked about quay; could not find my way back; obliged to call a gondolier.”

VENICE, *June 18th, 1875.*

MY DEAREST WIFE,—I was disappointed to find only one little letter from you when I expected three or four. If I were to write so seldom to you I know well enough what you would think. I am very sorry that Miss Bell has been cross to you. I did not think she would so far forget herself, for she knows well how few have been your opportunities of knowing what is right to do. Well,

darling, I at least am pleased that you took it without resentment, though I am very vexed that you should have been put to grief, and I do trust that Miss Bell will be more careful in speaking to you for the future, as you say indeed she has been since. As to mending your faults, it is not easy for any of us to do, God knows; but fear not, you will mend, and I shall praise you proudly for mending, with God's help. You are never out of my mind about your comfort, and most about your soul's comfort. But remember, dearest, that God Himself is the Author of all comfort, and if you seek His forgiveness earnestly through Jesus, who has made peace for us all by the blood of His Cross, you will yet say, "O Lord, I will praise Thee though Thou wast angry with me."

Do you write your dictation better as regards spelling than when you write to me? I am sure you are trying, but your mind has been so neglected that for a long while you will have to be busy uprooting the weeds of ignorance; and it is hard work for any of us, Cissy darling, and you will find it so, but you must not be cast down.

Sunday night. I've just come in from a walk on the Piazza of S. Mark. All Venice seemed to be there, young and old, rich and poor, marching round the square in a double stream in opposite directions, a band of music in the centre. Yet no one jostled another; and there was not a rude word, or look, or movement anywhere to be seen among the young people. I thought of Stratford Road and what kind of behaviour is going on there at the same time, and I blush for my country. Fancy what an Italian must think when they see our English streets of promenade on a Sunday night.

Venice gives me more pleasure than any place I have ever seen: the great Church of S. Mark, the palaces, the pictures, the canals, and the people themselves—all so wonderful that I feel dazed and confused with the marvels about me. Oh, my dearest one, it will be such a joy to see my sister wife again and to hear how obedient and industrious you have been, to hear all you have learnt and to tell you all I have learnt, for I am cram full.—  
Ever your loving husband, FREDERIC.

From Venice Shields went to Padua. The diary continues:—

*June 26th.*—St. Anastasia first. Benetiers at pillars, by Veronese's father; quaint, lovely, simple Gothic, with round pillars. The roof bothered with arabesques. Frescoes all poor. Some good Gothic tombs. To cathedral; most beautiful Titian there; fine Carrotti in Baptistery, which is twelfth century.

PADUA, *Sunday, June 26th.*

MY DEAREST WIFE,—I arrived here yesterday and found my way at once to the Chapel of Giotto, which has been one of my daydreams to stand within ever since my boyhood. It is a wonderful place, and I spent all the day till four in the afternoon, when I went to the Eremite Church beside it to see the Andrea Mantegna frescoes. We have had very melting weather for several days; it makes me feel very tired, and Venice is so full of glory that whilst I was there I worked too hard, and I am very glad of the quiet day of the Lord here, though it is very hard to make it holy here, where everyone seems entirely to disregard it. I am sure we in England have no idea of the blessings that flow to us through the observance of the Lord's Day. We ought to hold it fast as one of God's best gifts to us as a nation. There is no English service here, and so I am obliged to worship alone amidst so much distracting noise of busy workers about that I can hardly write to you even. To-morrow I start, God willing, for Verona, where I hope to find a letter waiting for me or I shall not get it, for I shall only stay there a day before going on to Milan, which will bring me a long stretch nearer home: for though we have none now till God directs us to a settled place, yet where you are is home to me so long as you love me, especially now, since I know of your mourning for sin—for where this is there is also fear and hatred of sin, and these things must bring increasing confidence between us. Look at the love of David and Jonathan; because it was founded in love to God, nothing could move it or change it.

I am grieved to hear that you have been so poorly. I



am writing to Miss Bell now about you, though I am afraid she may not understand me rightly. It is very hard to write about your going out more, although you must get into the garden for your health's sake. I thought that all the girls got out into the garden two or three times a day, and you with them; and if this is not so, then I hope what I have written to Miss Bell will remedy it. We want to see you get on, but not to make you ill, my sweet one. I have made no complaints, but have hinted to Miss Bell that you require more exercise, and I have no doubt she will see to it. It must be our wisdom not to count the days which lie between us and our meeting; to waste them in idle longing, but so to number them that each minute may be employed in duty, looking to our Great Master, Whose eye is upon us taking account of our deeds.

“Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go,  
My daily labour to pursue;  
Thee, only Thee, resolved to know  
In all I think or say or do.”

And if in such spirit you go on with your lessons, no doubt the grace of God will sanctify the efforts you make to advance.

God bless you, darling, once again. Don't you long to see my treasure-box, my bunch of blue ribbons to tie up your bonny gold hair, my Chrysomea? All my love with this.—Your true husband,  
FREDERIC.

From Padua Shields went to Verona; then to Como and Cadenabbia, Lugano, Hospenthal.

HOSPENTHAL, SWITZERLAND,  
July 5th, 1876.

MY DEAREST LOVE,—I am very tired to-day, as you may fancy when I tell you that I left Lake Como on Monday morning at ten o'clock by bus for Porlezza, which is on Lake Lugano; then I had to take a small boat to Lugano, at the other end of the lake—such a beautiful sail; then the diligence to Bellinzona, which we did not reach till 10 at night. Then next day I started from

Bellinzona for Biasca at 11 o'clock A.M. by the railway, and then took the government diligence to this place, Hospenthal, over the Alps, and did not get here till 10 last night, cold and tired, for we are in the region of perpetual snow here. All these two days I had no meals after breakfast, only such snacks of food as I could swallow in a hurry while the coach stops to change horses. The Alps—how shall I try to make you fancy what they are like?—you might put Ingleboro on the top of them and it would only look like a Scotch cap on their heads. You should have seen the flocks of goats this morning going to pasture, and the pretty little Swiss cows, their backs no higher than my elbow, each with a bell round her neck; and then four little pigs behind, one dark reddish brown, one a lighter brown, one the colour of a Scotch grey terrier, and one such a golden colour that his bristles would put even the light of your hair out, with little black spots on him behind, and pink ears and legs. I laughed at him, he was so odd, so lean, and so pretty coloured. And the flowers—such fields full in the valley, though the great snow-peaks frown down on them; and my brave lovely dandelions growing all along the roadsides. I suppose I shall get a letter from you at Lucerne, which won't be for some days yet, and when you get this you must write to Paris. It is so good to hear that Miss Colebrook is kind to you, and that you are really making an effort with your lessons. How is it that everything dies? It was so at Winnington before. Who neglects them or teases the pets? Someone is at fault. I suppose where there are so many no one attends to the duty of feeding them and cleaning them regularly. I hope you get out daily into the garden for exercise and play. One thing I long most of all for, to find your mind and heart still set upon Christ, longing for the fulness of His salvation from sin. There's a German band positively just struck up—I must run away; who would have thought it here? Think how those fellows have climbed to make such a noise—nearly 5000 feet above the level of the sea. I am very happy after your letter to think that you can learn from the example of any one, to avoid and to shrink from habits and manners which are painful to your husband—

you see them now a little as I see them.—Good night, my  
love, ever your own husband,  
FREDERIC.

“*July 10th.*—Left Lucerne for Basle, an interesting country, mostly soft, with a few bold cliffs and sweet quiet villages. Basle Cathedral; sketched door. Met Fildes at dinner at the hotel.”

From here in easy stages he returned to England, and on July 17th he arrived at Brighton; but for that day and for many months the diary is blank.

## CHAPTER XIII

House-hunting—The proposed decorations for Manchester Town Hall—English or foreign artists?—Shields' letter to the Council—The Photographic Company—Rossetti reproductions—Lodge Place, St. John's Wood—Commission for windows for Coodham Chapel.

SOON after his return from Italy, Shields went to London to begin searching for a house, staying with the Madox Browns, leaving his wife still at school at Brighton, where he spent week ends at intervals.

37 FITZROY SQUARE,  
*July 22nd, 1876.*

DEAR SHIELDS,—Why are you so silent? Solacing yourself with your wife at Brighton when your cry should be, "To your tents, O Israel!" I have not been able to write to you till this minute, for you left me no address. I am to go down to meet the Committee of Decoration at Manchester this week, and sadly would require to speak with you before going. Things may get into a terrible mess, I see, owing to Waterhouse and general stupidity, but with Rowley and much energy may still be brought right. . . . I don't yet know what day the meeting is to take place. You promised to finish your short truncated visit here, you and your wife, on your return from Italy. Are we to expect you now? I suppose you must look out for a house. I have just written off a scheme of decoration for the five rooms (substantially what we decided on before you left) to Rowley, to be shown to Councillor Thomson, stating what portion you devised of it: 1. Committee Room—Religious; 2. Politics; 3. Entrance Hall—Manufacture and Commerce; 4. Legendary; 5. The Banqueting Hall, to be devoted to great men of different municipalities (your idea, and, as I told them, most important). Watson, Gregory, and Marks have, you know,

declined. I, you, and Morgan are now, it seems, to be spoken with, and (Oh that it should be so!) *Guffens & Swertz of Belgium*.—With our united kind regards to you both, yours as ever,  
 FORD MADOX BROWN.

The following is from a rough copy of a letter which was apparently written to some member of the Manchester Town Council. The address is that of a studio in which Shields worked at this time. The date is some months later than the last letter of Madox Brown's, but it may fitly be admitted here as showing the spirited part played by Shields in these long-protracted negotiations, and as reminding Manchester of her indebtedness to his disinterested efforts.

20 HEREFORD SQUARE, BROMPTON,  
 10th October 1876.

DEAR SIR,—There are times and situations when a man feels he must act and speak from his own individual convictions, without consulting even those with whom he is intimately connected in some important matter which hangs on the balance.

So I feel now, and I wish it to be clearly understood that this communication is entirely independent of, unprompted by, and unknown to Mr. Madox Brown.

To the citizens of Manchester I owe some loyal gratitude, and I now seek by plain speaking their profit, not my own—as I believe your Decorative Committee also do, but very blindly—for I am amazed to hear that the idea of committing the decoration of your Town Hall to foreign artists is still entertained, and that a section of your Committee have even gone the length of visiting Austria, to determine for themselves the merit of these painters. But I venture to say that their merit is in this case entirely outside the question at issue.

Had the Germans and French called in foreign artists to adorn their town halls and public buildings, where would have been the present capacity of the painters of these two nations for public works?

By inviting or receiving foreign painters you taunt

English artists with incapacity, whilst you rob us of a rare opportunity of disproving your objections. Have English painters failed when tried? Witness the noble works of Barry, in the Society of Arts at London—on which he starved as the result of his enthusiastic devotion. Witness the Houses of Parliament, where the Government, at least, acted with a right spirit of national patriotism in inviting British painters to prove their fitness for great decorative pictures. To that invitation there came a triumphant response in the three great exhibitions of Westminster Hall, revealing a wholly unexpected amount of genius for poetic and historic design on a grand scale among English painters. And what Englishman with soul and eyes can look on the works of one of the chosen artists, Maclise—in the presentation of his country's great victories, Trafalgar and Waterloo—without feeling a just pride in his country's art? The pictures themselves are victories, won by the national enthusiasm of a painter who hitherto had been bound down to small easel pictures, and was untried in large works. Where on the Continent, in modern public works, will you find their equals for greatness and naturalness of conception combined? Yet who expected such a result from Maclise till the stimulus of a national subject, and the gaze of a nation's eyes, were applied to him?

Had the Royal Commission invited Kaulbach and Cornelius as foreign painters practised in large decorative works, we should have lost these two great pictures, and it would have been supposed Maclise was incapable. Similarly with Cope, who rose far above what he was generally supposed capable of, and has produced his very finest works on the corridor walls, works which will make his name honourable as long as they exist.

To have placed these decorations in the hands of foreign artists, no matter how great or skilled, would, I scruple not to say it, have been foul shame to England for ever. Compare this right procedure with that resolved on in the decoration of Glasgow Cathedral, where the painted glass was given into the hands of German designers of great skill and experience, but utterly unable to comprehend the necessity of adapting their designs to

the style and spirit of the grand Gothic structure which they now painfully deface.

But I fear I protest in vain—nor do I speak in my own interest. Such tasks ever involve heavy and unforeseen labour, with envyings and vexations, and prove unremunerative, if not absolutely beggarly, when executed with a conscience. My one object is, if it be possible, to dissuade your Committee from exposing themselves to merited obloquy by placing any part of this work in the hands of foreigners, and to entreat them that this first opportunity for the decoration of a great civic building in England may be given to English painters whose hearts and art are in sympathy with their own brethren.

You did not cross the Channel for a foreign architect. You will answer, "No! because we were able to obtain the services of a man of proved capacity." But his capacity had been proved beforehand, because he had been trusted with a great building when comparatively unknown, and as a consequence he astonished England with the Assize Courts.

But we English painters—your own children—are dogs, neither to be tried nor trusted, and the very crumbs due to us are given to your foreign adopted children. For very shame's sake, if none of your own blood can be found whose character and ability entitle them to your confidence, let the walls remain blank till such men arise or are discovered, nor place in the hands of strangers another unjust advantage for boasting over your country's poverty of art.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient Servant,

FRED. J. SHIELDS.

*P.S.*—To me all is a simple question of British art *versus* foreign, not of any English artist or artists against Messrs. Guffens & Swertz.

Shields and his wife still exchanged letters almost daily. The girl, thrust into an atmosphere of "prunes" and "prisms," with no experience but that learned in the streets of Manchester, save her strange first year of married life under the instruction of her devout husband, evidently

found it very hard to adapt herself to her new environment and the restrictions of a school. Her rare beauty no doubt added to her difficulties, and made her mistakes and her high spirits doubly conspicuous.

37 FITZROY SQUARE,  
*Monday Evening.*

MY DEAREST WIFE,—I was glad to hear so good an account of your health and conduct from Miss Bell, who thinks you much improved in many ways. You say I am always finding fault with you, and you think Miss Bell can see no good in you, so I hope it will satisfy you to hear this. But I have been, on the other hand, very grieved all day—so as to upset me very much—that when you had lost the key of your machine-box you should force it open, breaking the lock, and should then, without either explanation of it or any expression of sorrow for your folly, coolly tell me that it is broken in your letter of to-day. I quite expect they will make me pay for the box; they can do, for they could not sell it so damaged. If you had expressed any regret for such thoughtless conduct, I should have said nothing about it; but as it is I cannot help feeling very much pained.—With my dear love to you, I am ever, your loving husband,

FREDERIC.

The Photographic Company absorbed some of his attention, and the following letter from Rossetti indicates that Shields was superintending the reproduction of one of his pictures:—

FRIDAY NIGHT.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—It really and truly seems too bad that a living and breathing woman should suffer for the sake of a mere picture of one! Do you not perceive that an indignation meeting of Mrs. Shields with herself is about to pass an awful female vote against me, the English Autotype Company, and your cherished self, so far and so degrading?

To Brighton, my boy, is my advice. Let the Company take care of itself till you come back, and then they can



get the drawing and set about it. I find it is not likely to be quite ready before Monday. Let this determine you to go where you are most wanted. Don't suppose for a moment that I am ungrateful for such kind and truly brotherly care for my interests in this matter; but the very drawing itself seems to look from its window and reproach delay.—With love to Brown, yours affect.,

D. GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

The admiration felt by Miss Bell and her partner for the genius of Frederic Shields, doubtless made any lack of perfection on the part of his wife particularly shocking to them. From reference to her poor little ill-spelt letters we gather how she longed to get out more, to dance, to play, even upon the piano, the very thought of which would have distracted her husband.

LONDON, *Sept. 29th, '76.*

MY DEAREST WIFE,—And do you think I would forbid your learning to dance if I thought it well for you—but I did speak about it to you enough to show that whatever I said before, I felt when I was last at school that I would rather you did not learn to dance. It really grieves me that you should take it hardly—especially as I have just got a letter from Miss Bell, giving you such a good character for keeping rules, and industry, that it has made me quite as happy as I can be under present circumstances. And I was delighted that you are learning to sing, which will give you and me much pleasure I hope. This constant rushing about in trains, and the disappointment of every place I have seen as yet, leaves me little time and strength for writing. It is hard for me not to see you for another week, but this is a time of hard trial for me, and often I feel I could lie down and cry for weariness—only I try to say Thy will be done. I am glad you were at chapel on Sunday, and that the teaching was good to your heart. I found a Methodist Chapel near Fitzroy Square, and heard a most moving sermon on the first chapter of Colossians and the 27th verse: “If you continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from

the hope of the Gospel." The good preacher recalled to mind the numbers of those whom he had known in the congregation, who had once seemed to be the disciples of Jesus, but had been moved away from the hope of the Gospel, the hope of being saved from sinning, as he thought of these the preacher *wept in the pulpit* for sorrow and pity. Your last letters are an improvement in writing, and Miss Bradford gives me the best account of you. I am so glad you really have your sins always before your face. There is but one way to avoid sin, and that is to put the Lord always before your face.—Ever with deep heart love, your husband,  
FREDERIC.

Rossetti's last letter was followed by a week end at Brighton. On the following Monday he writes again. The drawing referred to is the chalk study for "La donna della Finestra," the picture afterwards purchased by Mr. F. S. Ellis. "The English Picture Publishing Company" consisted of Mr. Charles Rowley, Mr. George Milner, and Frederic Shields, but there was no legal partnership. Mr. Rowley says: "It was all done under Madox Brown's influence, we lost half our cash, but we spread some fine things, the like of which was not on the market." The photographs alluded to in these letters were the first reproductions of his pictures which Rossetti had allowed to be published.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I believe I may consider the drawing completed now, but it had better have a day's grace. Could you spend Wednesday evening with me, coming at about 8 or half-past, and dining beforehand, as the culinary complication of which you became aware last time you were here resulted next day in my being left cookless, and the want has not yet been supplied. A man is my sole domestic in the house at present, and though he cooks for me, I cannot ask my friends to a share—not that his cooking is amiss, but that he has so much to do besides. Would Brown come also? Please ask him, with my love.—Yours affec.,  
D. G. ROSSETTI.

Much pains were taken over this and other photographs, both by Shields and Rossetti. Photographic reproduction was then far from the state of perfected development in which we know it now, but all his weary experience with M'Lachlan had taught Shields how to overcome many of the difficulties of the process, and much as he hated the very name of photography to the end of his days, he was always ready to serve his friend in this, as in any other way that his enthusiastic devotion suggested.

Many other letters passed on the same subject; in one Rossetti says: "I cannot but remember your kind offer to help me in the retouching. Your experience of such things must be much more than my own, and if we were each to retouch one unglazed proof and then compare results, perhaps that might be the surest plan. I know you are too good a fellow to mind wasted labour if mine happened to secure our joint votes. If they have a fancy to give the head a title of any kind I must dictate such title. But best just call it a Study."

Apparently this being the first published photograph of a work of Rossetti's, it was thought desirable to give it a name, and the artist suggested "Twilight." However, in a day or two he wrote: "I have thought of another name for that profile head, 'Perlascura' (*i.e.* dark pearl, as an Italian female name). What think you? The name is exact for complexion."

Again with one of his flashes of keen business instinct which he occasionally displayed to a surprising extent, Rossetti wrote: "I have meant for some time to suggest (but always forgot) that the dates should be scratched off the negatives. There is no objection to their being supposed more recent works of mine, but rather the contrary, and I should prefer it. The initials could stand if wished." So the drawing of "Perlascura" bears the date 1871, but in

the Autotype issued in 1877 this is erased. Some months later the poetic title was the subject of an indignant letter from Rossetti :—

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I heard to-day that the profile autotype is being sold with the title of the *Black Pearl*. *Perlascura* was the name I gave it, and if any other is given it must really be at once withdrawn from circulation. I am extremely vexed about the matter if true. The right translation would be the *Dark Pearl*, but no translation is needed. It seems one cannot sanction anything of this kind without serious annoyances. A shop in Bond Street was mentioned as the one where it was seen. I must repeat that if the title reported was really put on the profile head, it must be withdrawn *at once*.

All this time Shields was still searching for a house where could be heard neither organs, pianos, railways, traffic, parrots, German bands, babies, dogs, cats, nor anything else likely to disturb his terribly sensitive nerves. In October he discovered a small house in Lodge Place, St. John's Wood, now demolished to give place to the railway with its huge coaling station. The house stood in a small garden surrounded by high walls, in a very quiet little road. In October he spent a day in the empty house, to test its quietness. The diary records :—

“At 7 Lodge Place all day. Reading Bible for my glass window designs. Very cold. Caught cold.”

However he decided to take the house, and put the business part of the transaction into the hands of Mr. Theodore Watts, Rossetti's friend, who kindly managed the necessary formalities. It was found that in order to make it worth while to build a studio, he must purchase the lease, and this necessitated a mortgage and absorbed all his spare capital. Apparently no sooner was the

business settled than Shields saw a house he liked better. According to the diary:—

“Oct. 26th.—To West Drayton to look at house. Very good and likely. Walked to Stanwell, three miles off, with Charles Pollard to see Mr. Nelson the landlord. Walk by river back in dark. To London by eight. Lost both tickets of G.W.R. back. Bed at 1.

“Oct. 27th.—To see Watts—he not in. To Museum till two. Walked back and about London. Sketched costume. Wrote to Rowley. Read *Ariadne Florentina*, and Bible.

“Oct. 28th.—To Watts about house. He tells me I am tied by Equity to take the house. Very low spirited.” There are no more entries in the diary that year.

He wrote to his wife at Brighton:—

MY DEAREST WIFE,—Only the money arrangements about the house remain to be concluded—and I hope these will be all right in the end. In some respects, and on your account chiefly, I would have avoided the house if I could, but I see only ruin staring me in the face unless I take some house, and I can't find another, so we must just make the best of it and thank God for all He gives us, which is very much, and trust Him for the future. I am sure everybody at Brighton will disbelieve this poor nobody when he says he cannot come. I have got home so tired that I can scarce write this, and cannot enter into reasons except that I shall and must be at Rossetti's on business to-night, and absolutely must be at the house early on Monday morning. What a plague the dishonesty and delay of workmen is—and what I have to suffer from it you will never know in your comfortable nest, where no real trouble comes near you, nor anxiety how to provide for yourself or others. It is well I made no promises when I would come back, the way the men have absented themselves from the house these three days past will compel me to stay now to look after the alterations, they are not to be trusted and want watching like thieves. God bless you, my darling. I

wish I could be on my way to you to-night. Tell Miss Bell and Miss Bradford what I say.—Ever your own hubby,  
FREDERIC.

The building or enlarging of the studio was an anxious matter, and as, through the introduction of his friend Mr. Alfred Waterhouse, he had now an important commission to design stained glass windows for Sir William Houldsworth's chapel at Coodham, Kilmarnock, it was a matter of vital importance that the artist should be able to settle to work at once. His wife was also evidently very anxious to leave the school at which she had remained so much longer than she had anticipated when her husband left her there while he spent two months in Italy. Her impatience was as great as his to have some settled home for the first time since their marriage.

*Dec. 16th, 1876.*

MY DEAR WIFE,—I am sorry that you have tooth-ache again, but the weather is so damp that one cannot escape something. I have a slight cold with sitting in cold rooms and looking after drains day after day. As for my coming to see you, I cannot do so for the present, though I am at least as anxious as you can be to see you, and I have much more reason to wish myself away from this mess and worry than you know. It will cost far, far more than I dreamt of, to make the place anything like fit to live in; every day I find out some new trouble about floors, drainage, roofage, or something—no end of vital matters to look after with my own eyes, of which I knew nothing before, and to pay heavily for my experience. Yesterday I bought two stout blankets to send to your mother, she writes to me that John is out of work, and it makes it very hard for her—and I cannot send her more than 10s. a week. Jessie's school will soon be due, £10 at least, and I sent Miss Bell £5 last week, and paid the builder £15 on account, and all this is only the beginning. I hope you had a profitable sermon last Sunday

from Mr. Punshan—I wish I had been with you. We had a very earnest sermon on John xi. 5—about the love of Jesus for each member of a Christian family. My best regards to your teachers.—Ever yours in love,

FREDERIC.

It may perhaps be mentioned that Shields contributed to the support of his wife's mother to the end of her days. The little sister of his wife, who is mentioned in this letter as Jessie, was adopted as their child very soon after their marriage and sent to school for some years, afterwards living with them until her marriage. She grew up to be a very lovely girl, and married in 1893 the Rev. B. Scott. Her early death, after a few years of the happiest married life, was a terrible grief to Shields. A very beautiful portrait of her was shown at the Memorial Exhibition of his works.

Early in 1877 Shields and his wife settled in their new home. His first work here was the series of stained glass windows for Sir William Houldsworth, the subject being “The Triumph of Faith.” The work occupied nearly the whole of the years from 1876 to 1880, and at once established the reputation of Shields as a decorative artist of the highest rank. From that time he had no lack of commissions.

In this and succeeding years frequent reference will be found to the commission given to Shields and Madox Brown, after much delay and discussion, to decorate the walls of the Town Hall, Manchester. Mr. Hueffer described the part played by Shields in this matter, in his *Life of Madox Brown*, as “the unique self-sacrifice of Mr. Shields.” The sacrifice was indeed a great one, for the work had appealed far more to the younger man than to Madox Brown, who wrote on Christmas Day 1876:—

“I have this morning had a communication from Rowley (only too good to be quite credible) that the decision has been finally arrived at by the sub-committee that five rooms are to be painted by *you, me, Watts, Poynter, and Leighton*. I believe you will agree with me that this—if carried out—will be quite as honourable, and indeed as satisfactory as our larger scheme which would have entailed heavy responsibility in many ways. If this be true, you will attain your ambition of being one of the historic painters of the country, and in company with some of unquestionably the first of them of the day. I do not myself say that this is a very obvious advantage to you—to my mind, you know, any kind of art one can do well and easily is honourable, and I would just as soon have painted ‘Genre’ works had I ever received any encouragement to do so—but you seem bent on it, and you have your wish, and with your studio in London and these commissions you will have every facility for gratifying it.”

Long negotiations, innumerable council meetings, and various log-rollings on all sides, seem to have left the matter more or less at a standstill after this, for many months. The arrangements at the new house dragged on week by week. Madox Brown wrote on Feb. 13th:—

“I hope you are not ill again (that we hear nothing further from you)—but well at work doing good things. Your design of Love and Time excites quite a thrill of approval with all who see it. Lucy and others think you ought to paint it—and indeed if you were to increase the landscape in size at one side you would have at once a paintable design. . . . What are you about, and how are you and your wife? Here we are all tolerably d——d miserable as the British tar put it, leaving out the thanks at the end. But Rowley, who is off again to-day, is a dear little man and wishes me to paint him a Milton with a Cromwell doing something together. Of course I shall do it for him straight off, but it is rather a rude shaking off of all our favourite subjects just at present. But it does





LOVE AND TIME

Designed for a Golden Wedding

(1877)

*By permission of Charles Rowley, Esq.*



not matter, once on the subject I shall inspire myself with the feeling of it, and I designed a subject in my head ten minutes after. . . . There is really no news as to the other matter, and we had better try to forget all about it till there is—for otherwise we shall grow to take no interest in ordinary work and forget our friends that we still have, in the vain pursuit of this *ignis fatuis*—like a law-suit or a patent invention that will not act.”

Shields had now constant intercourse with Rossetti. Strange sympathy between two such different natures. Rossetti, scornful of didactic art, and, as Mr. Watts-Dunton expresses it, “thoroughly indisposed towards attempts to ameliorate anybody’s condition by means of pictures”—Shields, on the other hand, passionately devoting his art to the interpretation of the Bible, having even, as we know, hesitated at one stage of his career as to whether he ought not to devote himself to preaching by word of mouth, rather than by his pictorial sermons. Rossetti, full-blooded, impetuous, Agnostic,—outraging, as one would imagine, every sentiment of the other, whose ascetic nervous frame vibrated between admiration for Rossetti’s genius, joy in his friendship, and real terror as to the ultimate fate of his immortal soul. Shields often painted for days in Rossetti’s studio, taking his own work and models there, and dozens of affectionate little notes carefully preserved, tell how Rossetti helped him, and sought his help in various details connected with their work, especially in those later years when increasing ill-health made Rossetti more dependent on the devotion of his friends. As for example: “Dear Shields,—The lay figure stands a monument of your friendly aid,” or “I must have a rose tree with leaves—if without trouble to yourself I should be glad of a tree on Tuesday,” and again: “Do you know any means of sending me good apple blossom, I would pay anyone well to bring me as much as possible

for some days to come, you would really befriend me if you could get me a good branch to-morrow—what I want is a full coloured red and white blossom, of the tufted rich kind.”

The next note says: “Thanks for the apple stem study, I have been much bothered with the blossom, some of which I have repainted since you saw it. As to stem, I have a bad one in my garden, and with the help of your study I might manage. The bark of the bough brought by your messenger is as black as London bark, though I believe he brought it from Edgware, so how far to seek for grey—or green bark, Heaven knows!”—later, “I hope to see you to paint to-morrow, as for me I am stuck fast.”

The diary for 1877 is very irregularly kept, and there are no entries until June.

“*Tues., June 12th.*—Rose 6.30. Walk. Breakfast. Prayer. Read Matt. 14. Mrs. Brown called, wished me to go to Brown about Manchester Town Hall business. To Heaton Butler’s with glass design at 3.30. To Covent Garden and Sir John Soane’s Museum (Hogarth’s). To Brown’s at 6.30. Home at 9.

“*June 15th.*—Worked at ‘A Street Song’ red chalk. To Bank and Exhibition of Japan Sketches. To Brown’s, arranged list of subjects for Manchester Town Hall. Home 10.30.

“*June 19th.*—Began ‘You shan’t go’ red chalk. Worked at East Window all afternoon, thinking them out. To Rossetti’s after tea, found him very ill in bed.

“*June 27th.*—Working at central windows for Coodham. To S. Kensington in afternoon with Cissy, in Library, looking over Mediæval works. To Rossetti’s at 7, found him very ill.

“*July 5th.*—Working at three central windows. To see Brown in afternoon. To Mrs. Rossetti’s in evening, with Miss Bradford.

"August 1st.—Working at colour drawing of Melchisedec, and Crucifixion. Cayley called. To glass works till 6.30, to Rossetti's till 12.30. Home in cab."

Towards the end of August Rossetti became worse, and went to Herne Bay with Madox Brown, who wrote:—

MR. SANDS, HUNTERS' FORESTALL,  
NR. HERNE BAY, August 23rd, 1877.

DEAR SHIELDS.—I am here for a day or two yet, having promised to bring D. G. R. away from his home for a week, till his Mother comes with his sister Christina. When I am gone perhaps Watts may come for a few days, and Rossetti wishes me to write and ask whether you would be so kind as to come and cheer him also. I must tell you that while his Mother and sister will be with him there will be no room for a male visitor, only a bed in Rossetti's room, into which the nurse may have to make an inroad at times in the night. I should fancy, however, that by the time you come, he will be so far recovered as no longer to require such cockering up. At present even, after six days only, he walks three miles, sleeps on the whole well, and is indeed an altered man. While the nurse and I remain this improvement will go on—after—what will happen I can't say! The deluge, possibly, after me, as Louis XV. used to say. I get horribly bored and fidgetting down here reflecting upon all my own affairs going to wreck, but it can't be helped. My wife and Lucy Rossetti are well and still at Gorleston—and I trust you and Mrs. Shields are prospering.—Till meeting again, and ever, yours affectionately,  
FORD MADOX BROWN.

Shields went to Herne Bay the following week, and wrote:—

HERNE BAY, Aug. 28th, '77.

MY DEAREST WIFE,—Rossetti had a very restless night, and as my bed is in his room, my rest was much broken up. And yet I am better for the change of air. He seems very much better, and would he but give up the demon Hydrate, he would get better, but never without this abstinence.

How are you, my darling? This absence will not be for long, I hope, for Watts will likely take my place at the end of the week, and whether he does or not, you know my position will not allow me to stay from work long.

Mrs. Rossetti and Christina enquire very affectionately after you.

This is a pretty cottage—with a pleasant garden in front, and kitchen garden behind, with beautiful espalier apple trees, and great walnut trees, covered with nuts—looking so bonny. There is no comfort or quiet to write here, so that I must stop, with my dear love.—Your own true husband,

FREDERIC.

Early in September Shields returned to Lodge Place and continued working at the windows, and in October he went to Kilmarnock, staying at Coodham with Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Houldsworth.

COODHAM, KILMARNOCK, N.B.,  
Oct. 23rd, 1877.

MY OWN DEAREST WIFE,—I seem to have been away from you a month, and am longing to see your dear sweet face again—but what a short letter you sent me this morning. I have been very much engaged since I came here with the work—for I find it likely that I shall have to paint a picture on the wall opposite the windows, and we must arrange about this so that I can design it when I return to London. I shall have to come here again after that to paint it on the wall. I shall stay here a day or two still, but until I send you a new address, direct your letters here. Part of your letter was blotted, and I could not read it. Mind you address your envelopes properly. N.B. stands for Scotland, which is called North Britain.

There is a lovely lake before this house, and a brood of young swans—they are not white, but spotted with dark fawn colour, and nearly as big as their parents, though this Spring's birth. Their beaks are black and won't be orange coloured till next Spring. The old ones white as driven snow—their wings erect at my approach, and all their neck feathers also. They carry their young under

their wings when they are little, and their tiny brown heads peep out of the mother's white feathers. You should have seen how they pursued a black swan on the lake, and cruelly beat it, and bit it till it shrieked again—I didn't like them after that.

Look, please do, at the 2nd Epistle of Timothy and the 3rd chapter—15 verse.

Without the Scripture no man knows anything of God and God's Salvation. The Scripture is able to make you wise—truly wise—in this life, and for the life to *come*—will you be content to be among the foolish virgins here, and hereafter too, and cry "Too late" when the door is shut? Pray to God to make you wise by His Blessed Word, wise to know your own self, your weakness, foolishness, and sinfulness, and wise to know the only Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from your sinfulness, and strengthen you to all goodness and virtue.

God bless you, my sweet. I must close, the post goes out so early and I have been at work all morning. You will be so glad that Mr. Houldsworth likes the designs. Is not that a comfort, after all one's hard work?—Many hundred kisses and loves from ever your own  
FREDERIC.

On his way back to London he stayed at Manchester for some days.

MANCHESTER, 31st October 1877.

MY DEAREST WIFE,—You will be glad to hear that I got the drawings unpacked at Grundy's to-day, and that they have been a great success. The few people who have seen them to-day are delighted with them, and have sat quiet and hushed before some of them. It is of God's goodness and I hope they may do good. I see I shall do wisely to stay over Sunday in order to see friends who all receive me with open arms—as if I were an angel. This long absence from you seems like a year to me, my sweet darling. I have had my hands full of business, but I shall not neglect poor Mother or Jessie. If I can sell these designs I shall be able to give Mother a good lift out of the misery she has been in so long. She is quite safe and well, and nothing you could do, my darling, could help her now, for the child is a fortnight or more old. I

shall see her to-morrow and bring all the news I can when I return. Shouldn't I like to have some of your baking for my tea when I get home, I shan't have had my dinner, and shall be hungry and tired.

Mrs. M'Laren and Miss Rowbotham send their love to you very affectionately. Mind that Lilly takes care of matches, gas, and fire. God bless you, dearest, and draw us both nearer to Himself from whom all blessings flow.—  
With dearest love, FREDERIC.

Rossetti, who was still at Herne Bay, had been thinking of building an additional studio in his garden, and now wrote:—

“You will be glad to hear that since I last wrote my hands have rather decidedly improved, though not yet right. My object in writing to you to-day is to ask you to enquire, when opportunity offers, all particulars respecting Herkomer's wooden studio, price of building, time occupied in erection, &c. I do not know what my moves may be, but I think it is pretty evident that if I were in London now, I could work somehow. I hope you have yourself been more settled in health since your return to London, and that you find no difficulties as to work. . . . I am making a drawing of my mother which is quite up to my mark and much the best likeness I ever did of her. It would be graceless in me not to believe now that I may consider myself restored to the power of work. Moreover, in London, I had back-weakness which forced me to give up continually, though cushioned all round in my chair, whereas I believe now, I could go on for at least four or five hours without needing a rest. I am much interested in hearing of your work. In these glass cartoons you have developed a vein which must be appreciated if you can only secure field enough. My mother and sister unite in kindest remembrances.”

The idea of a wooden studio was quickly abandoned, and a week later Rossetti wrote again:—



"Many thanks for sending me Herkomer's letter, which seems in several ways conclusive. Even if one *could* build a wooden studio it would not do if *equally* objectionable with an iron one. . . . I lately wrote to Rae of Birkenhead, offering him (he is the oldest and most faithful of my buying friends, not to disparage one or two others, but they seem really filled up)—well, after this mighty parenthesis—offering him that little picture with landscape called the "Water Willow," and telling him of a larger one, the "Proserpine." I asked but 300 gns. for the "Willow"; but his answer is that he is spending thousands in building a new house and fears he cannot buy at present. He is likely to be in London in about a week, and will then look at the things, but I apprehend he won't buy. Do you think it would be any good offering the small picture at 300 to Turner? I have to send him back his water-colour drawing and so this would give some opening. Truth to tell, this spending with nothing coming in is not calculated to raise the spirits. In any case it would be necessary to wait for Rae's ultimatum after his visit to town. I have no intention of going to Broadlands, but how long I may still be able to get on here, I don't know. My power of work is not essentially impaired at present, I believe, but I must confess that enthusiasm no less than encouragement seems other than it was. I shall be very glad to see your fine series of stained glass cartoons, but apprehend that your visit to Kilmarnock cannot be a *very* short one if there is a prospect of your painting a frieze there."

Apparently this letter evoked a reply from Shields suggesting that the use of chloral had something to do with Rossetti's discouragement, and he again writes to Shields, who is still in Manchester:—

HERNE BAY, *October 21st, 1877.*

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—On thinking over the point of perhaps offering the little picture to Mr. Turner (it is now gone to Rae, but I know he will not buy) it strikes me strongly that Mr. Turner *did* take a strong fancy to this

particular head, that he wrote to you after seeing it, asking if you knew its price—that you asked me, that I told you 500 gns. (which was what I always meant to ask if I parted with it) and that he thought it over his mark. If it was so, what I say will probably recall the matter to you. I certainly think it did occur. However there would in that case be a difficulty in offering it to him now at a lower price (though my long illness compels me to an unwilling willingness to take the 300), and the question, if opened to him, would be best alluded to by me in some way when I return his water-colour. I have finished a chalk head of my sister, which I think so successful that I am going to do another of my mother before I leave here, as the one I did does not now satisfy me.

As to the eternal drug, my dear Shields, if I suffer at times from morbidity, it is also possible for others to take a morbid view of the question. I am quite certain that I have, as an artist should, made solid progress in the merit of my work, such as it is, and this chiefly within the last five years, during which I have supplied by application, some serious qualities which had always been deficient in practice, and produced, I will venture to say, at least a dozen works (among those covering the time) which are unquestionably the best I ever did. In those only which *need* deep tone, will it be found. Some are among the brightest I ever produced,—as “La Bella Mano,” “The Sea Spell,” and I may add (for lightness rather than brightness) the “Roman Widow.” The only picture indeed which at all really tends to darkness is the “Astarte,” and I remember that on the only occasion when you saw this by daylight, you quite exclaimed as to its brightness and fulness of colour when properly seen. To reduce the drug as far as possibility admits is most desirable (at present it *is* reduced to less than a third of what I started with here); but if an opinion were to get abroad that my works were subject to a derogatory influence which reduced their beauty and value it would be most injurious to me, and would in reality be founded on a foregone conclusion as to the necessary results of such a medicine, and not on anything

really provable from the work itself. I now find that I have written more than enough in a vein which I hope does not seem too egotistical.

I expect Brown here again before I leave, now that he has finished and despatched his picture—doubtless now as fine as it promised to be when I saw it. It is sure to aid his name. I suppose I shall not be leaving much before the end of this month, but I think certainly not later. My mother and sister unite in kindest regards, and I am ever,—Affectionately yours,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Subsequently the "Water Willow" picture, "Proserpine," and "Fiametta" were all purchased by Mr. Turner, a Manchester friend of Shields and by him introduced to Rossetti, for the round sum of fifteen hundred guineas, and Rossetti sent the news to Shields.

"I really must let you know that I have just succeeded in doing some business with Mr. Turner, who brought with him a friend long known to you—Mr. Faulkner. Mr. Turner acted, I am convinced, in the most liberal spirit, though in these bad times some concession on my part was necessary on his taking, as he has done, several works together. Perhaps you may see him and Mr. F. before this reaches you, as they were proposing to look you up. Thanks about the house in St. John's Wood. I have just heard that Topham's house at Hampstead is to let; I shall get Dunn to look at the two together. I have to thank you greatly, I am certain, for keeping up Mr. Turner's interest in my work, which I perceive to be a genuine one."

Shields' visit to Manchester was somewhat prolonged, but at last he wrote in a cheerful mood to his wife:—

MANCHESTER, *Nov. 8th, 1877.*

DEAREST LOVE,—I am glad to tell you that I have really, really sold the drawings to-day. It was not quite certain till now, and that is why I have stayed another

day. I shall have a rush to get away to-morrow morning, but I shall make a great effort to get back, being quite sick of rushing about and seeing people and talking from morning till night. I can't tell you what train I shall start by, so I cannot ask you to meet me, and you must not be disappointed, my sweet, for I shall have a great deal to do, and may be driven to a late train, or I may get off by an early one as I want to. I am just going up to see Jessie again and bring you the last news about her. Have some tea ready for me when I come. I don't even know what line I shall come by, nor what station I shall arrive at, so that it is no use coming to meet me.—  
Your own, *etc.* FREDERIC.

Soon after he returned to London he received this amusing request :—

MANCHESTER, 20th Nov. 1877.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am going to ask a favour of rather a queer sort because I trust you to say no without hesitation. Do you see this beast enclosed? Well, he is a trade mark, which my son-in-law's house has been using for the African trade, and which they now find is an infringement of some other body's animal. So they are abandoning it, and my daughter came up to me this morning—did I think Mr. Shields would draw her something of a similar sort to use instead, and would I ask Mr. Shields—for “Edward” was so anxious to get something that would strike the nigger mind (!) and did not know where to go, &c. I ventured to suggest that perhaps your style was scarcely so broad as the “Felis Leo” enclosed, and that it was rather *Infra Dig* to do such a thing. But she seemed so disappointed that I was fain to promise to ask you if you would give them a drawing of any beast known and respected on the West African coast, in a sufficiently rampageous attitude—say a Tiger (are there any in Africa?) or a Lion, &c. If he had a nigger in his mouth, or if he were in the Nigger's, it might add poignancy to the production.

I know what an absurd request it is to make—and please understand that if you have the slightest objection

I rely on your being honest and saying so. Not all the lions in Africa will make me anything but—Yours very faithfully,  
ALEXR. M'LAREN.

The request must have been promptly complied with, and a rough sketch sent, with a request for a description of the correct native costume.

MANCHESTER, 30th Nov. 1877.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your lion was so long behind your letter that I was afraid he had broken out of the mail bags, eaten the P.O. clerks, and was devastating the country about Stafford. However, my fears are gone, and he has come.

We are very grateful to you (I mean my wife and I, the young people will speak for themselves) for your swift kindness in this matter, and do not know which to admire most, the good nature which consented, or the deft hand which drew such a monster. That nigger leg, with the toes up to heaven, is grand. If the goods don't go with such a leg as that, it's a pity—not to mention the tail. Lejeune is in raptures, and evidently sees himself notorious over several degrees of latitude—or is it longitude?

He will see about dresses—but I thought they had none. Manchester philanthropists I understood were slowly elevating them in "the scale of moral and intellectual beings" by sending them calico to induce them to wear it—on the principle "clothed" first and "right mind" afterwards. But I did not know they wore anything except fig leaves of a more or less literal kind. However, they shall be got and sent you, if possible, and there will be a big obligation afterwards for your kindness, which is felt to be even larger than your lion.

Don't you keep those hammers, that you speak of, going "overtime." That is the most wasteful kind of work; and I wish brain-workers had a trades union which prohibited it, as joiners and carpenters do. I shall be grateful for photos of the Crucifixion group. That centre panel haunts my memory, and I shall be thankful to have

it for my eyesight too. I am to be in town next week, but it is only for a day, preaching, and I am afraid I shall not get near St. John's Wood, either to see friends or relatives. By the bye, that last word reminds me of what I often meant to say. I have a sister in St. John's Wood, a very respectable woman, kind and motherly, and with lots of practical cleverness. She has a large household—would you care to make her acquaintance for Mrs. Shields? If so, I will tell her to call on you. If not, all right. Just as you like.—Yours always,  
ALEX. M'LAREN.

The decorations for the Manchester Town Hall were now in the air again, and Madox Brown wrote on December 19th:—

“Waterhouse has been here. His object to ascertain, before meeting the Committee of Decoration at Manchester, if we were still up to the work of the great Hall, as he reckoned on settling that for us next week. It seems Gosse the poet, who is an old friend of his, had told him that I did not care two pence about the job, and also from his last interviews with yourself that he had derived a similar impression—I let him understand that we had both of us plenty to do, and that had we cared so *very* much about the matter we might both have been dead before now—that we never of late even mentioned the matter, but that I believed we neither of us had changed, provided the conditions were not changed. That, however, from my point of view the conditions might for all I knew already have been changed, because it was one thing for us to work in company with some of the finest artists in the country, and another to form part of the group of nobodies such as there was talk of giving the rest to. We talked over this matter, and how these three men had tried me before going to Watson, and how absurd the whole thing is. I said it was like asking for two years' time to prepare themselves to write poetry like Shakespeare or Homer. Waterhouse agreed to state to the Committee that should they insist on giving the other rooms to these Manchester beginners it was likely I would refuse to co-operate. This is what passed. No news of

Rowley as yet; should you see him don't forget William Rossetti's Shelley lecture to-night at 8 at his house. The previous engagement here to dinner you will not forget."

Eventually it was decided that six frescoes in the Great Hall should be entrusted to Madox Brown and six to Shields. Then began endless discussions as to the choice of subjects, which were to be submitted to the Council by the two artists, and as Madox Brown plaintively remarks in one of his letters: "What chance remains of a Common Council deciding reasonably on matters of Art?"

Meanwhile Rossetti, putting finishing touches on his pictures for Mr. Turner, wrote from Cheyne Walk:—

"Can you dine with me Monday 8.30? If not, would you post a note in time for me to get it first thing that morning. I have been painting a rough version of the proposed change in Fiametta's drapery. It fits with wafers over the picture so as to judge from, but really I cannot make my mind up, and have no opportunity of a second opinion. To destroy so much work is very serious and risky. I would like your views. Come a little earlier if you can and so see it by daylight—but if not, it can quite be viewed by gas."

In December Rossetti wrote again:—

"I am grieved to learn that money bothers have been assailing you. If I can be of any service pray give me that pleasure. I shall be receiving a large remittance next week from Mr. Turner (as I know for certain by a letter just received), and am not without funds in hand now, so don't delay if of any use. I judge from your note that you might perhaps not be able to come down so soon as to-morrow, but if you can, I shall be alone and *delighted* to see you either at dinner at 7 or later. If you can come,

perhaps you can bring at any rate 'a red chalk morsel' or two for contemplation. Fogs have not certainly been so bad here as in your neighbourhood, where I know that darkness exists when light is everywhere else. The exhalations of the deep mud soil in the Regent's Park district are truly afflictive.'



## CHAPTER XIV

The Duke of Westminster's Chapel at Eaton Hall—Rossetti and James Smetham—Madox Brown begins work at Manchester—Rossetti's "Launcelot and Guinevere."

THE diary for 1876 recorded work on the Coodham windows and various red chalk studies, several of which are published by the Autotype Society. Shields' success in the hitherto untried medium of stained glass now led to the same architect friend, Mr. Waterhouse, offering him another commission of much greater importance. This was to design the stained glass and mosaics for the Duke of Westminster's beautiful chapel then being built at Eaton. The subject chosen was the *Te Deum Laudamus*. Although Shields did not like designing for glass, recognising that it was by no means an ideal medium for his thought, this commission certainly offered him his first great opportunity, and the large scale on which the drawing had to be made completely revolutionised his style. He found the technical difficulties great, and until he had gained experience in the selection of the coloured glass, the effect when the first windows were in place was frequently very disappointing. But writing years afterwards of this commission, he says:—

"The opportunity for which my whole longings and aims had fitted me come at last,—late—but come! My soul kindled and flamed with the subject accepted, the glorious hymn of St. Ambrose, the *Te Deum*. Nearly ninety subjects, all told, not isolated, but such as could be linked in blessed continuity—to keep the

heart hot, and the mind quick, with its grand purpose—the praise of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, from the lives of apostles, prophets, martyrs, and the Holy Church of all the ages. My love of the written word of God and all my longings after nobler avenues for expression in my Art had been fitting me for such a work.

“It revolutionised all my views of design, imposing bounds upon me that purified and ennobled my style, while the practice in drawing upon a large scale gave me great increase of knowledge and power, and the necessity of grappling with the fine disposition of drapery gradually taught me how much the dignity, grace, and action of a figure depended upon this feature, and made me seek after excellence in this respect eagerly. It is a branch of art that is most unteachable, nothing but study of the works of the greatest and purest masters will teach it. Fra Angelico in purely ideal draperies is supreme—and there is so strange a likeness to the finest Chinese designs in his draperies, which stand apart in Italian art, that I must think that he had become possessed of some fine Chinese designs, and based his taste upon them. At Orvieto, where Signorelli completed the chapel begun by Angelico, how heavy, cumbrous, and inorganic is the disposition of the draperies of Signorelli when compared with that noble compartment of Angelico’s, wherein the prophets sit tier upon tier in their stately beauty. It is worth travelling thither from England to see this alone, and I parted from it with slow, lingering gaze.”

The diary for 1878 commences:—

“*January 2nd.*—Red chalks till 1. Upset by Lilly upsetting table and ink. Quite ill. To National Gallery. To Brown’s lecture on Style; met Long, R.A.”

Lilly, often referred to in the diary, was a young maid who had accompanied them from Manchester, where she had for some time filled the place of maid and companion to Mrs. Shields at Ordsall Hall. The incident is a pathetic reminder of the constantly overstrung condition of the artist’s nerves.

"*January 10th.*—At work all day at scheme for Eaton Hall Chapel. To Brown's and Rossetti's. Bed at 2 A.M."

Visits to Rossetti were responsible for many very late nights in these days. His habit of frequently dining as late as 9 o'clock and retiring at all hours of the morning, ran counter to all Shields' previous habits of life. The long distance from Cheyne Walk to St. John's Wood was often the cause of his spending the night at Rossetti's, especially in bad weather, but the *ménage* was curiously unlike what Shields had been accustomed to in his hermit days. He used to relate how Rossetti would breakfast at noon upon eight eggs in a row, that he would then paint until dark without any other meal until the long-delayed dinner, by which time his guest—not having such a capacity for breakfasting—would be suffering real pangs of starvation.

"*January 25th.*—To Grosvenor Gallery with Miss Thomson. Wrote descriptions of 'Faith' cartoons. To Rossetti about Smetham."

Much correspondence passed at this time between Shields and Rossetti with regard to their friend James Smetham, whose health, both mentally and physically, had completely given way, and they both seem to have made great efforts to assist in disposing of his unsold pictures. Rossetti had many of them at his studio, and effected several sales to his own friends and patrons; some were sent to friends in Manchester and elsewhere, and the business is alluded to in Rossetti's letters for many months.

In February the Manchester business is again causing much speculation, and various communications pass between the two artists and the Town Hall Committee.

Rossetti, at the suggestion of Shields, was working on some of Smetham's unfinished pictures, knowing that the sensitive hand which had commenced them had lost its

cunning for ever, and anxious that the works entrusted to him should appear to the best possible advantage, he wrote on Feb. 13th:—

“I wish I could report any progress with the Smetham business yet. I wrote to Mrs. Cowper-Temple, but have not her answer yet. To-day I have written to Valpy who is in Italy. Graham I have seen no more. I am very anxious about the matter and have no doubt of *some* results. Meanwhile do you know whether the Smethams are in want of funds to go on with? If so, I would consider the practicability of making some advance and reckoning on sales, which, though delayed, must I think occur to some extent. The delay in my movements has depended partly on a wish to get something done to the works (as you suggested) to give them a little better chance, and this I have been unable to set to yet, owing to the necessity of getting Graham’s predella forward. The latter is now nearly done, and to-morrow or next day I trust to put a little work into the pictures sent to me. The truth is that to do any real good to them will cut into time, and I am most harassed to think what position our poor friend may be in. Have you any further news?”

The diary now records a visit to Manchester with Madox Brown to attend the meeting of the Town Hall Committee.

“*February 26th.*—Left for Lichfield by 7 train. Drove to Hoar Cross. Saw Bodley’s church with Waterhouse and Heaton. To Manchester and slept at dear O’Connor’s.

“*February 27th.*—To Town Hall Committee.

“*February 28th.*—To Chester by 7 train. To Eaton Hall. Slept at Waterhouse’s.

“*March 1st.*—Back to London at 11.

“*March 11th.*—To Brown’s to write letter of terms to Committee of Manchester Town Hall. To Waterhouse’s

with Brown. Dined with Brown, Rowley, and J. D. Watson.

“*May 18th.*—Really began the Duke’s windows.”

A year or two afterwards, writing to a friend in Manchester, he sent the following account of his views on the subject of stained glass in general, and this commission in particular :—

“The scheme I proposed to His Grace was the illustration of the *Te Deum*. This was decided on, and will comprise nearly a hundred subjects—of Angels, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Holy Church, with subjects from the life of Christ, and symbolic figures of Christian Virtues and Graces.

“The glass usually fixed in churches, however admissible some of it now is in decorative effect, is entirely without purpose, and I had almost said wholly without reverence, for the subjects treated. It is composed of spots of colour, repellent or attractive to the eye according to the artist’s skill; but the mind or heart of the worshipper whose eye fastens on it finds nothing in it warranting its obtrusion on his vision in God’s house. The designers follow one another, as in Byzantine bonds of tradition. Now wherever this traditional treatment appears to sit with deadly purpose on the expression of the subject I have to represent, I break myself loose from it; while I reverently regard it where it is itself subject to the authority of the Scriptures.

“... It is my aim, without losing regard to the necessity of decorative effect. And in style I am always struggling after purity of contour, elevation of individual character, and intensity of expression. Yes, it is *only* stained glass, an art invented by Goths and only fit to be continued by Goths in my esteem; but it finds me noblest matter of design, keeps me germinating high thoughts and inventions, and lifts me out of the petty trifling of petty subjects and imitative facility to which I must otherwise have gone on applying my efforts.”

Rossetti wrote (one of his numerous undated notes) about this time:—

“ Many thanks for the beautiful studies you have sent ; they are most complete, and will be sure to fit in for the little I need. I must trust to your not thinking me a humbug in not having made any appointment yet, after so much delay. The fact is, these bits of white drapery needed to be settled, and have had to be changed several times—all you saw went next morning. I am getting them right now (white undersleeves as well), but shall not be clear of them till the end of the week. Suppose we fix Wednesday of next week definitely—say 2 o'clock and to stay dinner. . . . You shone last night with such lustre of diplomacy that I must needs send you the draft of a letter which I propose writing to Turner for the eliciting of your views thereon. With it I send one of his, most kindly enclosing a cheque for Smetham. You will see by his letter that he is rather likely to be in town almost immediately ; and thus, were it possible for you to read and return my draft (with due inculcations) in time for me to get it to-morrow evening, I should be glad.”

The first week in June the diary records every afternoon spent painting in Rossetti's studio :—

“ *June 28th.*—Dorcas finished. Began Angel with bit. Took to Waterhouse the first window for Eaton.

*Wednesday 3rd.*—To town to see Waterhouse. To Heaton, Butler's, to see Rahab, Moses, and Gideon glass. To Moore and Burgess' Minstrels with Cissy in evening—a wretched entertainment.”

The entertainment had such a depressing effect that he records himself as very unwell for two days following ; though on the Saturday he was so far recovered as to spend the evening with Rossetti, and to actually return at 1.30 on Sunday morning, an unheard of commencement of the Sabbath.

June and July were months of depression and ill-health,



EZEKIEL



ST. JAMES THE LESS

Two designs for the Duke of Westminster's Chapel

*From photographs by the Autotype Fine Art Company, Ltd., by permission*





though the work was slowly proceeding. William Bell Scott, staying with Rossetti at Miss Boyd's in Ayrshire, wrote announcing their arrival, and asking for a photograph of the beautiful design of "Love and Time":—

PENKILL, GIRVAN, Ayrshire,  
1st July 1873.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—The day before I left London, Austin Dobson, my friend and brother poet—only much more popular—saw the photo of "Time and Love" you gave me, and was so struck by it, I took upon myself to beg one from you for him. He will frame it in gold and write a *rondeau* or a *triolet*, or some other conceit about it. D. G. R. tells me you did the drawing for a friend's "Golden Wedding," or Silver one; and if you would have the goodness to send him the photo, pray write him this information, which will interest him as he is a domestic and amiable bloke.

We arrived here after a warm journey on Saturday.

With affectionate regards,—Yours very truly,

W. B. SCOTT.

In this month matters with regard to the Manchester frescoes were so far advanced that Madox Brown wrote:—

"It would appear they fancy that we are at work. Whatever this may mean, I fancy it requires a change of tactics to meet them. I have begun the 'Baptism of Eadwin,' therefore, because it comes readily to my hand, having done the sort of thing before—as you declared you would not choose for yourself. However, this is only one for a beginning. I have got some medium and colours from Robertson's, as they supply it to Leighton for his South Kensington Spirit frescoes. I am going to try it on my square of plaster, and there will be enough for you, I should think, if you wish to experimentalise upon yours."

August was spent in work at St. Matthew. Shields' days were spent between his studio and the glassworks,

varied with occasional days of research at South Kensington or the British Museum.

Madox Brown writes from Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, a remarkably cheery letter from a man in bed with the gout :—

August 25th, 1878.

DEAR SHIELDS,—Here I have been since Wednesday, the day after that on which I saw you, held fast in bed by the gout. I am rather better to-day, and should wish to be well enough to return home on Wednesday, but must take what comes grinningly. You know all these here parts, and I emphatically *don't*, so I won't write to you about them; but I should have nevertheless written to tell you how we were getting on (very jolly we all are), when yesterday a voluminous packet came stamped *Corporation of Manchester*. Don't be alarmed; I have mastered it all, and have answered both Heywood and the Committee Clerk. The first named with the slightest perception of banter, which I find is the only way to deal with him. To read his letter—which I do not send on to you, for it would drive you mad—one would suppose he wished us to write out eighty-four lists of all our twelve subjects over again, plus alternate ones and incidental remarks of an agreeable nature for the edification of the members of the Corporation. But he meant nothing; the Clerk's letter explains all. They only wish in a fit of generosity to present each of us with an impression of the Corporation Seal.

Could you, from memory, write out the Cotton Famine subject again? It is unfortunately locked up in my bureau at home.—Yours as ever,

F. MADOX BROWN.

In this month Rossetti was much perturbed about some forged reproductions of his pictures, and wrote :—

“ Burne-Jones sent me to-day one of these heads sold as mine which a friend of his had bought. Of course it is a forgery, and I must take some immediate steps about it

now—writing to the papers or something. Must see Watts on it forthwith.”

Shields, having considerable experience in the ways of dealers and photographers, evidently offered some advice, for Rossetti writes again:—

“I have sent your note on to Watts. He has been to A——, but I do not fully know with what results as yet. I should think it by no means improbable that he might like to go again in your company, as you have some experience of these rascals in a transaction connected with drawings. . . . I really do not see, in spite of any difficulties, how a public denial of these things as my work is to be avoided. The mere prices charged for them are so trivial as to strike at the root of my market, and themselves so contemptible as to discredit me completely.”

Writing a few days later on the same subject:—

“*Re A*——. Watts thought well of the plan of your accompanying him if necessary, but finally I made up my mind to write to *Athenæum* and *Times*, and had just despatched a note to the *Athenæum* when Mr. Wyndham (who bought the dummy drawing, which I think you saw here) turned up, and thought it better that he should make the first move. For this he got me to arm him with a letter declaring it was not my work, and I contrived to withdraw the *Athenæum* letter pending his proceedings. All this was on Thursday, and I have not seen or heard from him again. . . . Many thanks about writing to Turner.

“Suppose you dine with me on Tuesday, if at your disposal.

“*P.S.*—*Re Butterworth*. I would give £20 for the drawing; I got £15.”

The postscript suggests the curious history of one of Rossetti's early pictures. Butterworth was the old friend

whose landscapes Shields used to embellish, in his youthful days, with figures and cattle; he was also at one time Ruskin's assistant.

Early in the fifties Rossetti did a water-colour for Ruskin—one of his beautiful luminous drawings looking almost like a bit of glowing stained glass, the subject being the last meeting of Launcelot and Guinevere. The queen, in the garb of a nun, is kneeling on the sunlit grass beneath a tree, beside the grim carven effigy of her Lord, while Launcelot, in crimson tunic, leans over the stone breast of the figure, yearning for one more guilty kiss. Ruskin, later on, wrote rather petulantly to Rossetti, complaining of some alteration in the picture, saying: "You've scratched the eyes out of my Launcelot, and I've given it to Butterworth."

Now, after twenty years or more, Shields had evidently found the picture still in Butterworth's possession, and told Rossetti, who was anxious to buy it, but did not wish Butterworth to know who was the would-be purchaser.

On Sept. 4th he writes again to Shields on a postcard; "You might tell friend B. that your buyer will go £30 for that water-colour: that is his tether: no more will be offered."

Evidently some terms were made; the drawing again came into Rossetti's hands, and while he had it Shields made a very perfect copy, which remained in his possession until his death. Rossetti soon sold the picture again to Mr. Graham.

The following letter shows Madox Brown in doubt over the subjects of what were eventually two of the most interesting of all his grand series of frescoes—one representing Crabtree observing the transit of Venus, the other John Kay, the inventor of the fly-shuttle, being saved from the rioters by his wife, who concealed him in a wool-sheet.

"I have been at the Museum Library two or three days since I have seen you, and should, I think, pretty well have cleared up for us all doubts worth entertaining with respect to our subjects. . . . I wish to write to Thompson, but first ought to clear up about Kay and the wool-sheet. Can you advise me as to this matter? Kay seems to have been a sort of friend and hanger-on of Arkwright. I doubt if there is any biography of him. There is still doubt as to Crabtree being a sufficiently important character. I must consult with you about the matter, and as to the Danes I can as yet discover no authority for their taking Manchester, though no doubt *there* often enough; but I must consult Malmesbury. So there are still three doubtful subjects. I have been trying the square of plaster, and this seems equally a doubtful subject. I must talk the matter over with you when we meet; meanwhile if you find out anything more about Kay, pray remember him."

A week later the diary records half a day spent over the Duke's windows, and half with Brown over the Manchester subjects.

In November Shields was working at a design illustrating Blake's poem, "Little Lamb, who made thee?"—two children in a field with a lamb, the elder child being drawn from his adopted daughter Jessie.

On the 15th Rossetti wrote:—

"When you come to-morrow suppose you bring the 'Lamb' drawing. Bates was here yesterday, an extremely nice, genial old fellow. He is an ardent Blakeite, and the drawing is so valuable that I think you might well dispose of it either to or through him. He is going to look in late in the afternoon. When you come, let me suggest your resuming your rightful coat which is still lying here, its pockets full of prophets. I'd like your views as to that drapery study."

Bates was the Leeds dealer already referred to in connection with the sale of Smetham's pictures.

Later in the month came several letters from Rossetti about a poor man whom he was anxious to befriend, asking Shields' advice as to setting him up in a little shop in Manchester or elsewhere. He writes:—

“Thanks for the letters, they are valuable. No doubt the view taken is but too true, yet enforced inactivity is so fearful a thing that I will try to help poor C. to some use for his limbs and brain, if it be but for a while. He has tried for over fifty situations as book-keeper and failed, owing to his age, which must be considerably over my own. I do not fancy his health is broken, thus if employment could be found for him, I judge he is equal to it. He is quite without means, and has a wife.

“What a lark the Whistler case is!! I must say he shone in the box, the fool of an Attorney-General was nowhere. I am glad to see that Ruskin is not to be hauled out. I send you a letter from Bates, but I suppose he wrote to you also about the sale of your drawing. I have actually got a blue face on the Ionides canvas! I hope to see you on Wednesday.”

The year 1878 closes with continued work at the Eaton windows, the last entry being:—

“*Dec. 28th.*—Model for St. Thomas, sketches for two lower subjects. To see Holman Hunt, afterwards Rossetti, he very ill; back at 2 A.M.”

In 1879 the question of the subjects for the Manchester work was still absorbing much attention. The commission was given jointly to Shields and Madox Brown; each was to be responsible for six of the large spaces on either side of the Great Hall. Meanwhile the designs for glass were still proceeding.

“*March 3rd.*—To glassworks all morning; St. James successful. Wrote out ideas for Philip and Andrew. Took

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Cissy to concert in evening; Joachim played, didn't like it.

"*April 17th.*—Began Andrew; had to alter pose of legs from the nude study—by standing myself for them and the drapery—until tea. Went and bought prints in Hampstead Road. To Rossetti's.

"*April 24th.*—To Oxford with Rowley by 10 o'clock train. Saw Jones's lovely windows at Christ Church. Keble Chapel (Oh, Butterfield!)"

Early in April Madox Brown proceeded to Manchester and wrote:—

TOWN HALL, MANCHESTER.

DEAR SHIELDS,—I date to you from this, to us, memorable place. How I have ever got here seems to me a puzzle and a dream. I find it very comfortable, the only fault about my box (for it's like a box at the opera) being that it is far *too* comfortable, and I fear not to be abandoned often enough to see the effect of one's work, at a distance. At night when I'm all alone, with an excellent gas-stand, it is perfectly delightful; and by daylight I feel charmingly free from household worries. I have not yet begun on the wall myself because I am delayed by want of more medium, but I have given the first coating to one space and rubbed down three others, all ready to coat when the stuff arrives; and the man now is fit to be trusted to do the others by himself. The cartoon seems highly successful with all who have seen it, and all the masters and servants at the Hall are as pleasant and attentive as they can be—except Mr. —, who is a Philister and will not let me have a room in the building. However, his race will be run in another six months. . . . I am so glad to know you have sold one of your large cartoons here. Remember me to D. G. R. when you see him, and tell him I would he could see me at my box at the opera, and how I have arranged it with bits of string rolled up and stuck on pegs."

The subjects were all by this time practically agreed upon, with the exception of the last, which seemed to

be especially difficult to decide. Shields used to relate dramatically the scene at a meeting at which one of the councillors rose and declared that they were all in favour of the last scene representing "The Opening of the New Town Hall." Madox Brown whispered furiously to Shields that this meant that the councillors wanted all their portraits painted, and was rising with an angry protest, when Shields pulled his coat-tails and whispered, "Shut up, Brown, for goodness' sake; don't you see all these old fellows will be dead long before we get to the twelfth cartoon?" Madox Brown's suggestion was "The Peterloo Meeting (which led to reform which led to Free Trade, without which no steam-power could have availed at Manchester)." But this seems to have been considered too controversial a subject; a letter from him, dated August 30th, 1879, says:—

"You will have received a communication from the Decorative Committee to the effect that they have now definitely settled on 'The Opening of the Bridgewater Canal' as their twelfth and last subject. I don't know what caused their extreme tenacity on this head—as far as I could see it resulted from one of their number, Mr. Councillor —— (who rules them by reason of a certain preponderancy of nose and chin) having seen somewhere a picture by a local artist representing 'a canal at Amsterdam,' and having been very much struck by this performance, and as it would appear not ever having in his life before examined any other picture, he wishes to see something like it on the walls of the Great Hall.

"In confirmation of this theory is the fact that he once commissioned a local painter to paint some 'shooting grounds' he owned somewhere, but after paying for the same loyally, almost broke the said local man's heart by steadily refusing to look at the work simply for the reason that he thought he had done enough in ordering and paying for the same. I perceived it was no use standing out, and seeing that it must be long before the



Canal scene need be begun, I thought it best to let them have their way—after protesting. If it came to the worst I would do it. T—— gave the strongest reason in favour of the subject, for he said that a quarter share in the same canal had recently fetched £8000 in the market at Liverpool. This was unanswerable! . . . The Gambier-Parry process I still find all that I can approve of. There are difficulties with the work, however, that one could not count on—such as shadows cast at certain hours by the projecting piers on either side and sunshine at certain hours. These of course I manage to counteract in divers ways, but the result is that time is wasted and the difficulty of obtaining the desired effect increased.”

This letter from Alexander M'Laren acknowledges photographs of some of the Coodham windows:—

MANCHESTER, 3rd April 1879.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your gift of this morning has given me the renewal of a great pleasure. I have been looking at these designs again with fresh admiration and thankfulness that you have been able to witness in them so nobly for the Master. I feel their beauty none the less because I prize them most for their wealth of reverent thought and profound suggestiveness. . . . In power and harmony, in weighty meaning expressed in fair shape, in delightful and not too misty symbolism, they seem to me to surpass all that you have done, so far as I know it. And one feels that they are not the work of a man who looks at Christ as an artist, but of a painter, who looks at him as a Christian. I only wish they were not going to be buried in a hole in Ayrshire, where nobody will see them but Presbyterians, who will think them “Rags of the whore of Babylon,” or spinners who will wonder what they cost. When are you coming down here? You will not forget to give us as much of your time as you can spare from swells who can give commissions. We are getting gracious sunshine even here at last, and, ungrateful as we are, it makes me restless and longing for Italy or the New Forest, or anywhere, if only there are larks and primroses and budding elms.

## CHAPTER XV

Mrs. Cowper-Temple—Painting in Rossetti's studio—Leyland's Botticelli—Priscilla and Aquila—Christina Rossetti and the fairies—Letters to Mrs. Kingsley—Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*—Shields resigns the Town Hall commission.

IN June 1877 is mentioned Shields' first visit to Lady Mount-Temple (then Mrs. Cowper-Temple). Introduced to them by Rossetti, Lord and Lady Mount-Temple were afterwards among his kindest and most intimate friends; they came to his help in one of the most tragic crises of his life, and they introduced him to Mrs. Russell-Gurney, who gave him the great task which occupied so many years of his life, and was only completed a few months before his death.

"*May 23rd.*—Worked at St. Jude till 1. To Mrs. Cowper-Temple's to lunch till 4. To Rossetti's—back at 2 A.M."

So were the summer months spent, Shields working at the big designs for the Eaton windows, and doubtless greatly developing his mastery of colour under Rossetti's generous help. Mr. Hall Caine records, in his *Recollections of Rossetti*, a conversation in which Rossetti told him: "I paint by a set of unwritten but clearly defined rules which I could teach to any man as systematically as you could teach arithmetic; indeed, recently I sat all day for that very purpose with Shields, who is not so great a colourist as he is a draughtsman; he is a great draughtsman—none better living, unless it is Leighton or Sir Noel Paton." Not for one day, but for many days Shields worked in Rossetti's studio, and his rules for each

day's painting were all carefully written down as they fell from his lips, and form the substance of a notebook illustrated with diagrams and preserved by Shields. Did space permit it might be included here, but the technical details would perhaps be out of place.

This is another of Rossetti's undated notes written about the end of June:—

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—When you come to-morrow try to bring some of your work with you if you can. Davies was here on Friday and brought some astounding—incredible—miraculous—designs in silhouette (cut out with scissors) by a youth, a nephew of Smetham's. They are from Milton's *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. I am writing and asking if he could possibly bring them again to-morrow, and meet you, as he wants to know you. The boy is a marvel. His work is up to Flaxman's very finest, and each design cut out in five minutes, whatever subject you give him! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! !

I really judge you ought to make a start and get away for awhile, though assuredly none would miss you more than myself. Calais—as nearest and new, would I fancy be a good goal. You would delight in making sketches on the ramparts.—Your affect. D. G. ROSSETTI.

The diary at this time contains many references to ill-health and weakness which led to a brief holiday this month.

“*June 20th.*—To Rossetti, beginning oil painting of Mary Magdalene.

“*June 27th.*—Colour sketches for St. Andrew and Philip. To Rossetti's painting Magdalene, dinner at 10 P.M. Home at 2 A.M.

“*July 7th.*—Vine leaves in Sinful Woman. Finished Simon and Jude. To Mrs. Cowper-Temple's to lunch. To Grosvenor Gallery.

“*July 9th.*—Left for Petersfield by 5 o'clock train with Cissy.”

Rossetti wrote :—

16th July /79.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I was most glad to hear that Mrs. Shields is already the better for her change, and hope the improvement will increase. . . .

I regret much that you should have lost Mrs. Cowper-Temple's visit and she the sight of your late work which would have *really* rejoiced her, and into every detail of which she would have entered with loving attention. She and Mr. Temple called here the other day and I also missed them! The *why*, you will think, is to seek. The fact is I was engaged in selling to Ellis a picture ("The Lady of the Window")—which I afterwards learned they had come to buy—and having given orders to Dunn that *no one* was to come in, he even excluded them. I was delighted to hear that Mr. Temple was right again,—his changes are most fitful and I am glad to hear he does not mean to stand for the next election. However I think they'll want something else (probably not for themselves but for a friend whom I also know)—meanwhile the picture is sold. I had written it down a *thing*, but I won't because of the sitter, to whom I owe the best of my art such as it is. . . .

I am sorry to note that you do not mention Mrs. Stillman's pictures at the Grosvenor! I fear they may not be her best. The good kind creature wrote me to-day with the address of a nice model, "a friend of hers"—a poor lady I judge who wants to earn a little. She is spoken of as "refined and suggestive" for Dante subjects, *i.e.* ladies in such.

The second predella is getting on to the canvas but I haven't yet put colour to either. The supposed Blake portraits are to be sent to Palmer. The other day I saw Allen the Silhouettist. . . . I gave him the advice to get through the Slade Schools, make his Academy drawings there, go in for the R.A. Studentship and do the cut and dried thing altogether. That is the right course with but one life at disposal, and so many millions of fools to dispose of that.

I sold some books for him to Marks who wants to charter him, but this I advised him to eschew, also wood-

designing altogether, into which he seemed getting drawn by some advisers—*i.e.* as a hack to some engraver. . . . I am trying the Leeds Blake man as to a further market for poor Smetham's works, but no answer yet. He would at least appreciate them. My Mother and sister are gone to Seaford. This seems the last scrap of news. Best love to you and kindest remembrances to your wife.—Yours affec.,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

*P.S.*—By the bye, here's an extra bit of news. Perhaps you know Botticelli's four pictures of the story in *Bocaccio* where a cruel lady's ghost is hunted by a bogey hunter and dogs. These were in Burke's sale some few years back, but bought in at a high figure of reserve. Lately they were at Christie's again without reserve, and were sold, three to a London dealer and the fourth to a Paris one. Leyland bought the three London ones for £800. He was then in doubt what to do about the Paris one, till Ned Jones told him it was the finest of the lot; whereupon he sent to Paris and bought it for £900—*i.e.* a hundred over the other three in a lump. He then sent them to be cleaned, which they have been most successfully and need little or no retouching on the excellent renewed surface. The alterations were laughable. The naked ghost-lady had been draped throughout and her heart and entrails (as thrown to the dogs in one of the scenes) obliterated, leaving inexplicable results. This, however, was all in water-colour and came off quite easily. However, the oddest is to come. The Paris picture is pronounced on all hands to be a school work and not a real Botticelli, though doubtless always forming part of the series, of which Vasari speaks. Why Jones thought it the best is a mystery, Murray and other good judges are unanimous about it, and Leyland says it is plainly inferior. Still he was right in getting the lot. I am doing a head of him for a wedding present to his eldest daughter, but have begun two already without quite pleasing myself. His head is really fine, but there are difficult points in it.

Madox Brown was now beginning to wonder when Shields was going to commence his share of the Manchester frescoes, and wrote:—

THE TOWN HALL, MANCHESTER,  
July 18th, 1879.

DEAR SHIELDS,—Rowley tells me you are gone to Shottermill. . . . I hardly know if this will reach you, but I have long had it on my mind to write to you on some important matters connected with the decoration of this Hall, and this is almost the only opportunity I have had of doing so for so long, that at all hazards I will now grasp it—come what may of the letter. First let me say I have rumours that you are beginning the Wickliffe design, if so let me congratulate you, and if not, permit me to say that I think it would be very desirable that you should make some show in this direction. It is work that must pay quite as well as your other work, so that whichever you do it can make no great difference pecuniarily, and from the numerous questions that are put to me, I think it is not a matter that ought to be procrastinated much longer. Hitherto I have refrained from writing on this topic from the fear of worrying you, but now I think it would be wrong to delay doing so longer. . . . I am not quite so satisfied with the Gambier-Parry process as I was at first. I find it keeps on drying and getting paler and weaker for three or four weeks, which makes it difficult to know what one's work will look like. So that I may possibly do the next in water-glass—the wall being roughened up.

Things here are looking awfully down, but I must now conclude. I have near done with the Baptism. Best regards to your wife.—Yours,  
F. MADOX BROWN.

Rossetti writes a day or two later:—

July 21st, 1879.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Write me a line when you can. How long will your stay be from London? Can you tell me whether Mrs. Smetham is at home? I wrote her some days back and have received no answer. The occasion was my sending all Smetham's little pictures here to Mr. Bates of Leeds (whose letter you saw about Blake) and I wished to know her lowest views as to prices. . . . He seems to be that strange creature—a dealer who admires the spiritual only and sells nothing but what he admires! I must try and know him. . . .

Murray has got out some divine photographs, which you will enjoy greatly. One from J. della Quercia—the fountain figures, but very small—he will get me others. Two Botticellis recovered from whitewash in a scarred state are nevertheless ravishing.

I hope you are doing well, and Mrs. Shields also, to whom pray give my best regards. Your description of your dwelling sounds as if your honeymoon ought to have discovered it. . . .—Yours affectionately,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

*P.S.*—I write from a house servantless and so far blest. The last of the lot went out to-day, and to-morrow I expect two new ones—promising decency at any rate.

Madox Brown had for some time cherished a special aversion for an elderly domestic at Rossetti's, which went so far that he refused to visit the house while she was there. The news conveyed in Rossetti's postscript must have been forwarded to him by Shields, for Brown writes another letter, undated, but evidently a little later than the last.

“MANCHESTER.

“Ever so many thanks for the magnificent cat you have sent me; Rowley twigged it on my table, and his heart seemed to yearn towards it—or to itwards, as Swinburne would put it. For indeed his whole poetical practice seems to have reduced itself to this particular form of this particular preposition. It lessens the amount of his mannerisms. The puss must have been drawn by one who had some knowledge of his subject. It is a pity the head is not turned the way I want it—but the motion of the ears and tail is most valuable to me, and I find I have room for the tail in this position. The news you send me also about the proceedings at D. G. Rossetti's is almost as glorious as the cat itself—it is in fact of another feline that we speak, and whose expression must now look very like the one you sent me—with tail ominous of fight and claw lifted to strike. I should have springes set in all the areas and bells fixed to the windows lest she should

get back on the premises after the manner of cats. Has the very old one who used to open the door been served with a similar notice? Otherwise, depend on it, the quarantine will not long keep the plague out; it will creep back through the keyhole, and then comes, like Macbeth, his fit again."

On July 23rd the diary records: "Left Haslemere 7 P.M., home 9.30. Thank God for all mercies.

"August 15th.—Study for 'Priscilla and Aquila.'"

For details as to accessories for this design he sought the assistance of Holman Hunt, who wrote an interesting letter, giving details and diagrams of the construction of goat's-hair tents—the black tents of Kedar—which, however, he did not think Priscilla and Aquila would have used, as they did not dwell in the desert. The goat hair is woven into a narrow black or brown cloth, about as thick as "stiffish towelling," and these are sewn together, the tents being ranged in a semicircle—the letter ends with the friendly offer of the loan of a goat's-hair cloak. Shields spent the remaining months of this year in steady work at the Eaton windows and in painting with Rossetti. The diary continues much the same record.

"Dec. 26th.—To Rossetti's—Broke glass and tore picture of Mrs. Morris through recklessness. Left very miserable to see Scott about it. Rossetti sent Miss Asher up with comforting note and invitation to return and dine."

This is evidently the "comforting note":—

DEAR SHIELDS,—It can't be helped, but it *can* be mended I believe. I don't mean to say that I hadn't rather almost anything else had happened. I'll hope to see you to dinner and we'll consult about the mending. The worst of it is, the delay of this Xmas season if one sends it anywhere, and I shall be needing to begin the picture.—Your affectionate

D. G. R.



The year 1880 finds Shields engaged in much the same routine, with brief entries in the diary recording each day's work with rather monotonous brevity, varied by domestic details of scant interest.

"*Jan. 17th.*—Dreadfully foggy, 'Angel of Tares' till 2. To Holman Hunt's to see his picture of 'Flight into Egypt.' To Rossetti's. Befogged there all night.

"*Feb. 26th.*—Tracing angels. To glassworks till 6. To Holman Hunt's meeting on Deceased Wife's Sisters. William Rossetti, Stephens, William Morris, Burne-Jones, and Richmond there. Excited meeting."

This was a meeting organised by extreme Ritualists at St. James's Hall "To oppose legislation of marriage with a wife's sister." (They leave out "deceased," Holman Hunt pointed out in sending the notice to Shields asking him to come and help to prevent the perpetuation of this law as "opposed to Bible edicts and to all common sense and righteousness," by opposing the resolution at the meeting.)

"*March 9th.*—East windows all morning. To glassworks. Waterhouse pleased with the windows now done. To Mrs. Evans Bell's party, late in getting back.

"*March 10th.*—Study from Cissy for 'Eve in Paradise.' Reading and studying for East windows. To see Christina Rossetti."

This undated letter from Christina Rossetti was probably written about this time:—

30 TORRINGTON SQUARE, W.C.

DEAR MR. SHIELDS,—I must beg your patience and favourable construction for this letter, for it may appear to you that I ought not to write it. Even if so, you are one to make allowance for a conscientious mistake. I think last night in admiring Miss Thomson's work I might better have said less, unless I could have managed to convey more. I do admire the grace and beauty of the designs, but I do not think that to call a figure a

"fairy" settles the right and wrong of such figures. You (as far as I know) are no dealer in such wares. Therefore I think it possible you will agree with me in thinking that *all* do well to forbear such delineations, and that most of all women artists should lead the way. I ought not now—I fear—to be having to say awkwardly what should not have been so totally ignored in my tone last night, but last night's blunder must not make me the slave of false shame this morning.

Do not answer this: I am not afraid to have offended you.

My mental eye is fixed on fetching the dear photograph—I hope possibly to do so to-morrow and then quickly to send it to you. But if a longer time elapses, do not think I am forgetful: sometimes I am hindered. Very sincerely yours,

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

If the "dear photograph" was not fetched on the following day, Shields must certainly have replied to this letter—and it is interesting to conjecture what his reply may have been! Of all men he had the most holy horror of anything approaching what one might call "nudity for the nude's sake" in art, and in Manchester in 1870 had collected signatures for a public protest against the Heywood prize being awarded to what he considered an improper picture. The drawings with which he had innocently thought to delight Miss Rossetti were the exquisite child fairies which Miss Thomson had designed for Christmas cards and other decorative uses. It is difficult to realise that even in Victorian days a poetess could be shocked at those fairy dream children with their dainty tinted butterfly wings and sweet baby faces. One would imagine that they were just the children to delight a maiden aunt, so good, so pretty, and so innocent—one is before me as I write, sitting on a honeysuckle, talking to a bumble-bee almost as large as itself, and like the bee attired only in gauzy wings.

In connection with this, it is rather interesting to read Shields' advice on the subject of drapery in a letter written some time before, which has been kindly sent to me by Miss Thomson.

"What shall you do other than sea fairies? I don't know—doing them so beautifully, what you might achieve in other subjects, but hitherto I look on most of your work as the playful sport of a kitten with a worsted ball. It knows not its power. It shall toss mice soon, yea rats mayhap—with teeth, and count that play then. . . . And to find subjects that you feel a heat about, or that will get up a heat in you when found, you must seek them, in books, in your memories, in your hopes and fears, in the streets and the house, seek them diligently, and you shall find them, subjects that will *fit you like a good glove*—and you will know as soon as you try them on, which they are. When the pencil speaks out of the abundance of the heart, it can be eloquent like the tongue out of the same full well. Hence I am happier and gaining more skill and power in the Bible designs than ever in my life. I grow more in a week than in years of the dull grind of uncongenial work which I have so long endured.

"Drapery! This strikes me—you will have to meet that difficulty some day—when people who live above water will have to be dealt with. Its conception by different artists and natures is very expressive. Grave or gay, majestic or playful, calm or tempestuous, its lines and masses express all moods; and so to design your own draperies that they shall support and sympathise with the mood of the being they clothe is a problem which exercises the artist's tailoring talents to their utmost stretch, for no rules guide him here, no measurements, no ideal principle of form deduced from the antique or fine nature. And as soon as you undertake any other, or almost any other, subjects but water babies, you will find yourself strangled by calicoes and flannels, or burnt by them like the shirt of Nessus, till you wish the whole race had remained in Adamite innocence, if only for the cost to your brains of dressing them with propriety.

“ When do you think of coming up, or down, to London ? I hope it may hap when my nose is eased from the grindstone a wee bit, and I can get to some of the grand places with you. You can compare school with school, method with method here ; can resolve what is food and what is poison ; can discern between good and evil in quite a new way when near and among the finest, though I miss my dear old friends so, so much. . . . ”

On March 15th the diary continues : “ Very unwell. Wrote to Mrs. Kingsley. To glassworks from 2 till 8.30.” Miss Kingsley has kindly forwarded the letter referred to :—

7 LODGE PLACE, N.W.,  
15.3.1880.

DEAR MRS. KINGSLEY,—For some time past I have been engaged on a work of large dimensions, a series of designs illustrative of St. Ambrose’s grand anthem, the *Te Deum*, for the mosaic and stained glass decorations of Eaton Hall Chapel, Chester (the Duke of Westminster’s). Since I came to London to settle, I am entirely without any cultivated Christian acquaintance or friendship upon whom I might call for counsel in some of the greater difficulties of invention, as, say, the character of St. Paul ; how best to present that wondrous soul, and with what accessories to set forth his work as one of the “ glorious company of the Apostles.” It is true, I have formed views of my own concerning the best method of designing some of these difficult figures, casting aside all traditional treatment ; but fain would I have the help of some earnest Christian, learned, and with a love of art enough to make him sympathise with my aim.

Once I could have come to Mr. Kingsley with certainty of finding in him all I seek ; but now I am without anyone. Were dear Howson in London, and had leisure for half an hour, he is, I surmise from his noble *Life of St. Paul*, such a counsellor as I need ; but I could ill express in writing the conflicting views which divide my mind. The Rev. Llewellyn Davies is near to me ; and sometimes, as he has

preached, I have thought he might afford me help if I knew him.

I know that what your friendship can devise to help me in this matter I may rely on; but time presses for the completion of the work, and what I do must be done quickly. It is so long since through any avenue I have heard of your health, which was most feeble last year, and cannot have improved beneath the strain of the past terrible winter, that I feel much doubt whether I ought to trouble you; though I shall be grateful if you are able to give me such an introduction as I seek, without strain either upon your own strength or the kindness of your friends.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Kingsley, most truly yours,  
FREDERIC J. SHIELDS.

The request evidently met with the kindest response, and he wrote to Mrs. Kingsley a week later:—

“The reception which your introduction secured me from Mr. Llewellyn Davies evidenced how kindly you must have written; and you will be glad to know that on the point which caused me most to halt, he threw out a suggestion which was of the most essential service. He is fond of Art, and was full of sympathy and desire to help me in future hesitations or ignorance. So that I scarce feel warranted in using the privilege which your generous desire to make me rich in sources of counsel has procured from Canon Farrar; but he has been of late so steeped in the consideration of the life and work of the great Apostle of the Gentiles that out of such special store he may enrich me more than ever, I expect, and give me cause to be still more grateful for your kindness. I suppose there is scarcely a week that I do not feel how guided and strengthened I should have been by Mr. Kingsley’s spirit.”

At various intervals the little garden at Lodge Place was tenanted by a lamb, to be replaced by another when in the course of time it grew to large and unbeautiful dimensions.

"*April 12th.*—All morning at sketches of lamb. Afternoon at Blake notes for Gilchrist."

Rossetti wrote about this date:—

"To-morrow will suit me, and I advise you to go in for a day's work here after your success last time. I shall be very glad to see the Blake notes, and have a rich treat for you in the way of cheap woodcuts—eleven volumes thrillingly embellished by Sam Williams, the earliest of high-spiced art-dramatists. I shall be glad to see you again and talk the Manchester matter over. I do not think the answer at all a matter of course, as Brown and others would doubtless view it. It must be considered in relation to your special state of health, &c., and it is by no means easy to settle. I trust you will not be drawn into taking any steps hastily."

Shields had probably made up his mind by this time that Madox Brown should be left to complete the whole series of frescoes at Manchester. Madox Brown had written months before under the impression that the Wickliffe cartoon was taking shape in Shields' studio; but if Shields had not always intended to let Brown do the whole series, he certainly very soon made up his mind that he himself would have nothing to do with them, for he early realised that the artist who had made so magnificent a beginning ought to be allowed to complete the whole. Neither the persuasion of his friends nor the threat of a lawsuit from the Corporation could shake his resolution not to move in the matter. And as no power could compel him to evolve a series of designs against his will, he eventually had the satisfaction of seeing his share of the commission handed over to his friend.

## CHAPTER XVI

Notes on Blake's designs—Article in the *Manchester Quarterly*—Drawing of Blake's room—Rossetti's sonnet—Aberdeen—Sir Noel Paton—Rossetti's illness—His strange idea—Shields visits the theatre—Letter from Christina Rossetti—The scapegoat—At Birchington—Rossetti's death.

EARLY in April 1880, Rossetti wrote:—

“You will be glad to hear that Bates of Leeds is delighted with Smetham's pictures and speaks confidently of his chances with them. I've a letter from Mrs. Gilchrist greatly rejoicing on the beauty of your notes on Young.

“Watts is back in town for the morning and is asleep on the sofa as I write! He is delighted at the prospect of getting his drawing.

“My servants are evidently excellent ones—the little housemaid of 16 most apt and very nice looking. I only hope they'll stay.”

The “notes on Young” were the remarkable descriptive notes on Blake's designs for Young's *Night Thoughts* which appear in the second edition of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*. Several entries in the diary refer to this.

“*March 24th.*—At Mr. Bain's, writing notes on Blake drawings all afternoon until 7.”

In an article in the *Manchester Quarterly* (April 1910) Shields relates how an unexpected treasure trove of Blake's designs was brought to light. A sale catalogue from Yorkshire advertised some large volumes containing five hundred and thirty designs to Young's *Night*

*Thoughts*, by William Blake. The announcement seemed incredible, but one of the partners of Messrs. Bain, the booksellers in the Haymarket, travelled to the sale, and secured the books, which had been in the possession of the family of Richard Evans, the publisher of the incomplete issue of the engraved designs to the earlier books of Young's poem. Doubt was thrown upon the authenticity of the designs when they reached the Haymarket, by critics, "even," says Shields, "as Payne Knight scouted the fact that the Elgin Marbles were the very crown of the art of Phidias."

He goes on to say that at this juncture Mrs. Gilchrist, then about to publish a second edition of her husband's work, asked him to call and inspect the newly unearthed volumes.

Shields was overjoyed at the richness of the discovery, actually five hundred and thirty coloured designs. He wrote:—

"At the beginning of each volume there is a frontispiece entirely occupied by design, unbroken by text; and each 'Night' has to its pages of title and preface appropriate suggestive inventions. The stupendous task that confronted Blake when he entered on this commission, and its triumphal completion, staggers mind and eye as the pages are turned, revealing wonder and glory inconceivable. In the very fervency of enthusiasm I described the volumes to Rossetti, who suggested that some notice of so important an accession to Blake's known works should be added to the second edition of the *Life of William Blake*, then under preparation by Mrs. Gilchrist. Messrs. Bain offered me every facility, placing the books in an upper room at my service. There I spent some glad days in rapt communion with the sublime imagery that glowed from the amazing glory of the designs. There I wrote the descriptive notes which appear on page 289 of vol. ii. of the new edition. Moreover, all that I could freely give to increase the interest



of the new edition was done with joy. In the manuscript book from which Rossetti collated some of the poems of Blake there was a fanciful decorative drawing of Oberon and Titania lying asleep in the heart of a poppy. Rossetti suggested that I might adapt this for the cover, which I did. Also, I reverently re-drew the profile of Blake by his own hand, which had been indifferently engraved on wood in the first edition, together with a profile of Catherine Blake, and these were produced well in photo intaglio, as well as a plan of the room at Fountain Court, Strand. Alas, when I would have renewed acquaintance with the shrine I found the whole court demolished in 1901, swept away by Strand improvements." ]

The assistance given by Shields in the production of these volumes is described in a letter from Rossetti to Madox Brown which appears in his *Life* by Mr. Hueffer. That letter is undated, but must have been written in 1880, and contains the following passages:—

"The new Blake volumes are truly splendid. Shields has made the most wonderful cover from a design of Blake's, and has written a long paper on Young's *Night Thoughts* series, which reads as if he had been writing all his life. He has also drawn a most interesting plate of Blake and his wife from Blake's Sketches, and a separate one of Mrs. Blake from another sketch of Blake's. In fact he has half-made the book."

One evening early in May, Shields took a drawing which he had just made, to show Rossetti. A monochrome drawing of William Blake's room, showing the window overlooking the river, the cupboards, and the scanty furnishing—unpromising enough, as one might think, for the subject of a picture, but over the low bed can be dimly seen a vision of hovering angels. Though it was late when Shields left Rossetti that night, he received early next morning the perfect sonnet which must have ]

been penned in the small hours. The revised copy referred to in the following note, sent a few days later in answer to Shields' delighted acknowledgment, differs only in a few words from the original.

FRIDAY.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Thanks for your loving words on the sonnet; and thanks most of all, for the chance of writing it. I subjoin a revised copy.

I write this line because I expect Mrs. Gilchrist and her son about 5 to-morrow, and I thought I should tell you so. But I daresay you won't think this forbids work. Hoping to see you,—Your ever affec. D. G. R.

### WILLIAM BLAKE

(*To Frederic Shields, on his Sketch of Blake's Work-room and Death-room, 3 Fountain Court, Strand.*)

This is the place—Even here the dauntless soul,  
The unflinching hand, wrought on; till in that nook,  
As on that very bed, his life partook  
New birth and passed. Yon river's distant shoal  
Whereto the close-built coiling lanes unroll,  
Faced his work window, whence his eyes would stare  
Thought-wandering, unto nought that met them there,  
But to the unfettered irreversible goal.

This cupboard, Holy of Holies, held the cloud  
Of his soul writ and limned; this other one  
His true wife's charge, full oft to their abode  
Yielded for daily bread the martyr's stone,  
Ere yet their food might be that Bread alone  
The words now home speech in the mouth of God.

D. G. ROSSETTI

L 20th May 1880.

In the original the fifth line runs :

“Beyond the steep wynd’s teeming gully hole,”

and the last :

“The words now home-heard from the mouth of God.”

A little later Rossetti wrote again :—

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I was very sorry to hear of Mrs. Shields being unwell on Friday. I hope she is better now, and that I shall not fail to see you on Tuesday. I have done the Mike Holy Family sonnet and think it is quite good. I want much to look with you at the design of the archers. I am sending the Blake sonnet to the *Athenæum* with the inscription to you.—Your affect.  
D. G. R.

In the article in the *Manchester Quarterly* Shields says :—

“In connection with Blake’s illustrations to the *Night Thoughts*, I asked Rossetti what was his estimate of Young; and he, pre-eminently a poet of the supernatural, replied: ‘Young was the greatest poet of his century.’ That Blake caught fire from the fervent heat of the *Night Thoughts*, that blazed into many of his sublimest designs, is brilliantly evidenced. The volumes were offered to the British Museum print-room and declined. They went finally to America, to England’s impoverisation. The unbiassed, confident verdict of the critics, untrained though they may be by experimental study to discern the character of unaltering, unflinching execution through which Blake infallibly manifests his mighty visionary spirit, is, however, that this spirit is specially in evidence in these books. No hesitation weakens the presentment; as Blake himself puts it, ‘execution is the chariot of genius; grandeur of ideas is founded on precision of ideas;’ for, as I have described, the designs are drawn on both sides of the paper, right at once, immortally right. Blake’s early training in Basire’s shop with the

graver on copper or steel, whereon every line must be governed by the calmest deliberation, had educated both eye and hand until, when he exchanged the burin for the pencil, pen, or brush, the forms sought were swiftly struck with all the grace and strength consequent upon a clearly conceived aim."

Hogarth, in like manner, learnt to draw first when apprenticed to a "silverplate engraver" in Leicester Fields; is it not also probable that, in the case of Shields himself, his early training in lithography and wood-engraving may have done much to develop the power and decision of draughtsmanship which made Rossetti compare his drawing to that of Dürer?

An undated letter of Rossetti's relates to a sale of casts at which Shields had offered to make purchases for him.

"I forget when you told me Brucciani's sale was, but I don't think I can well go a fiver. What I should principally wish for would be useful hands, feet, &c.—anything really likely to serve in painting, or anything very special in art, and not too big to find a place. I fancy Mike's figures are better seen in the photos than at the top of a book-case. If there were any portraits—say Keats'—of special interest and cheap, I'd have one.

"I worked in the sea bird with immense effect. I shall be doubly glad of a double visit on Wednesday. I have done one of the predella designs, and should like to have your views as to the drawing and proportions, &c., before painting it.

"*P.S.*—Thanks about Brucciani. It's a fact a fiver was once a stiver. But in these times it's a keep-im-aliver."

The diary is blank now until June 8th, when it records:—

"Left three cartoons with Heaton & Butler—St. Matthias, Jailer and Priscilla, and Aquila."

"*June 10th.*—Left London for Aberdeen—by steam."

Why Aberdeen was chosen is not quite clear, but evidently the journey was an exceedingly uncomfortable one, as shown by Rossetti's letter which follows. It enclosed an introduction to Sir Noel Paton, in whom Shields found a man after his own heart, and an artist for whose work he had always a supreme admiration. They afterwards corresponded regularly until Sir Noel Paton's death.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Alas! Much disaster has been incurred, but it is my most serious opinion that the worst by far is to come if you persist in coming home by the Aberdeen route. Such result of sleeplessness and suffering as you describe is enough to do away the good which, in spite of all, the change must otherwise effect, and I should anticipate serious illness for you on your return if you come *via* Aberdeen. I do not want to make you over anxious, but I feel that a strong expression of my conviction is necessary to deter you.

I hope you *will* be deterred. After all, a small money loss is the worst on one side—on the other, a likelihood of far greater evil.

I enclose a note for Noel Paton. The appreciative stationer is gratifying and surely exceptional, even among the much-reading Scotch nation. I think I told you that a thing called *The Pen* had descanted flatteringly on me, as I heard. I have since seen it, and it is very good (I know not by whom at all) but I regret to find that I have killed off *The Pen*, as its writing days ceased with that number. I took the head right out of my picture and have put it in again, more to my liking, I feel sure, when glazed and done. I have not yet got on any fresh work, except that I am recommencing that figure of Beatrice (walking through street) on another canvas. I spoil it by glazing too soon, and must pay the penalty. Kind regards to Mrs. Shields.—Ever yours affectionately,

D. G. ROSSETTI.

Shields having taken return tickets to Aberdeen, felt bound to return by the same route, however uncomfort-

able he had found it. Rossetti's next letter dissuaded him from this unnecessary martyrdom.

"I had much better send you £5; if any surplus, you can return it when I see you, but you really must not return by Hell's Aberdeen. I fancy you must get good if no more Aberdeen, but only harm with that.

"I can't conceive this election of G. R. Brown. What can he possibly know?

"I certainly didn't see what *The Pen* meant about the 'Last Confession,' but am always rather glad, if not all praise, so long as no spite. Leyland has sold Brown's 'Don Juan' for £500—£100 more than he gave—to Brookes the dealer, in part exchange for a Memling for which he paid £500 cash besides. I don't know how it will please Brown. Howell was the go-between, and told Brookes that his market was Manchester; so there it will doubtless be hawked. As I told you, I am not hard up just now.

"I'll hope to hear better news of you both next time."

Shields and his wife arrived at Edinburgh on July 13th. Madox Brown wrote from Manchester on the 22nd, apparently not aware of their expedition to Scotland.

"Like you, I only seem to write to such as I do not entirely care for. The harpies which befoul life's feast, and make it scant and troubled through the penny post, are those who are too dangerous to leave unanswered—those who forgive are easily put off. The weather has been rather warm—the first few days of it we have had here this summer, but rain and thunder all day. I should not be surprised at another bad harvest. You may be surprised at my noticing this at present, but the state of the country is so bound up with the harvest, and the state of art in the country so bound up with the state of the country, that one cannot help thinking of it. Things are much complained of in Manchester by all except friend Rowley, who remains always cheery despite of head or liver, and makes his little excursions—his 'goes' and

'little goes,' and 'Jacobs' and building societies, as though all were prospering—preparatory to his August trip to Scotland or Portugal. He is quite right, I am sure—what would be the worth of his working himself to death? and he manages to do all the business required of him, in the intervals between these expeditions. . . .

“. . . Tell Gabriel, with my love, that Turner's father is dead. As I believe his fortunes were to turn upon this event, I suppose he is in luck again! I hope so.

“At Eaton Hall I saw your windows made up—for the first time, of course. I was exceedingly pleased, and I may say surprised at them. None of the subtleties of detail or expression are thrown away, but, on the contrary, these works seem to show that stained glass is particularly suited for showing up these qualities—the reverse of Gabriel's maxim, 'Anything will do for stained glass.'

“These windows of yours seem quite original in treatment, and if Heaton & Butler's rendering of your colour is not always quite successful, at least you have got them to execute works that for drawing and expression are unrivalled, and they look at the same time thoroughly decorative in design. The brassy yellow of some of the hair they ought to be bullied for, though!

“People used to ask me when you meant to favour us with a visit to Manchester; of late, however, they have left off. Sir Coutts and his wonderful conclusion, that the four remaining rooms ought to be dedicated to the four English Great Poets (this would include Swinburne) shows that new ideas have already superseded the ones we tried to inculcate. I care not—enough and more is for me what I am about.”

On July 31st Shields and his wife left Edinburgh for Manchester. In a hurried note Rossetti says:—

“I write no longer to Edinburgh, as I suppose it is probably too late to do so. Shall be very glad if you can pay me a visit on Monday at usual time and let me hear all about your doings. I am glad you liked Noel Paton. I have pretty near finished the Sycamore picture

—the head at last I think to my satisfaction—a honeysuckle in hand.

“I expect the frame in just a week, when of course I shall add work and tone. . . . I heard an extremely good account of Brown’s progress from young Caine of Liverpool, who is going to notice it in the Liverpool press.”

Young Caine refers of course to Mr. Hall Caine, who was soon to be an inmate of Rossetti’s house.

A week spent at Manchester in seeing various old friends, and visiting Chester to see the Eaton glass.

“*September 3rd.*—Took Cissy to Rossetti’s to study head for Magdalen from her—and got it much better.

“*September 14th.*—Went early to Rossetti’s, painted at hair of Magdalen and sky. Had to rub rosy sky out—wouldn’t do. Stayed all night as rain severe.

“*September 15th.*—Up at 8. Got to work at sky, tried most part of day; rubbed it out twice, but left it successful at last. Rossetti talked much of his early life. Home 11.30 P.M.

“*September 22nd.*—All day at Rossetti’s. Slept there. Still painting sky.”

Rossetti sent numerous undated notes about this time, as:—

“I don’t know if you mean to paint here to-morrow, but should be glad if you would, as I think of getting on with that battlement work, and find it a bore when alone. When you come, could you bring any photograph or sketch of ivy growing on a wall, I want it for the distant rampart of La Pia, if you happen to have such. I much wanted to talk to you the other evening as to that background, but could not tackle it with Scott there. Thus I trust not to miss seeing you to-morrow.”

“*October 22nd.*—To Rossetti’s to paint the Lazarus—began it in blue.”





LAZARUS (1880)

Painted in Rossetti's Studio



This picture was painted almost entirely in Rossetti's studio, and according to his methods, the flesh laid in with ultramarine on a warm reddish-brown ground. It was purchased by Mrs. Russell-Gurney, and was eventually placed in the Chapel of the Ascension. It now hangs in the Ante Chapel.

Rossetti and Shields were both interested at this time in some doubtfully authenticated portraits of Chatterton which had been brought to their notice. Rossetti wrote:—

“The Salford portrait looks evidently older than the other, which is a life-sized oil head belonging to Sir Henry Taylor, and seeming really about twelve or thirteen. It has been engraved. I cannot see my way to believe in either, though it is curious that both do seem markedly to represent the same person, as does a third rough engraving in different pose of head which I have seen. My conceivable theory about the Chatterton portraits is this. He *did* know a miniature painter named Alcock at Bristol, and has written a laudatory poem on him. The striking resemblance between the two portraits and the rough proof I named, suggests conjecture. Had Alcock painted Chatterton in his lifetime it would assuredly be on record with so many more facts we know, his reputation having been rapid after his death. But it is *possible* that Alcock may have been asked to make some posthumous reminiscence of Chatterton from which these portraits derive. But where then is the reminiscent portrait, which would probably be a miniature? Of course the Salford portrait is a good deal older than twelve. I should be glad if you can bring sketch of fig-tree when you come to-morrow, also of your aid in getting down a branch to paint from. I have been three nights alone, and shall be glad to see you.”

The year 1880 closed without further incident, the immense thought and care bestowed on the designs for the Duke of Westminster's windows made the remuneration very inadequate, and some increase of pay was

eventually agreed upon, so that it might be possible for the artist to continue the work with comparative peace of mind with regard to his worldly affairs.

"*January 7th.*—Rose late. Gabriel Romano sat for St. John. To glassworks to take cartoons. To Rossetti's. A serious talk with him. Lord give me faith and courage for more.

"*January 11th.*—Struggling all day with the drapery of St. John on the lay figure. To Rossetti's. He very depressed. Showed me background of his Beatrice put in."

Rossetti now began working again at his long abandoned picture of "Found." He wrote: "I have really resolved to take up that Calf picture and want to consult with you; my sincere thanks to Mrs. Shields for her kind offer about the smock frock."

The weather in this month was very severe. Rossetti writes a little later:—

"To-night is fearful indeed. I merely write to say that if possible on Friday you might do me an essential service by helping to set the lay figure with the leggings you lent me—a matter at which I am always helpless. This new fall of snow looks like a menace of a most serious kind. I feel that absolute solitude is one likely result to myself."

The diary records:—

"*January 26th.*—St. John finished in seventeen days of bitter cold and suffering from chilblains. To Rossetti, put gaiters on lay figure for him.

"*February 1st.*—To Oxford with Butler to see New College glass and Jones window. Back at 6. With Cissy to see Christina Rossetti.

"*February 2nd.*—To see *The Colonel* for D. G. R."

This was a terrible sacrifice to friendship, for Shields

loathed the theatre, and nothing but his devotion to Rossetti would have induced him to witness an absurd farce which must have made him feel that at any rate he *ought* to shudder at what he would have considered its depraved frivolity. Rossetti, possessed with the idea that his enemies were caricaturing him on the stage, would trust no one but Shields to give him a true account of the performance. Oddly enough the diary records no ill effects from witnessing *The Colonel*, though as a rule such an entertainment as the German Reeds or the Moore and Burgess Minstrels is held accountable for inevitable illness on the following day. Perhaps the relief at being able to assure Rossetti that he was not the subject of the play accounts for the untroubled record following.

"*February 3rd.*—Evans helped me with lead lines of east window; designed olive leaf background for St. Peter. To Rossetti; stayed all night after setting lay woman figure for 'Found.'

"*February 10th.*—Painted apple blossom for gift to Cissy. Finished all matter belonging to the four subjects of East windows. To Rossetti's with Cissy about dress."

One of Rossetti's notes says:—

"I may probably be sending for the mantle to-morrow evening. I want your views on that drawing, which I think is doctored now. You said Mrs. Shields was kind enough to express a wish to hear the 'White Ship.' Would she give me the pleasure of dining here with you, after which I would produce the ballad? My gratitude to her has been much aroused in painting the smock frock, the sleeve of which I think I have done all right by her help."

"*February 15th.*—To Rossetti's with Cissy to alter mantilla for him. Stayed all night."

A day or two later Rossetti wrote in high spirits:—

“Leyland was here to-day, and seems likely to buy the ‘Blasted Damdozel!’ I want your views as to the present state of the big picture. I am sorry to say that William is laid up with sore throat. Two sonnets a day and inexorable politics must be the result. I hope to see you on Tuesday—Friday I have proposed to Ned Jones.”

March and April record much the same round of work at the windows, varied with long days and evenings with Rossetti and afternoons at the Museum for study. Days of work selected here and there record:—

“*April 25th.*—To Zoo for goat; got a dead kid there, and erased the lamb from Abel and put it in, which gave much hard trouble.”

“*July 20th.*—To glassworks to correct John the Baptist light. Tried coloured arrangement for Martyrs. Mrs. Evans Bell sat for head of Stephen for me, 4 to 6. Dined at Brown’s. Watts there. Saw Brown’s designs for Flemish weavers and Crabtree.”

“*August 8th.*—Angel with crown and cross. To British Museum for Martyr research. To Rossetti’s; Caine established there.”

A card from Madox Brown, dated Fitzroy Square, August 9th, says:—

“I believe I have got rid of this place, and shall accept your kind offer of storage room in your house. Will it be all right if I send things to-morrow and day after? In most frightful confusion and muddle; we have got a little house in Manchester.”

“*August 10th.*—Brown’s things came. To see Brown at Fitzroy Square; all dismantled—a sad sight.

“*August 15th.*—To Hampton Court by river with wife on our marriage day. Four hours’ voyage; very cold.



THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

Design for one of a series of Memorial Windows





Back by rail. To Real Niggers at Her Majesty's Theatre. Vile vulgarity and noise; bestial show."

As a usual consequence the next day's diary records:—

"16th.—Very ill in head. Did a little at Lazarus (oil). Turkish bath in evening.

"17th.—Weak but struggling. Martyrs' design. Major Evans Bell called. To Rossetti's; an evening wasted in Joe Miller'isms, of which he is too fond."

The rest of the month is spent over the two designs of Martyrs, which necessitated much research at the British Museum, and about which he consulted Christina Rossetti, who wrote—the letter as usual undated:—

"I am proud to offer such points as occur to me in answer to your invitation; however useless, they show my sympathy in your noble work.

"As to the 'noble Army of Martyrs,' I see you admit many (so to say) from the east and from the west; may we all meet in the heavenly Church; but *I*, of course, should draw my illustrations for the present from the visible Church on earth. I only make this remark to clear my conscience, not to seem impertinent, and even less to seem indifferent to examples to which one's heart (if one has a heart) responds. I shall feel you treat me as a friend if you spare yourself any trouble in answering. Thank you for the Museum book title."

To this letter Miss Rossetti appends a long extract from *Personal Names in the Bible*, by the Rev. W. F. Wilkinson.

In this month are recorded frequent visits to Cheyne Walk, for Rossetti's health was causing much anxiety, and his condition altogether was one which Shields, nervous and sensitive as ever, could not contemplate without grief and foreboding.

"September 16th.—Finished 'Female Martyrs.' To Rossetti, just about to leave for the Lakes.

“*September 17th.*—To see Waterhouse. Gilchrist brought Mr. H. Scudder of Boston to see cartoons.”

Mr. Horace Scudder was so impressed with the cartoons that he journeyed at once to Chester to see Eaton Hall Chapel.

The result was a very thoughtful and appreciative article entitled “An English Interpreter,” which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for October 1882.

Mr. Scudder says, “It is in the interpretative function of art that Mr. Shields has shown his great power; and the interpretation is not of a historical tradition nor of an individual fancy, but of a Catholic and Comprehensive conception of spiritual life.”

And this is true enough, if by spiritual life is understood spiritual life as represented by the literal interpretation of the Bible, enriched with all the symbolism and allegory that one whose whole life was devoted to devoutly “searching the Scriptures” could discover or invent.

Rossetti, with Mr. Hall Caine at Keswick, wrote in September 1881 :—

FISHER PLACE, FISHER GHYLL, VALE OF ST. JOHN,  
NEAR KESWICK.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—I think, on the whole, I had better send you on the enclosed, true as it is that such hopes are apt to become disillusion. But Sir Noel Paton is at any rate a man who will not forget one word that he has spoken, if only he have the power to make that word efficacious.

That I am not absolutely limbless was proved yesterday by my ascending the Great Hough, which is a steep wooded height of 1200 feet, and this without particular fatigue. Nevertheless I am still aware that my limbs are out of order, and must hope to improve further. To-day I set up an easel and shall drudge a little at an easy replica for Valpy. I think I must muster energy to write a letter to Sir N. P. Is there anything you would like

said besides what I should say naturally? Caine sends kindest regards.—Your affec. D. G. ROSSETTI.

A little later he writes from the same place :—

“I am making some reduction in the drug, but cannot say that I am feeling very well at present. May I put you to a little trouble at your leisure? If you can make time to run down to Cheyne Walk, please open the top right-hand drawer of the cabinet near the back door of the studio and get out a slight sketch of binding. It is a piece of foliage, and has ‘Dante and his Circle’ inserted on it. Would you send it to me and pardon trouble? I note what you say as to Paton. I shall not now be writing to him until I can send him my book, which I hear is more or less out.”

Shields was now finding the drudgery of overlooking the glass work very wearying.

“Oct. 29th.—All day numbering glass and arranging patterns and diapers on the tracing—nine days of this hideous slavery. Spent evening with Christina Rossetti.”

Christina Rossetti wrote :—

“Thank you for excusing and remedying my momentary lapse of memory, and for writing words so kind that I can only hope to deserve them some day—no, not only ‘hope,’ I can try. I have thought of your fine scape-goat since I saw it,—indeed I have thought of a number of your works to the glory of God, but that one is the one specially in my mind at this moment. I wish I understood the meaning of the ‘Azazel’; it appears, of course, to contain the most sacred word ‘El,’ and I should be so glad to ascertain the signification of the whole. I have lately been struck by an idea (but am not aware of any authority whatsoever for it—it may be a mere fantastic error) whether the two goats of the great Day of Atonement taken together may not stand as one type of our Blessed Redeemer—the slain goat, His Sacred Body slain for our sins; the scape-goat, His Soul sent all alone into the

desolate desert world of the departed, and bearing our sins, as in Isaiah liii. 10. Not that the unseen world of the elect really was at any moment of man's history a desolate desert; yet till our Lord entered it, it was an unknown land fearful to flesh and blood; fearful even to saints, if we may judge by some Old Testament utterances, as of Job or in the Psalms. I trust you will not dislike my saying all this to you, for with you I have the happiness of feeling that you accept the Bible as the Word of God, to be venerated and made much of."

In connection with the question of the Scapegoat it is interesting to note that Holman Hunt in one of his letters says that he has long come to the conclusion that two Messiahs were promised, one to suffer death and to be the Shiloh to the Gentiles, the other to bring about the restoration of the Jews. In painting his own picture of the Scapegoat he felt that he ought to represent the beast as suffering persecution or contempt, to the point of death, but that he must not make it certain that the creature died.

A little later Miss Rossetti writes again, saying:—

"It is a comfort that nothing immediately depended on my remarks about Azazel. Mr. Cayley (who asks to be remembered to you) has come to the rescue, and has gone far to rout my Hebrew!"

Then follows a disquisition by Mr. Cayley on "el" and "azel," and the interpretation of Azazel in the valuable lexicon of Fürst. However, Miss Rossetti continues:—

"Fürst as a philologist is reckoned too deep if anything in tracing Hebrew roots to their first fibres, so I still feel at liberty to pursue my own train of thought, though I see it is by no means to be built up so easily as my rash ignorance supposed. I hope Mrs. Shields is a perfect spring blossom of bloom for you this autumn, pray offer her my love."

Rossetti returned, evidently in worse health than when he left. This note shows a much feebler writing:—

“I don't exactly gather whether you propose to kindly come to-morrow or Saturday, but either evening will be welcome, the only ‘emanation’ from outer space which has greeted me since your last visit has been the calm presence of William on his faithful Monday. I must say I go daily from bad to worse, I am quite exhausted now, and really don't know how it may end. I have been seeing Marshall.”

Again on November 22nd he writes:—

“William has told you that I shall be alone to-morrow. Let me implore you to come. I am still very ill.”

“*November 26th.*—Studying Bible for Chancel windows. To town on Rossetti's business to get him a nurse. To Marshall's, and to Rossetti's, he in a desperate state.”

The diary continues its record of work and anxiety.

Two or three days are spent in designing a cover for Hall Caine's *Sonnets of Three Centuries*.

“*December 12th.*—Waterhouse sent most kind answer about the Duke. Young William Sharp called. To Royal Academy with Gilchrist to see the Prize work of students. Shameful awards against merit. To Rossetti, in bed, declares his left side paralysed since Sunday.”

The anxiety as to Rossetti's fast failing health increased, and many visits to him are mentioned in the diary, with sad accounts of his mental and physical depression. Christina Rossetti wrote on December 16th:—

“Your letter comes like balm. My dearest Mother thanks you with a warm heart, and so do I, for the hope you help us to keep up. I need not dwell on our grief and anxiety on poor Gabriel's account: yet with you I do hope that under the absolute authority of a medical man he may yet be weaned from that fatal chloral, and that

even now much which has been lost may be retrieved. You and Mr. Watts, and every unwearied friend who is kind to him now, earn our deepest gratitude."

For a week Rossetti's health improved slightly, and he tried to work again. A day or two before Christmas he wrote a shaky little note:—

"Would you let me know how you are situated as to next Friday and Saturday, which would suit you best? Things seem getting brighter, and I hope painting might be possible. With Merry Xmas to yourself and wife."

"*December 29th.*—To glassworks to meet dear Madox Brown and show him the Martyr windows. Then to binders about Caine's book, which lost all the day."

The diary for 1882 begins with a retrospect of the two hundred and eight days spent on the Duke's work, and a calculation that by the end of June the twelve designs for the chancel ought to be finished.

Rossetti still made great demands upon Shields' time and strength, also indeed upon his patience, which must have been often sorely tried. The book referred to in the next note was *Clarissa*, which Rossetti had persuaded Shields to read aloud to him.

DEAR OLD SHIELDS,—I mentioned to Watts about your drawing here, and he has taken it upstairs to his own room where it is quite safe, so I think it might be better not to write him about it.

I felt very much your goodness about the book, as I know it was really an effort to your friendship, and it has proved a relief to me which I owe to you. Hoping to see you to-morrow. The New Year does not find me merry.  
—Your affectionate  
D. G. R.

The diary continues:—

"*January 3rd.*—To Academy, Old Masters. Dunn

called. To Rossetti, he out of sick bed now, but still complains of arm. To British Museum, early Italian Prints."

Early in February Rossetti went to Birchington with Mr. Hall Caine. Three days after their arrival Mr. Caine sent a hurried card to Shields:—

"Rossetti threatens to return at once unless someone comes out to see us. Such is the condition of things. When can you come? He says you promised to come—do try to do so, or something of the kind."

Shields however remained at his work until on April 8th he received another letter from Mr. Hall Caine, urging him to come at once as Rossetti has become very suddenly worse, and he fears he is sinking rapidly. By a later post Mr. William Rossetti wrote:—

WESTCLIFF BUNGALOW,  
BIRCHINGTON-ON-SEA, 8th April.

DEAR FRIEND,—A few sad words in haste. On Monday I told you Gabriel was dying, but did not know how very close I spoke to the very fact. He is now dying—I don't particularly expect him to survive to-day. He is calm, patient, conscious, rational but somewhat lethargic through weakness—suffering we may infer no acute pain, and not any very excessive inconvenience. The Doctor says that most probably he will pass off unconscious. My Mother and sister, Watts and Caine, and myself are here. Leyland looked in yesterday and is expected to-day.

Not many minutes ago—say at noon—Gabriel, hearing I was going to write to you, asked with his half extinct voice that I would tell you that he knows he has neglected you of late, but it was not through any feeling of indifference. Don't let anything I say beguile you into coming down here: it would be of no use.

Marshall is expected to-day, towards 3.30. He would have come down with me yesterday, but great incon-

venience has beset us from Good Friday's trains being like Sunday's, and we shall not be clear of this sort of interruption until Monday next is past. I wrote to Marshall at length on Tuesday, mentioning about Clarke or some other physician, and asking if he would appoint a day for me to call.

He replied on Thursday by a verbal message through Watts, merely to the effect that he must in reason accompany any such physician; also that he did not agree in the opinion that the malady is softening of the brain—perhaps not *any* brain disease. Three or four hours after Marshall's message I received a telegram from Christina showing that I must lose no time in coming down. I quite think from what I see here that no skilfullest physician would have been of the least practical avail: a fatal form of kidney disease now exists besides much other and total breaking up. Love and farewell to my illustrious brother and your affectionate friend is all I can say.—Yours,  
W. M. ROSSETTI.

Shields, however, had already started for Birchington, arriving on the evening of the 8th.

In his diary he wrote:—

“*April 9th.*—Change for the better. Hope. At a quarter to ten—the loud clang of Fate—and in five minutes the great soul was gone! God forgive him, and me!

“*April 10th.*—Spent day at William's request in drawing the poor dead face, a melancholy tearful task.”

On the same day he wrote to his wife:—

“MY OWN BELOVED ONE,—Our hopes of recovery are over—Oh, so suddenly last night at ten o'clock the summons came! In two minutes all of us knew that his spirit was passed. It was an awful scene.

“So is gone the man whom I loved most, and who loved me—and I am more and more alone—with you, my best beloved. May God join our hearts more closely, so that when the hour comes which shall divide us here,



we, having both the same hope in Jesus Christ, may part, in sorrow indeed—but sorrow that we know shall be turned into joy when He shall call us from the dust again, to love each other forever without a fault on either side. I will tell you all when we meet—which I expect at the latest, by God's mercy, may be to-morrow."

Madox Brown wrote a touching letter from Manchester, on hearing of Rossetti's death:—

"I don't know how you feel this sad event; to me it is the greatest blow I have received since the loss of our dear Nolly. I cannot at all get over the idea that I am never to speak to him again. And yet when he was alive it seemed as though nothing I could hear as to his health could surprise me, and still it was not apparently his visible ailments which proved fatal. How could one imagine such a breakdown?—when I saw him in bed, eating sandwiches and asking for cake and grapes not three hours after his dinner, I thought his ailments imaginary, and so they might have been then, so little did they shadow this last disease. A great man is gone! And the effects of it on art in this country none can tell, but one may fear—unsubstantiality and affectation on the one hand, and 'Herkomerism' on the other. I fear it will go hard with the British School when a few more of us are gone. You, Jones, Poynter, and Leighton are tolerably young yet; Hunt, Millais, Watts, myself, and Paton are in the sear and yellow or wrinkling stage decidedly—and what is to follow? I can't foresee. I hear you are at Birchington—or were on Saturday. I shall address this to you there. You have seen so much of poor dear Gabriel of late; you must be terribly cut up. To me it seems like a dream; I cannot make out how things are to go on; in so many directions things must be changed."

Shields records in his diary: "Made two copies (in misery) of the drawing of Rossetti's face for Christina and Watts."

He went back to Birchington for the funeral: "Awake all night there," he says, and returning to town went to see Burne-Jones, "to weep with him."

Sir Noel Paton wrote:—

"I send you a hurried line—all I possibly can just now—to thank you most sincerely for your most kind and touching letter. When Rossetti's death has been such a keen sorrow to me, whose actual intercourse with that kingly soul was so much slighter than yours—I can but too well understand all that you feel, and from my heart I offer you that sympathy which I myself crave, and which I know you extend to me. . . . You did inform me that the Duke of Westminster had done what was right by you in the matter of the windows, at which I greatly rejoiced. I had intended being in London in May; but I don't know that I have the heart to come now. If I do, however, I shall not fail to see you; and you will tell me all you can of our dead King."

Immeasurable was the gulf of disagreement on all spiritual matters between Shields and Rossetti; agonising to the younger man's sensitive, ascetic nature were many episodes in their long intimacy, and terrible were his misgivings when the end had come, lest he had neglected any possible opportunity of essaying the obviously impossible task of converting Rossetti to his own religious views.

But he never failed to express his scorn for those who attempted to belittle Rossetti's greatness. As a heaven-born genius and as a generous-souled friend, Rossetti always had a large place in his loyal heart, and no one more than Shields would have endorsed the words written by Burne-Jones on his early friendship with Rossetti:—

"His talk and his look and his kindness, what words can say them? But bit by bit little forgotten touches will

come back, I daresay, and some sort of image of him be made out—and if it is a perfect image and all overlaid with gold, it will be truer really than one that should make him halt or begrimed or sully him in the least.”

Among Shields' possessions was a cast of a hand—such a small fine hand that it might be taken for that of a woman, but that upon it are pencilled the words: “D. G. Rossetti's cunning right hand, that clasped mine in friendship once.”

It has been said that Rossetti was born out of due time and place—Mediæval Italy should have been the setting for that strange jewel. And certainly Shields would have been more suitably environed by a peaceful hermit's cell, where, like Fra Angelico, he could have spent his days in painting to the glory of God—unless, indeed, rumours of the wicked outside world had moved him to head a crusade, or to offer himself up, like Savonarola, to a losing battle against the Mammon of Unrighteousness.

## CHAPTER XVII

Lady Mount-Temple and Mrs. Russell-Gurney—A visit to Babbacombe—G. F. Watts—The Rossetti memorial windows—The vicar's objections—With Lord and Lady Mount-Temple at Broadlands—Mosaics at Eaton Hall—Windows at Cheltenham College—M'Lachlan's lawsuit—Sir Noel Paton's letters—Sir John Gilbert—St. Luke's, Camberwell—Memorial to Gordon Highlanders—Mosaic workers in Paris.

EARLY in May 1882, Lady Mount-Temple brought Mrs. Russell-Gurney to Shields' studio—a visit which led to then undreamed of consequences, for the quiet lady in the black dress was to become his nearest friend, and her beautiful vision of a chapel of rest, to be built to the memory of her husband, was to give the artist the great opportunity of his life.

A week or two later Shields paid a fortnight's visit to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple at Babbacombe, the first of many visits to these "angelic hosts." At the end of June he went to Manchester for a week, staying with Dr. M'Laren, and returned home to attend the sale of Rossetti's effects at Cheyne Walk. The diary records:—

"*July 6th.*—To Rossetti's sale. To see Holman Hunt, he still patching at his big picture. He expects Ruskin to-morrow to see it.

"*July 7th.*—Drawing D. G. R.'s head for Leyland. Tracing Miss S——'s head for dear Hunt."

Miss S—— was a very beautiful model frequently employed by Shields and subsequently by Holman Hunt. The lovely water-colour head of the girl with jasmine in her hair, bequeathed to the writer, and here reproduced, was painted from her.



THE LADY WITH THE JASMINE

Portrait Study, 1888



"*July 10th.*—To Cheyne Walk—the things all removed. All bare. The last look. To Christina Rossetti in evening, she showed me D. G. R.'s golden hair, Hancock's medallion at 13, his own drawing of the same time, and one of him as a child of 4.

"*July 28th.*—To Lady Mount-Temple's to lunch, and to Academy with Dunn. Leighton's decorations for St. Paul's are dreadful."

The beautiful design of "Love" was made in the autumn of this year, much time being spent in the East End searching for a suitable black baby as model—the tiny chinaman being even more difficult to secure.

"*December 30th.*—Put lettering in Paradise. Wrote Rossetti notes for F. G. Stephens. To Rossetti Exhibition—a disgrace to the Academy."

In January 1883 William Rossetti lost a little son—the diary refers to the sad event.

"*January 25th.*—To Academy and Burlington Club all day with Theodore Watts. To Christina Rossetti and to William Rossetti. Drew dead little Michael for his Mother—until midnight."

Madox Brown was very ill early in the year, but on February 3rd he writes from Manchester:—

"I will write you a line because I begin to be able to write a little, and no one is more deserving of it than you. I have been up for an hour to-day. This has been a sad affair of the Rossettis' loss. Lucy writes that you sat up late one night making a beautiful drawing of her poor little boy—a sad task, I know, for you, and very kind of you."

Writing to G. F. Watts for some advice, Shields received this kindly reply—which in time was followed by much helpful intercourse:—

LITTLE HOLLAND HOUSE,  
*May 28th, 1883.*

MY DEAR SIR,—If one lives long in the world, I think the conclusion arrived at will be that the things best worth having are, to be able to add something to humanity—real possessions, either by achievement or example,—and to give aid.

Sympathy may seem to be a very cheap kind of aid, but I know very well that at times, if depressed, it is not one whose value is least. Such workers as yourself may be always sure of it from me, with such help, also, as my experience may enable me to afford.

It will give me very great pleasure indeed to see you any day this week, except Saturday between 2 and 3. This will hold good for next week, but I might chance to be out.—Yours sincerely,  
 G. F. WATTS.

In July came the question of a memorial window, and Christina Rossetti wrote from Birchington:—

“I am sure you will be in sympathy with us in this spot of all spots. And one train of thought and feeling will arise in us all alike.

“Now I am going to write frankly expressing a great wish of my Mother’s, if such a wish can be made to harmonise with your good will and possibilities.

“Concerning our dear Gabriel’s grave three things are now in question: a stone on the grave itself, and two windows which more or less look upon the grave. The stone William in the main appropriates. One window is supposed to be filled in by personal friends and admirers. Indeed both windows might be so dealt with, only that here my Mother steps in with her personal preference. She wishes—if it may be—to secure this window (choosing the one nearest the grave)—as exclusively her own gift, and she devotes £100 to the purpose. Please bear in mind that we have no distinct idea of the costliness of such work—and then tolerate my enquiring for her whether that sum would give her a right to request you to undertake this window as her commission? Even your



personal love of Gabriel weighs less with her in this quest than your personal love of Christ. . . . As the window belongs to that part of the Church which forms the Baptistry, Mr. Alcock inclines to a subject in some way appropriate to Holy Baptism, and the lower section of the window—which consists of two lights—the lower section of each light has to be made slightly ornamental in some simple way independent of the figure subjects, as these panes of glass are made movable for the purpose. Every message from my Mother to you goes with her affectionate remembrances and her hopes (in which I unite) that you and Mrs. Shields enjoy at least tolerable health at present. Pray remember us both to your wife. We have been here a week to-day and are hoping to remain for 6 or 7 weeks longer, partly because we like to stay here, and partly because our home-house is in the hands of painters, paperers, &c.

“Please accept a poor photograph of the old familiar bungalow ; poor as it is, it reminds one of the original.”

Needless to say, Shields at once threw himself heart and soul into this idea, and proceeded to Birchington to discuss the question and examine the position for the proposed window. Much correspondence passed between Miss Rossetti and himself, and he prepared two designs, one of his own, the subject being the healing of the blind man, the other adapted from Rossetti's beautiful design of Mary Magdalene. These had to be submitted to the Birchington vicar for approval, and the dismay of Shields can be better imagined than described when he received a letter from the vicar objecting to the second design, saying, “I do not think this picture is likely to inspire devotional thoughts and feelings, and fear that in some cases it might rather do the reverse.”

What is presumably a rough copy of Shields' reply says:—

“My friend Rossetti himself would have shrunk with shuddering at any supposition that the design could

have an impure effect. Mrs. and Miss Rossetti could not have anticipated, even in dreams, such an objection arising, for they have been accustomed to regard the design as directly opponent to evil, and so it is, and has been esteemed by many pious men and women whom I have known enthusiastic in admiration of its conception—That the woman—passing by with a crowd of worldlings like herself to a revel—was caught by an eye at the window of the Pharisee's house—an eye at once reproachful and attractive, that with a glance broke her heart, and drew her, spite of the interposed barrier of lover and friend, so that she tore away her ornaments to fall stripped of her pride at the Saviour's feet, changed and renewed. Surely in an age of vanity like this—when another Isaiah might well arise, stirred by the Holy Spirit—to declaim against the daughters of Christian England 'walking and mincing as they go' in their high-heeled shoes, and decked with a larger catalogue of fripperies than the prophet enumerates, their hair curled with crimping pins (in defiance of Apostolic injunction), the very trade mark of levity on their faces, such an earnest and startling revelation of the 7th of Luke may well awake in some gazers the thought of whether the guise in which they present themselves for worship in the place of your ministry is one on which the Lord is likely to look graciously and speak forgiveness to their souls.

“Was not the denuding of the ornaments, so aptly insisted on by Rossetti, the very attitude required by God from His people after their spiritual fornication of the Golden Calf, as the express condition on which alone God would not come up in their midst in a moment, and consume them? I perceive that the freedom of the design from the dead, unhelpful conventionality common to religious art has astonished you.”

If the vicar received this letter, its eloquence produced no effect upon him, nor was he moved by another letter in which Shields, apparently not having yet dared to tell Mrs. Rossetti of the objection, prayed him to consider whether “for the sake of such a visionary fear you

should grieve the love and piety which has dictated this gift to your church, and which would provoke such a storm of indignation from Rossetti's many friends, and might become such a subject of public scandal that in dread of such a calamity I have kept silence to everyone concerning your communication."

The vicar was still quite decided that the ladies of his congregation were not likely to be moved to cast aside their hair-curlers or their high-heeled shoes, but that the effect of Rossetti's beautiful design might be demoralising rather than elevating. So after much more correspondence on all sides, another design of Rossetti's, "Passover in the Holy Family," was chosen for the second light, and the window was fixed in position in the following year—when Christina Rossetti, who with her aged mother had been at Birchington waiting to see it completed, wrote:—

"At last I enjoy the pleasure of telling you that we have seen the beautiful worth-waiting-for window, and that it excels my mother's hope. This she tells you as her own message—I wish you also could have beheld it on this bright morning, inviting us all to piety and devotion. The homely little dog and puppies I much like, with their spiritual suggestion. To me, the two subjects go together quite well, both as to line of composition and degree of action: let us hope that at least the ignorant may see with my eyes rather than with yours."

In September, Shields went to Broadlands to visit Lord and Lady Mount-Temple, and wrote to his wife:—

MY BELOVED ONE,—I should be so happy here, if my own better part were not in Lodge Place. Everything falls short of its full joy because you have not your share of it, and I half quarrel with all the pleasures on this account. Never have I been in any place so entirely to my tastes—it soothes me and delights me, more than I can tell you. This morning, after a very restless night,

away from you, I rose at 7, and after prayers for you, my dearest, what a walk I had along the swift river's beautiful banks—such great cedar trees, with their mighty boughs sweeping down to the very ground, and the swallows and the rooks overhead—Ah me, I came across one dark broad-beaked fellow, dead, with his splendid rainbow-tinted feathers, that look black only because they are generally so far away from us—and even here I thought the sorrow of the earth is found, while far above his dead body there flew his living fellows, none taking any thought of the lost one—who had been with them yesterday. . . . Then I was startled by the rush of wings and scattered water and a water-hen darted, with her feet touching the water and her wings spread above it, straight across to the opposite bank. Then a great heron with his broad wings flapping away a little further on, then a startled rabbit ran near my feet, and the wild doves cooed in the trees. All the river bottom is spread with weeds and long grasses, that quiver through the clear rushing water. At nearly half-past ten the bell rang for prayers, which Lord Mount-Temple led, Miss Juliet playing the harmonium. I must get the prayers they use, as they are the best I have seen for family worship. Then we sang the fine hymn which begins: "O the bitter shame and sorrow, that a time could ever be" . . .

The air here to-day was like cream, so soft and sweet, as I took an evening walk just now; all the young bulls in the park were butting at each other with their horns for very playfulness. The organ has just begun with the governess playing it, or I would write to Jessie—it distracts my head—I must go out till it stops.—Ever your own

FREDERIC.

A few days later Mrs. Shields joined him at Broadlands, where they stayed for a fortnight. The rest of the year was devoted to the Eaton designs and the Rossetti window. On Christmas Day Madox Brown, still in Manchester, wrote in anything but his usual cheerful vein:—

"You will be glad to know that the Decoration Committee at the Town Hall have decided at length to advise

that the remaining six panels in the large room should be given to me to fill. Not exactly at what I required for doing so, but at such price as would pay all round £375 for each picture of the twelve. It is only five years more exile in this place, and after that it will not, I suppose, much matter what happens. Altogether the idea has made me melancholy, but I must endeavour to get some place in London to come to, for otherwise it would be more unendurable."

An entry in the diary for 1884, on January 7th, records · "To Merton Abbey to see William Morris. He delightful, showed me many things."

This visit was made with a view to getting Morris's advice as to the designs still to be made for the south wall of the chapel at Eaton. They were to be carried out in mosaic—to Shields a medium even more distasteful than stained glass. Much correspondence passed between Mr. Waterhouse the architect, the Duke of Westminster, and Shields, as to the relative merits of glass and marble mosaic. The architect wrote that Morris had recommended marble, Morris wrote that he didn't remember anything about marble, but was inclined to agree with the artist that glass mosaic is the only material worth using, except for pavements or very simple wall ornament. "I remember, however," he says in a letter to Shields, "thinking that the chapel was not the best possible place for mosaic, as the flat spaces were small and cut up, and mosaic seems to call for large spaces, and if possible curved ones, as in the great domical buildings where it was used in early days."

Shields wrote in after years :—

"When I learned that marble mosaic was determined on, my soul sickened with recoil from a labour that I foresaw hateful in its finality, interpreted by dull Italian workmen, or even by the most intelligent that could piece the small squares. I went to inspect some examples

lately placed in a London church, flat, tame, and feeble in their effect. I concluded that only a background of black could redeem my own designs from the like failure. I made two sketches on this plan. 'What, black background,' said Waterhouse—'consider well before you regret it.'

But in the end the artist proved his point, and the mosaics at Eaton were pronounced as successful as the windows. Madox Brown wrote sympathetically about the mosaic in a letter dated February 20th, 1884:—

"When you wrote you were in the throes of martial encounter with Ducal and other stupidities. Is that over, and can it ever pass away? Probably not; but I trust it has already passed from you to others, more leathery of nerves and of tougher skin. I do not clearly understand, however, what the other kinds of mosaic (not marble) are. I suppose glass. Those who are to work in contact with you must be a great drawback to the expression of your work; yet you have, on the whole, got the stained-glass workers into such effectual order that I don't doubt your being able to overcome the denseness of the mosaic workers, that is, if they work in London."

Some time was spent over designs for windows for Cheltenham College, undertaken at the request of a friend. The subjects were from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Unfortunately Miss Beale, the well-known head mistress of Cheltenham, seriously disagreed with the artist as to his treatment of one of the figures—that of a little Cupid. Miss Beale thought that, as the figure was undraped, it could only be allowed to appear if festooned with roses! But roses had formed no part of the design, and Shields was furious at the suggestion that the lovely little figure needed any such alteration. One is wickedly but irresistibly reminded of the school-girl's rhyme:—

"Miss Buss and Miss Beale, Cupid's darts never feel.  
How different from us, Miss Beale and Miss Buss!"

The result was that Shields would do no more of the windows, and the series was completed by another hand. A visit was made to Paris to study the technical processes of the mosaic workers, and in August Shields paid a short visit to Normandy, again accompanied by his old friend Mr. Rowley. Madox Brown wrote on September 12th:—

“How are you, and how is work progressing? I wish I were well back in London, for I am pretty nigh sick of here. But I am making some progress with a small bit of ‘Wycliffe,’—and a very exciting and curious subject it is. For news—while you were in Normandy we have been in Scotland and Arran—after health! but I do not find myself much the better for it now I am back again. But it was tolerably jolly while it lasted. Arran might be beautiful if it were not so Scotch, and yet I like the poor Scotch people so much, though I do not care for their scenery. The Autumn Exhibition is open here now, but not much more interesting than the R.A., though, being a local affair, it somehow is more interesting. I have not troubled them. I see by the catalogue you have, but I have not seen the work itself. The most curious thing to notice in this exhibition is how *all* the works are for sale—some for large prices, like Herkomer’s; some for modest prices, as are *Friih’s*! But all, whether R.A.’s or others, for sale—alack the day! I do not think no one has any money, because I know of many people who launch forth more than ever; but I think it is the fashion for buying pictures that is passing. It never was a genuine taste, and people are now getting ashamed of being sold by dealers, without having acquired the taste to buy fine things for themselves. Mr. —, M.P., appears very large if not lifelike (by an R.A., of course), and he has exactly the expression, or seems saying to himself: ‘Really I must forswear lying and live cleanly; this last lie of mine was too much, even for an M.P.’

“This inveterate habit of mine (for it is such, I gain nothing by it) will be the ruin of me unless I give it up; but it sticks, it sticks! . . . And his complexion is as if he had been trying to wash it away in port wine. Dear

Shields, I have nothing but this nonsense to write to you, but you return me some sense for it in that vigorous hand I know so well and see so little of."

Three days later Shields went to Manchester and stayed for some days with Madox Brown. The Wycliffe picture was still in progress, and Shields sat for the head of Wycliffe himself—quite a recognisable portrait, though somewhat broadened about the lower part of the face. The rest of the autumn was spent over designs for mosaic and several other designs for glass, for which there was no lack of commissions. A portrait of Miss Waterhouse is mentioned in the list of this year's work, also a water-colour of the "Good Shepherd" for Lord Mount-Temple, and some drawings of children for Mr. Rowley; these, in addition to the Duke of Westminster's mosaics, the Rossetti windows, the Cheltenham windows, and other designs, show a year of strenuous work.

A bad fall, resulting in serious injury to the artist's finger, made him unable to do any work from December 8th until the beginning of January 1885, and the injured hand troubled him for many months. On January 5th, 1885, the diary records:—

"Able to begin to work a little in a rude way on Seddon's panels for sideboard. Went to Bougereau's exhibition with Brown, and to Holman Hunt's."

In this year Shields suffered long ill-health and domestic trouble, and was much sustained by the steadfast friendship of Lord and Lady Mount-Temple and Mrs. Russell-Gurney.

In June a visit was paid to Sark, a place which always had a great charm for Shields, and where, both on this and succeeding visits, he made many delightful sketches of rocks and sea, the entrance to one of the Gouliot caves being the subject of an oil painting entitled "The Sea's engulfing Maw."



In October a long and kindly letter from Sir Noel Paton asked Shields for a little bit of his work, in colour or black and white, for his old friend Lady Jane Dundas, suggesting that, if he found any difficulty in selection, William Sharp, who was known to them both, might assist him.

The diary is blank for some months of this year, but the following letter, dated Oct. 19th, from Sir Noel Paton, shows that Shields had been going through a time of trouble and anxiety:—

“I have just read—need I say with what profound sympathy—your letter of yesterday. God grant that ere long the terrible strains of soul, mind, and body from which you have been suffering as only one of your high-strung and ultra-sensitive nature can suffer, may be released, and a more or less easeful time be given you for the prosecution and successful completion of your noble work at Eaton Hall—work which, long after we have quitted this scene of probation, will remain a monument to your honour. There is no need for your hurrying about the drawing for Lady Jane Dundas: if it reaches Edinburgh a fortnight hence it will be in very good time. In the meantime I hasten to relieve myself of the responsibility of the enclosed. I will not fail to convey your message to Lady Jane. With sincere thanks for your generous and correct construction of my silence, and assurance that *yours* I shall never misconstrue.”

Another letter from Sir Noel Paton begs Shields not to send, as he proposed, a drawing which was unfinished and needed working on. He says:—

“I fully appreciate and sympathise with your wish to send a bit of your best, but pray let it be a bit of work already done. Keep every atom of your strength for the heavy and troublesome task in which you are now engaged. Pray pardon my thus speaking to you ‘like a father.’”

Again, in a letter from Edinburgh dated November 15th, 1885, Sir Noel Paton writes:—

“I conclude that you have disregarded my wise paternal advice, and are pursuing your own headstrong courses, as men of genius will! Some time ago Lady Jane Dundas (who is warmly disposed to further your interests to the best of her power) wrote to me enquiring whether I thought you would be disposed to undertake certain windows for a private chapel now in process of erection by her niece, Mrs. Bromley Davenport. But I have ventured to say that your hands are, and will be for some considerable time, fully occupied with the mosaics for Eaton Hall, and that I am sure you could not undertake them now. If, however, I have gone beyond my brief in making this statement, it is not too late to reopen the case. Further, I have this morning another communication from Lady Jane to the effect that, finding the Earl of Dysart wishes a music-room which he is now building decorated with high-class mural paintings, she strongly recommended that the commission should be offered to you. Also that Lord Dysart (who is busy with arrangements for his marriage) wishes your address, that he may take a convenient opportunity of speaking to you on the subject. I don't think it likely that Lord Dysart will call until after his marriage. In the meantime kindly let me know how you feel about both these proposals.”

Shields was unable to undertake any other work, knowing that Mrs. Russell-Gurney was eagerly awaiting his freedom from the toils of stained glass and mosaic that he might devote himself to her service.

Early in 1886 came M'Lachlan's lawsuit about the Royal group, Shields, much to his distress, being subpoenaed as a witness on his behalf. Madox Brown wrote from Manchester on April 16th: “Thanks ever so much for your kind letter and still kinder *bridges*; I shall always value them and certainly make as good use of them as I am able. The small low one is particularly jolly.”





SKETCH OF ROSSETTI'S ROOM AT CHEYNE WALK

Drawn from memory by Sir John Gilbert, R.A.

Then follow some particulars with regard to a raffle which, with his usual generosity, he was getting up for the benefit of an artist's widow, the prize being his own picture of Platt Lane.

Madox Brown is also keenly interested as ever in social reform, and says:—

“I was at a mass meeting of the unemployed yesterday at Pomona Gardens—6000 or 7000 poor, wretched-looking, ragged fellows. I had to speechify them, for—did I tell you?—I and some others have started a ‘labour bureau’ to register all who want employment, and invite those who want them to come to us. The workers have come in numbers, but not 5 per cent. of those numbers as employers. In fact, I believe the manufacturer looks upon a good broad margin of starving workmen as the necessary accompaniment of cheap labour—I shall get a nice name, I expect.”

Shields took a ticket for the raffle and won the prize, Madox Brown being highly delighted at this result.

It was in this year that Shields wrote an article on Rossetti's method of drawing in coloured chalks. A copy was sent to Sir John Gilbert, with a note describing the pleasure Rossetti used to take in Shields' large collection of prints and woodcuts from Gilbert's works. He wrote on October 10th:—

“It was thoughtful and kind to send me the ‘Hobby Horse.’

“That Rossetti could feel any interest in *my* Art rather surprises me; but I am glad to find that he *did*.

“I wish I had known more of him; it was but seldom that we met. He was a member of the Garrick Club, where we more than once or twice dined together. It was greatly to my loss that we met so seldom. I visited him at his house in Chelsea once, uninvited, and was received with the greatest kindness. While waiting until he came

in from his painting room, I looked all round the walls of what I took to be the library, because there were bookshelves well filled. And so careful was my survey and so pleased and interested was I in the picturesque treatment of the variety and beauty of its adornments that I made a mental drawing, and when I got home put all down in pencil sketch, which I still have by me.

"Now I know that he was a dear friend of yours, would you like to have a copy of this sketch? I will with pleasure do it for you when time permits. The original I should not like to part with, but you shall have a fac-simile."

A month later Sir John Gilbert wrote again, sending the sketch here reproduced. It is remarkable as a feat of memory, and interesting also as showing the great artist's pleasure in seeing a room which in Victorian days, before the influence of Morris and his partners had penetrated further than their immediate circle, must have been unique in the beauty of its furnishing.

"I have much pleasure in sending you this slight sketch of the fireplace in a room endeared to you by many recollections, before which you may have enjoyed happy converse with a most valued friend. Better conversation than is to be had *generally*. Of such a sort, too, which is, *I find*, hard to get nowadays.

"You will recognise some of the adornments of the mantel and above it. The owls, the little mirror, the candle branches, the little round worsted balls hanging over the shelf, the Dutch tiles and other things, the bell ropes, &c. &c.

"I am indeed glad to be able to send you such a memorial of an old friend."

In December Madox Brown wrote in reply to Shields' Christmas greeting. Incidentally he says:—

"I have undertaken to execute some very large coloured figures for their Jubilee Exhibition here, and they must be

ready by a certain day. I have got Knewstub, D. G. R.'s old pupil, to assist me. One of the characters is a sheep shearer. Do you think that in London anywhere there is to be got a cast of a *shorn* sheep? I had one in my studio, shorn on purpose; but he was a Xmas one, and so fat that taking his wool off made very little difference to him—or to me."

In the spring of 1887 Shields had a pleasurable task in designing symbolic decorations for the church of St. Luke's, Camberwell, his friend the Rev. Hugh Chapman then being the vicar. Mr. Chapman has published an interesting little book describing Shields' work in his church, entitled *Sermons in Symbols*.

Another commission, different to anything the artist had hitherto undertaken, was a design for a memorial to the Gordon Highlanders, to be executed in relief by Mr. M'Lean for a church in Edinburgh.

In April Shields again visited Broadlands, and at the end of July made another visit to Paris. The diary records:—

"August 3rd.—To Rue St. Luc; mosaic work woeful in extreme. Did some myself, correcting the ignorant tracing.

"August 8th.—Burke having seen our work held all in vain till we had formed a scale of tints. This I tried to do with Zachariah, and came a cropper. Burke caved in; the colours are not to be had that he gave me samples of. A wretched collapse; I can fight this fool's war no longer."

He returned to London more disgusted with mosaic work than ever.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Mrs. Russell-Gurney's dream—Search for a site—The disused mortuary chapel—The Jubilee windows at St. Ann's, Manchester—Window at Mereworth Church, Kent—To Northern Italy—At Pietra Santa—Letters from Italy—Mrs. Gurney's letters—Designing the Chapel of the Ascension—The Madox Brown testimonial—Correspondence with G. F. Watts—Address to art students—"Knott Mill Fair"—Holman Hunt's interesting experiences—Death of Madox Brown.

At the end of August 1887 is an interesting entry in Shields' diary:—

"To Mrs. Russell-Gurney, and with her to National Gallery. Her idea of a little Hall decorated."

On September 2nd he wrote to Mrs. Russell-Gurney, whose dream of a decorated chapel was growing nearer to possible realisation:—

"All this is beautiful and felicitous beyond my thought—for yours is the conception, and yours the swift steps taken to nurse it into well-being. I tremble with desire and fear towards the work—I say fear, for it involves great issues, and may lead to a new departure in the alliance or service of Art to Piety. Symbols affect men's imagination and faith mightily still. The little spot should be pure—so that anything that defileth—if it entered—should feel itself abhorred and reproved silently. I would wish it lit from the roof, shut out from all but heaven's vault—closeted from the tumultuous world about it—and this also—to economise wall space, precious for decoration in so small a shrine.

"O send wisdom out of Thy Holy Place, that being present, she may labour with us.

"You imply the dear Mount-Temple's approval. By Thursday next I trust that some embryo of a scheme may



be mine to submit to you—for there is no engagement that prevents me from immediate action. I have purposely kept myself free from the bonds of two commissions that were proffered me—for glass decoration. It only seems dreamlike yet—and sacred—so that I cannot breathe a word of it to anyone.”

Mrs. Russell-Gurney was now full of suggestions and ideas which were eagerly welcomed and considered by the artist, whose delight at the prospect of such an opportunity knew no bounds. While their plans were maturing, Shields was finishing the last of his work for Eaton Chapel. In the autumn of this year he was much interested in the Salvation Army, which both his wife and adopted daughter joined for a time. He had some friendly correspondence with Mrs. Booth, and she sat to him for her portrait.

Subsequently Shields became much prejudiced against the methods of the Salvationists, though always retaining a great respect for Mrs. Booth and her family. In October he was greatly pleased to hear that Madox Brown was really returning to London and had taken a house in St. Edmund's Terrace—within quite easy distance of Lodge Place.

On December 13th Brown wrote:—

“Now I expect to be in London (my ‘Dalton’ at the Town Hall being about to be fixed) about Xmas. . . . Rowley has given me one or two rather mysterious hints of some great works you are to be engaged on—well, if so, there is no one deserves more, nor whom I should so rejoice to see get it. He also asked me from you what I had said of you in a certain Lecture—it was very little, because, on the whole, they had treated you rather well. I merely said, talking of the Black and White display, that they might have shown your ‘Plague of London’ designs, and with them Dyce's cartoons, &c. They had, you must know, confined this department to a few hackneyed things out of *Punch*.”

Early in 1888 Mrs. Russell-Gurney's plan had grown beyond its original conception of a small decorated hall. As Shields says in his handbook to the Chapel of the Ascension, "The direction of the commission was changed, only to carve for it a wider channel. It now welled forth as a desire to plant in some great highway of London a place of rest for wayfarers, and for prayer and meditation, wherein body, mind, and spirit oppressed with the hurrying roar of the city's life, might find repose and a refreshing feast ever liberally spread upon its walls, for whosoever willed to enter." Mrs. Gurney wrote in August 1888:—"It must be in a good thoroughfare, and I suppose attached to a parochial church for occasional services. . . . I wonder who would be a real authority to consult, and when we know all, I wonder whether we could advertise in the *Guardian*, 'Ho! some London Clergymen—would you like a little additional chapel—for parochial services—to be kept always open—painted with divine symbols, and with a Porch with seats and a little fountain!' Then the willing Clergyman and the site must coincide, and the Bishop must be willing to consecrate—which he cannot do without an endowment, that would be necessary,"

Some such advertisement was actually inserted, but brought no response. Much advice was sought from friends, who gave anything but encouragement. Miss Octavia Hill wrote that she thought that only the associations of a church would keep visitors at all in order, though in these days of public museums and picture galleries that seems to be a peculiarly depressing view.

A site was suggested in the Bayswater Road, with a depth of 100 feet running down Orpington Street, for which £2000 was asked. After months of negotiations it seemed impossible to come to agreement with the landowners.

At last Mr. Kegan Paul suggested that the dilapidated mortuary chapel on the Bayswater Road might possibly

be acquired. Mrs. Gurney wrote on November 15th, 1888:—

“I covet that site—the disused St. George’s, Hanover Square, Burying Ground and Chapel. For such a site I would spend more on building—it might be lovely. I would do up a pretty little garden—it would be a delightful Passengers’ Rest, inviting within to a still deeper rest. I could leave something to the Parish for perpetual custody. Do find out whether an application in person to the Bishop of London would be of any use—he would, I know, remember my husband’s name.”

The legal preliminaries were now set on foot, but many months elapsed before any definite permission to rebuild the chapel was obtained from the Burial Board. In the meantime Shields was maturing his plans, so far as it was possible without definite knowledge as to the space which would be available. In this year he also designed the altarpiece for Eaton Chapel, the fine windows in St. Ann’s, Manchester—placed there as a memorial of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee—and a series of designs for glass for Mr. Budgett. Sir Noel Paton wrote to report on the memorial in Edinburgh:—

33 GEORGE SQUARE, EDINBURGH,  
November 18th, 1888.

MY DEAR AND MUCH FORGIVING FRIEND,—I must not allow my desire to write you the long letter which, by every law of gratitude and friendship, I owe you, to delay for another hour the brief report of my visit to the “Gordon Highlander” memorial in St. Giles’—already too long delayed, through causes beyond my control. On Tuesday afternoon I went to the grand old church with one of my daughters, to see the memorial. The day was a very dismal one, and the church so dark that the tattered colours of the Scottish Regiments grouped over the capitals of the great piers looked like so many gigantic bat spectres hovering in their murky corners. We were conducted by the verger towards a mysterious light *flittering* about in

the blackness under a painted window; and there we found the object of our quest. That I *saw* it, however, I dare not venture to assert; but one of the workmen who was putting finishing touches to the "fixing up" was good enough to pass his candle (my daughter, who has a fine sense of the fitness of things, called it a "glimmering taper!") back and forward over the tablet, and I saw enough to realise the simple and pathetic dignity of your design, and the admirable way in which it has been carried out by Mr. McLean. When I see it under more favourable conditions, as I hope to do soon, I will write again, and more fully. Meantime you may rest assured that you have not failed in your purpose of producing a work worthy of its object, its place, and its author.

I must not write another line or I shall miss the south post. Forgive haste, and believe me, with much affection.—Yours,  
NOEL PATON.

On January 1st, 1889, Shields went to see the chapel in Bayswater Road, and met there Mr. Herbert Horne, the young architect who was to design the new building. Later in the month he called on G. F. Watts, and wrote to Mrs. Gurney:—

"I thought it a most fortunate opportunity to ask him what he thought of tempera. He says there is no question of its beauty and durability; but that all modern attempts in it have failed from lack of some unknown essential in the formulæ bequeathed to us from the ancients—that I should find myself plunged in difficulties if I essayed that medium; but that a perfectly 'mat' surface—*i.e.* without shine—could be attained on his own lines—painting on a preparation of tempera, and using the smallest quantity of oil possible as medium for painting. You know how little sheen there is about his own pictures, which always have a more or less fresco-like aspect, as compared with all other men's oil paintings. So far this is satisfactory, and enables me to balance the qualities of the plans open to me."

A letter from Dr. M'Laren acknowledging a photograph of the painting now in the crypt of St. Barnabas', Pimlico, shows his faith in the vocation of Shields as a painter of religious subjects; he had evidently not been told of the proposed chapel when writing from Manchester on March 20th, 1889; he said:—

“I am delighted with the lunette. The rich symbolism is not obtruded, and yet sufficiently emphasised. I do not think you have ever touched a higher level in intensity of conception. Was not the moon full at the Passover? I cannot find the Roman soldiers. They must have made good their escape between your sending and my getting the autotype. Where is the lunette put up? Wherever it is, there will not be many sermons preached in that church, which will be as powerful to clothe the story with reality and pathos as yours is. Surely you are meant to be the painter of true sacred subjects. The old men had a very narrow range of these; annunciations, crucifixions, resurrections, ascensions, last suppers, are about all, barring the cartoons. Oh, there's the woman taken in adultery, too, for the sake of the opportunity of painting some Italian harlot; and then there's no more. You have faith and imagination and mysticism, and you can draw, so I hope that you will have strength to make more of the gospel stories live to us.

“. . . My brain is very weary, and sometimes obstinately refuses to secrete any more sermons. Small blame to it, for last night's was the 5836th.”

In May Shields designed the large window, “The Raising of Lazarus,” for Mereworth Church, Kent; and in this month the Brazenose Club, Manchester, held an exhibition of his works, which included many early water-colours and designs for woodcuts, as well as autotypes of his latest works. Meanwhile the chapel business was progressing; and on May 6th Shields wrote to Mrs. Gurney, who was away nursing her uncle at Hereford:—

MY DEAR MISTRESS,—I miss you greatly, desiring to lay before you the possibilities of our plan, as far as I am presently able to perceive them. I say presently, because I know that what will seem to you but a poor handful of seed corn will develop and swell and bring forth according as the sun and rain feed it and shine upon it. And now I lack your casting vote amidst my own counsels. No one has such paramount right as you, and no one has a heart so joined in my desire and purpose in this devoted work; no one will look so intelligently and sympathetically into the difficulties or inspire me so much in threading my way through them. Light dawns—nay rather, I should say, that my dimmed eyes begin to see, under the dazzling glory of the fulness of the Revealed Truth, what paths are open to us for this work. I see many reasons why the selection of subjects essayed by the old men were so narrow and oft-repeated. Here are two or three walls possible to divide in so many spaces—these are one's chess-board—and all the hosts of heaven and hell to do battle within them. The space is an encounter on a narrow bridge, where two combatants are pitched over, where rank and courage are indifferent and foothold tells for most. So cherished subjects perish from my scheme for lack of space; and I have often been as a child, standing environed with starry fields of daisies, who eagerly begins to gather and goes on till its little capacity to pluck and hold is exhausted, and then sits down to weep because it cannot gather all. When do you return? You must, as my mistress, resolve for me which of the tentative schemes I have prepared is most acceptable to you. Ever since I knew that the Beloved Ladye was in London I have wished to see her. Why have I not done so then? Truly because I feared to be questioned about the scheme, while my own mind was a chaos of disordered material. Now I have written to ask when I may wait at Cheyne Walk.

The last paragraph refers, of course, to Lady Mount-Temple.

Permission being at last granted to erect a new chapel,



LOVE

In the Chapel of the Ascension





the Burial Board elected Mrs. Russell-Gurney to their committee.

Mr. Horne was instructed to prepare designs, and at Mrs. Russell-Gurney's suggestion he and Shields visited Northern Italy to study some of the principal churches and decorations.

Many letters passed during this Italian tour between the artist and his "beloved mistress," whose soul was so at one with his in the task before him.

ALBERGA UNIONE, PIETRA SANTA,  
*September 13th, 1889.*

MY DEAR MRS. RUSSELL-GURNEY,—We are at this wonderful little place, having come from Milan, where we have been feeding, both of us, on Luini, and Horne particularly on the Sta. Maria della Grazia façade. It is not possible for me to say what I feel about this journey, nor the rich rewards that meet us after the long railway journeys. By the nature of our mission we are both fitted supremely to receive all the best of suggestiveness in whatever passes beneath our notice; and we are both resolute, amid the many bye-path lanes that tempt us bewitchingly in this land of marvels, not to be led astray from our direct quest. Both the churches here are most choice examples of Lombardic—so simple and pure—and we are making studies of them and of the principles that govern their design. Horne admires them extremely. . . . We make next for Pisa and Lucca, whence I will again write a few words, for I feel so much engrossed with all the varied interests of this tour that my mind cannot settle itself to write at length; only I know that fruit must come of all this delving, and daily do I ask that it may be to the glory of God—that first—and to the delight of our dear mistress in the work she has set her hand unto. I forget not my inward promise which you desired me to make, remembering your solicitude with faithful affection. We stayed at the Hotel Cavour two nights; we were comfortable, but it was very expensive; and though I know that the privileges we enjoy cannot be had cheaply, I do grudge all that seems to me the excess of expense

at such a hostel as the Cavour. I do hope that you are keeping well.—Ever, dear Mistress, gratefully yours,  
 FREDERIC SHIELDS.

Shields wrote again from Assisi on September 25th :—

“ My heart leaped and joyed in your dear messages—and you know so well, I see, the difficulty of putting one’s experiences into ordered description while more and more are being shot in upon you that I have no need to excuse myself for making little present attempt to do so. At Florence—save for two hours at the Uffizi—we confined ourselves wholly to the church decorations. The Holy Angelicos were so engrossing when I was at St. Marco, that I absolutely forgot the Scalzi—but I went back—and the first glimpse I got of the Cortile fascinated me. The slender columns coupled at the angles, with the single ones between, the beautiful light, and the noble manner of the designs of Del Sarto, made a whole that is fast in my mind as one of the most congruous things I ever saw. He had varied the colours very cunningly—some of the subjects being wholly in raw umber, and others a cooler greenish-brown. The Annunziata frescoes are injured by the abolition of the coloured border originally painted round them by Del Sarto. I was greatly impressed by the superiority of Giotto as a colourist (especially in Sta. Croce) over all those of his epoch—and this applies here also. Nothing can be more beautiful in tone than the frescoes over the high altar of the lower church. These I have been studying, as well as the grand Cimabues that are seen as wrecks here and there. I meant only to stay one day here, but it has won two from me—for it is unique in all things—for situation, for its galaxy of early frescoes, for its strange architecture. The earliest, quite Byzantine, that I have seen, is the Duomo front—and very fine it is. And the fulness of the Glory of God in the beauteous mountain itself under storm and sunshine. To-night as I returned, the great church in the valley below, St. Maria del Angeli, lay under the golden sun as it set, its great dome surrounded by a blaze of purple nimbus, lifting the church out from

the gloom of the wide campagna in the most mystic manner. I never saw such an effect before—so mystically unearthly. This people are the models of Leonardo, Buonarotti, and Raphael, most evidently. I observe their actions—so spontaneously expressive—not acting, like much French action. And I perceive what a mighty advantage the old designers had in familiarity with all this, day by day. Their mouths are more flexible at the corners than ours. Here, over and over again, I have met with that rounded corner of the parted lips which is seen in the Greek sculptures, but never in English faces—and the magnificent proportions of many of the men and women justify the types of Michael Angelo, and almost the exaggerations of Parmegiano. Horne desired to spend three days on his own account in Rome, and I am not unwilling, though by no means desirous to go thither, seeing we are now so near—but this is out of our sacred quest, and at our own cost, not yours, dear Mistress. Then we are to touch Orvieto, and see the Angelicos and Signorellis, and then to make for home. Oh, that Della Quercia at Lucca! Holy, Holy, Holy, seemed breathed throughout its still beauty. Art never excelled this. Adieu, until we can meet by God's mercy, and I can enjoy the joy you have given me over again, piece by piece. We are both agreed to beware of fixed ideas during this period of reception—but all our thoughts and doings tend continually and everywhere to our one great object."

The following letter is characteristic of Shields in a cheerful frame of mind. It was addressed to the writer, who had known him since babyhood, and to whom he was now beginning to give regular instruction every week at Lodge Place.

ASSISI,  
*September 24th, 1889.*

MIA CARA PICCOLO BAMBINO,—This pigeon Italian faintly aims to breathe forth the expressions of my altissima sentimento verso di cara Bambino pittore. What have I seen in the brief days of my absence! Is

it a year ago—for so long have I lived since, at least. What a tower of experiences, from whence I look loftily down on the past. And here, in this divinely beautiful Assisi—I have you in my mind—with St. Francis' great presence all about me, and the marvellous church, filled with art from vault to floor, and the great campagna stretching below, rich with olives and vines. Stop—it's only a catalogue, which is provokingly whetting to the tantalised appetite shut up in London's brick circles of lost people—to which also I must return—as driven forth from Paradise. And the people here are so gracious, so truly polite from poor to rich. You seldom grate against your fellows here—they are as mellow as their own figs, and sweet as their olive-oil, and inexpressibly graceful in their ways. If I should get a note to say you are better, my most dear baby, it would relieve my care about you, dear little white spectre, whose pallor haunts me since I saw you last. Bother your work—don't worry about it, you are more precious than any art of man, you wondrous image, living, feeling, loving, the work of the Almighty—while our best works are but a poor silent mockery of life, painfully wrought out. Now good night, I am so tired—dear love to your Mamma, and your own self, mea Piccolo Bambino. If you write, address Poste Restante, Roma—whither, God willing, we soon go hence.—Ever your affectionate Maestro,

FREDERIC SHIELDS.

At Rome Shields had an attack of illness, and hurried on as soon as he was able to Orvieto, whence he wrote to Mrs. Gurney on October 6th :—

“I have been out twice to-day. This afternoon over-looking the Tiber valley with the tinkling of flocks coming up from below, and the green lizards playing in and out on the crannied wall. O the sweet heat of the sun, and the flecking shadows of cloud over the far faint hills—and all so strange as well as lovely. This morning I went straight to the Duomo. It is a miracle of art hurt sorely by the modern mosaics on the façade. Within, the side chapels are all hoarded up under repairs, but Signor-

elli's frescoes were visible, and I confess I was astonished to find that the things I disliked in photographs from them vanished in the breadth of the colour—leaving a most consistent impression of powerful mastery. I was not able to look long, and mean to visit them again to-morrow. But the passingly lovely portion of the ceiling by Angelico I could sit gazing at as indeed forgetful that they are seen on the roof—and not rather that floating in the open glory of heaven, I beheld the saints majestically seated on their thrones. I recognised at once your favourite Magi Adoration in the altar near, by Moso, and loved to think as I sat waiting opposite it for the *custode* to open the chapel, that I was sitting where you had sat, gazing where you had gazed. I have been in the chapel of the Duomo a long time this morning learning much, but chiefly from the contrast between the spandril by Angelo and all the rest. Signorelli could never have designed that noble David, the grand Moses, or the Baptist. Spiritually, Angelico occupies the exalted place."

Ten days later he returned to London, and at the end of the month wrote to Mrs. Russell-Gurney as to a design by Mr. H. P. Horne, whose task was indeed a difficult one owing to the narrowness of the frontage allowed, it being necessary to preserve the old ante-chapel on one side, and the caretaker's lodge on the other.

Shields wrote:—

"The design is of the interior only as yet. That is the vital thing to arrange primarily, and let the exterior develop thence—not the reverse way as with most modern buildings. My schemes depend for organisation on the number, size, and variety of shape of the spaces possible to allot within—even as do the thoughts and purposes of a man, upon the space within his skull. In all the church decoration in Italy, there is little more than the segment representation of a sacred or legendary story in one or two tiers of subjects. I seek to develop

rather a sequence of ideas, illustrated by wealth of figurative ideas and symbols and types. To give the Spirit of the Revelation of God to man—from the beginning—conveyed in the forms of Scripture translated as much as may be into the shapes at art's command. To glorify the Father by a good work which shall teach, admonish, and accentuate, with the never silent speech of Art. We shall talk over it when I have sunned my fruit against the walls in my thought—but the walls I must have first."

Plans and models innumerable, and endless legal difficulties occupied much time during the last months of this year, and not until February 1890 were the finished plans of the new chapel ready to be submitted to the authorities. Only those who have perused the correspondence can realise the endless complications of all the proceedings from the moment the site was suggested. "Progress was barred," writes Mr. Horne, "by a special Act of Parliament, a Rector, Churchwardens, a Vestry, and a Burial Board, also if I remember rightly, a Duke and his interests came in, some way or another." The legal difficulties at one time made it apparently impossible to pull down any of the old decaying walls, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Burial Boards, Vestries, Consistories, Faculties, Court of Arches, Vicars, Bishops, all these authorities seemed to the distracted artist to be in league to delay the commencement of his great task. Finally the matter was put into the hands of a skilled ecclesiastical lawyer, who succeeded in reconciling the various interests which barred the way, and carrying the whole thing through the Court of Arches.

And then came all the questions connected with building, into every detail of which, from the stencilling on the rafters of the roof to the marble steps, Mrs. Gurney entered with the greatest interest and enthusiasm.



DESIGNS ABOVE THE GALLERY

West Wall, Chapel of the Ascension





## THE CHAPEL OF THE ASCENSION 307

Shields, writing to Mr. Horne in December, says:—

“Ever since we met on Saturday, I have been brewing and stewing, and taking into the scales afresh all you said. I have an awe of missing the mark in this momentous matter, and a most earnest wish that no incertitude of purpose on my part shall stumble you, or confuse you, in a task of which I more and more discern the difficulty, and to this end there is a foundation principle which I desire to lay firmly down—*i.e.* that the paintings are not for the building, but the building for the paintings. That I am not to be cramped into the bed, but the bed made to my measure, with room to stretch myself a little. This was why I endeavoured to begin at the end, to see before me, and to formulate a settled plan of the division of the wall into three main quantities or tiers.

“1. The lowest to be of subjects with many figures.

“2. That above to be mainly of single figures in divided niches.

“3. And the uppermost of a narrower line to receive angelic figures—which Mrs. Gurney much sets her heart on.”

That the architect, within the limitations already alluded to, and with the restrictions imposed on him both by the artist and the pious foundress, was able to achieve a result so beautiful and dignified as the Chapel of the Ascension as it now stands, speaks volumes for his skill—and patience.

Shields painted a water-colour entitled “*Facilis Avernì Descensus*” which he sent to the Old Water-Colour Society Spring Exhibition. This was the last picture he exhibited there; he subsequently retired, in order to give undivided attention to the chapel work.

Being again out of health, some days were spent at a Matlock Hydro, and on his return he wrote to his pupil:—

SIENA HOUSE, *February 5th.*

MY DEAR BAMBINO,—I have borne inward reproaches enough for not writing to you while away. What a

creature of habit I am! Turned into a seething crowd of my fellow-beings, without any possibility for a moment of the solitude habitual to me—I was carried away as by a stream, and saw you, and all other things I care for, whisked past me without power to wave a “how do you do” even. A hundred and sixty-three mortals made the swollen current, with baths and other medicinal affairs—in one eddy after another you got caught all day, till you gave up volition, as a vain struggle. Thursday is taken up by an engagement. Will Friday suit you? Bring all your work and discouragements to me—I know all about them, and how power is built up of them, eventually. If you please to come for the whole day—do. I will get old Austen for a model. Bring a colour box and a sheet of Arnold paper, N.B.—Easel provided by the Institute. Don't get discouraged with your efforts—Colour is a thousand times more difficult than black and white. Remember that its beauty is very largely—I had almost said altogether—dependent on the variety of its gradations as it turns to or from the light, becomes more saturated with the grey or golden beams, or more sobered by their absence. How I puzzled through its mysteries, with no one to show me anything—only reading all I could lay hands on—and trying this way and the other, with many a failure, on tinted paper, on white paper, with body colour and without, with mediums and without. Now I can reach what I seek in a direct and simple way—no simpler could be taught to you.—Ever yours affectionately,

F. S.

The writer remembers one of her weekly lessons at this time, when Shields with a radiant face, speaking of his new work, exclaimed: “I feel as if I had been given wings.”

On April 9th he records in his diary—in red letters—“Began Mrs. Gurney's work”—and wrote to her saying:—

“I have indeed begun to-day, even as I said. I feel an unknown land is to be sought, in fear and trembling, across unvoyaged seas. I feel that if Art may be used

in the service of God at all, if the fine talent may be traded with in Christ's mart, then there is a scope and part for it never yet approached save in a very few exceptional examples. I feel that if there is to be spiritual life in this work, and welling from it, it must be wrought in and by the spirit of life.

"We are of one mind and heart in this, my beloved and honoured mistress. May God fulfil it to His own glory, though I be nothing."

In June, G. F. Watts wrote asking him to lunch any day at Little Holland House. He knew nothing of the work Shields was commencing, but said: "I should like to have an occasional chat about serious art. I wish you would kindly send me a line and tell me the correct colours for the draperies of Faith. I know you are an authority." To which Shields replied:—

"It is good indeed to remember me, in spite of the appearance of slighting you, and the fact is that I have often yearned to see you again, but have feared intrusion, perhaps at some unlucky time when you might, as a painter sometimes does, wish me at Jericho. Then I heard with pain of your illness, and became more shy of troubling you. But thanks indeed for this word of kindness, which assures me of your undiminished goodwill. I will take the earliest leisure I can make for waiting on you. Art becomes to me so 'serious' in all senses that I am less and less inclined to talk about it, especially in an age that runs to gabbling seed. The power of Art for good and evil seems altogether unrecognised, and I, who have some glimmering that way, am so weak and purblind that I keep to myself, going timidly on, but at least not giving myself up to the guidance of the blind teachers who cry aloud, 'We see.'

"For answer to your question and compliment, I am no 'authority.' I know none on the subject but the Authority of the Word revealed. Paul declares Faith is God's gift. She is Heaven born. She is the assurance of Heavenly things to mortals shut in by sensuous things,

therefore the *skies' hue* is hers, her mantle and her wings: and for her robe, *white*—unspotted. And this because they who seek righteousness by works fail of that which only Faith gives. The 'fine linen of the Saints' symbolises their righteousness in the Apocalypse, and it is said that their robes were made '*white* in the blood of the Lamb.' If I seek where alone I look to find, this is what is given me, and it is the best I can offer in response to your question. I bow to tradition only where it agrees with the written word."

The rest of the year was devoted to work for the chapel. A visit to Sark in the autumn was saddened by pathetic letters from Madox Brown telling him of the illness of his wife, who died on October 10th. He wrote:—

"It is no use your hurrying home, and spoiling all the good of your outing. Good-bye, dear old fellow, try and come back strong for the winter's work."

Shields was able to get home only on the day after the funeral, but he lost no time in hastening to his old friend's side, and through the years of life that were left to him they were very frequently together.

In 1891 the little road in which Shields had found so quiet a retreat was threatened by an extension of the railway. He wrote several letters of protest to the newspapers, and got up a petition to Parliament signed by many artists who lived in the neighbourhood. Eventually, however, the same fate which had interrupted his tenancy of the two strange old houses in Manchester, pursued him here, and over the site of Siena House now spreads the great coaling station of St. John's Wood.

It would be of little interest to dwell with detail upon the next few years, which were spent in work undisturbed save by rare days of holiday when health showed this to be necessary, and by personal sorrows of too intimate a

nature to be dwelt upon here. In November 1891, being much troubled as to the affairs of his friend Madox Brown, he set on foot a movement in which he was joined by nearly every artist of note in the country, to commission a picture to be painted by Brown and presented by the subscribers to the National Collection. Only those who have seen the mass of correspondence, questioning and answering, meddling and intermeddling, subscribing and not subscribing, enthusiastic or indifferent, can understand the work this entailed. Not the least of the difficulties was that of keeping the whole affair a secret from the veteran artist—until some tangible result was assured. For a time this was possible, and the affair seemed likely to proceed smoothly. G. F. Watts wrote, with his fine generous spirit, on November 12th :—

“I am greatly grieved by the contents of your letter, forwarded to me here. I will, of course, send what aid I can, and think the idea of giving a commission, or better, buying a picture, the right thing. I wish I could at once promise a liberal subscription, but I have never had anything I did not work for (excepting once in my life a very small legacy), and I have had from the beginning to work for more than myself. Also, as may be known, the number of things I have devoted to public objects, and the number of works in my Gallery, mean so much out of pocket and nothing in, and the state of my health obliges many outlays that seem to be luxuries but are necessities. I am sorry I missed seeing you, I should have liked to have your opinion of some new efforts, but I am obliged, by the state of my health, to avoid the London winter fogs. Write and tell me what you have been doing, your work is full of interest to me. It may seem rather presumptive of me to say write and tell me, but I think you will excuse my ardent desire to know all that is being conscientiously done. In a few months I shall be seventy-two, so have not much time to lose.”

Shields' reply, written on the following day, speaks eloquently of his new work:—

“I know too sadly that all the noble works that hang in your gallery unsold are costly in possession. The world talks of them in affected raptures, and leaves them with you. The day will come when they will fight for them. No nation ever slighted and contemned its imaginative artists as our England does. Yet what wonders have they wrought, in conquest of neglect and poverty? As for Brown, the miserable pittance paid for the first six frescoes at Manchester, left him eight hundred pounds to the bad. Thanks to you indeed, for a sympathy I knew you would extend, and for the promised aid according to your power. Burne-Jones, Stephens, and myself are to meet for an informal committee talk to-morrow, and determine how best to proceed as quietly as possible to the end we have in view. I hope we shall reach it. We have now about £300 promised. I feel it is most kind to enquire what I am doing, a subject I avoid in general, chiefly, I think, from a pained sense of failure to hit my mark, save now and then, and but for these occasional approaches to the bull's eye, I should yield up effort in despair. Art is harder to me every day, and the long years I spent in solitary pursuit of elementary knowledge (which students under ordinary teaching acquire early) left me in middle age far behind in all technical attainment, and this still cripples me, yet I feel that I can find means of expressing what I feel, whenever I feel strongly. So I am battling away at a wonderful thing that by God's blessing surely has been given me to do. A whole chapel to fill with design from floor to roof, an Arena Capella to myself. Subject over subject, all pictured walls. It seems incredible still. But the walls are slowly creeping up under these November skies in the Bayswater Road, and I am steadily adding subject to subject, all in ordered plan, to take their places therein. You painted once the portrait of Mr. Russell-Gurney—a wonderful picture. This is his widow's commission to me. The beautiful soul had dreamed of helping some neglected high-aimed artist from her youth. She found me, took

me for such an one, and so will I prove to her, my good mistress—a faithful and unslothful servant in the work. I should have to write a book to lay before you my scheme, but Prophets and Apostles, Christian virtues and worldly vices, Gospel and Apostolic history, types and symbols all enter into it, so that my mind and heart are ever engaged, and I have that greatest of all intellectual boons—a consecutive work, that which made the old men happy, and that which is denied to modern artists. I have completed about 24 subjects, but unless you had so generously professed an interest in my work, I should not have said so much, for I dread that it should be talked of prematurely, and so the press get hold of Mrs. Gurney's dear hope, to tear its vitals with their bear's claws. And it is because this work by its magnitude calls for all my application, that I am so unready to leave it in the daylight, so that while my affection has gone out to Little Holland House, the work has kept me bound day after day, month after month, till too late to come.

“I do hope that when you return to town, your health may be recruited, and so you may be the fitter to recur to the work you have in hand, to enter upon the works you meditate. As I grow older, I realise the preciousness of the few coins of time possibly left to me also, and how I squandered from my exhaustless purse when I was young.

“May I send my kindest memory of Mrs. Watts' reception of a stranger?”

To this letter Watts replied on November 20th as follows, enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds for the Madox Brown fund:—

“I send the enclosed cheque to be used for the benefit of Madox Brown, much wishing I could contribute the whole sum required; but, as I told you, I am not a man with independent means. How I envy you! An opportunity not hitherto afforded to any modern, at least in England. The boon could not have been afforded to any

artist more earnest than yourself; you have my best wishes and all the aid the most profound sympathy can give—sympathy and really anxious interest, for it is an event in the history of Modern Art.”

Shields replied by return of post :—

“I read your letter to the last words with deep interest ; then, and not till then, did I open the cheque, and the blood mounted to my cheeks with surprise—yea—why should I not say the truth, with admiration for the generous spirit that dictated such a gift, with such added wish that you could give the whole required. I say not my thanks alone are due, but the thanks of all who are working in this cause. You will be glad to hear that we have in promises and subscriptions paid in, over £580, your own cheque added making £630. Leyland has promised £100 of this on condition that the picture or work purchased from F. M. B. be presented to the nation ; so we are far advanced towards our aim, and it makes me very glad. Once more my heartiest thanks for the unexpected liberality of your gift. Yes, you express exactly what I have felt from the initial projection of the Chapel and its contents, that it is a new thing in England, an unprecedented opportunity, one for which I am conscious that all my life has contributed singularly to fit me to grasp, in certain aspects of it—and one that, looked at from other points, many living painters are better furnished than myself to adorn. But I am so free here to give full vent to all I feel, all I have in me to express, I who have been repressed all my life before, bound, chained with evil and irksome conditions. No words give utterance to my wonder and reverence for this gift like those of the Psalm—

‘ When the Lord turned again the Captivity of Zion,  
Then were we like unto them that dream.’

Indeed for long I could with hardness persuade myself this glorious place was mine. What a stimulus to work ! My health has improved since I began eighteen months ago, a great aim quickens the vital powers, as a diffusion of aims lowers them by distraction. I know I have your



sympathy, for your life has been largely given to advocate the introduction of painting into our public buildings, and you have made great sacrifices to furnish some noble examples, and yet England, that boasts herself of you, has never given you an opportunity for a cycle of subjects in which your powers could have full scope. She has produced artists during the last hundred years manifesting gifts beyond those of any contemporary nation, and every one of them has suffered from the same national indifference to their high aspirations."

Holman Hunt wrote:—

"Much more would indeed be but a poor acknowledgment of the honour Madox Brown has been to this generation of English Art, but in justice to other obligations I feel compelled to limit my contribution. Oh! this is a humbugging Age, and our country is tainted worse than any, or such disregard of really great work could not occur."

Sir Frederic Leighton wrote in his courtly style:—

"I hope you will allow me as a brother artist and a great appreciator of his gifts to contribute my mite."

Sir Noel Paton wrote:—

"I am appalled when I realise how long it is since I last wrote to you. But do not speak of my silence having built up a wall between us. A mist-wreath it has no doubt raised, but through that we can still clasp hands of friendship, and with the eye of faith see each other spirit to spirit. . . . In the interval I have lost some old and dear friends by death (I am thankful to say I never lost a friend otherwise); but in the more immediate circle of my belongings the Gods have been reasonably propitious. This much of self—which may explain some things to you. For the sorrows through which you have passed, accept my sincere condolence. But—as is generally the

case with the generous—personal troubles have not blunted your sympathy in the troubles of others—as your efforts to help that great artist and sorely tried man, Madox Brown, shows. I should be grateful were you to let him know, should occasion present itself, how highly I honour him. I only wish I had been the wealthy man the world so fallaciously considers me, that I might have assisted your scheme with a more liberal hand.”

The names of Millais, Poynter, Alma Tadema, Burne-Jones, and many others figure on the committee, and great was the dismay of Shields when the secret was let out in the most unfortunate manner by a paragraph, written in the worst possible taste, in an evening paper. This unluckily was seen by Madox Brown, and its suggestion that a charitable fund was being started to assist him made him simply furious. He wrote to Shields repudiating the whole idea, and threatening to write to the papers to say that the whole thing was a mistake, and that he didn't want any help and wouldn't accept any. Poor Shields was in despair. Burne-Jones, who had given much invaluable help, wrote very indignantly, and subsequently interviewed a member of the staff of the offending paper and persuaded him to put in another paragraph amending “the horrible wording.” But for some time Madox Brown was unapproachable, and there seemed a possibility that Shields would have to return all the money subscribed—amounting to nearly £1000. However, Madox Brown was eventually persuaded to realise that an unprecedented honour was intended, and it was explained to him that several people had refused to subscribe for this very reason—that never before had artists subscribed to present a living artist's work to the nation. The desirable end was partly due to the fact that a friend of Madox Brown's died just then, leaving a widow, and with his habitual generosity he was anxious to assist her immediately. So he consented

to accept an instalment of the money and to undertake the commission. Shields had still much work and anxiety over the choice of subject and various other details which were not finally decided until the spring of 1892, when Burne-Jones wrote: "Madox Brown has written me a nice letter, so now all is healed and comfortable."

Holman Hunt was always in touch with Shields, and many indeed were the letters they exchanged; those carefully preserved by Shields date from 1877 to 1910. During the last few years they were written painfully, the failing sight of the great artist is only too evident in the strange and almost undecipherable documents, which he knew his friend's sympathetic eyes would grudge no pains to decipher.

At this time Hunt was travelling in the East and wrote some vivid letters to Shields; the first from Rome—six or eight closely written pages full of interesting details of his journey through Alassio, Genoa, and Pisa, at which last-named place the destruction of some of the frescoes by restoration, moved him to write a protest to the *Times*. Shields would indeed regret the damage done to Gozzoli's work. Lasinio's engravings of the Campo Santo frescoes were introduced to him by Rossetti, and he always regarded the big volume as a perfect treasure-house of invention and design. The letter ends with a disquisition on the sculptures in the Lateran Museum.

Holman Hunt's next letter is written from Cairo in February, with vivid descriptions of the glorious scenes up the Nile, new wonders every day. He dwells upon his surprise at the beauty of the black and brown people who are engaged along the banks of the Nile, drawing up water to irrigate the land.

"These ply their trade and they get bronzed to a perfect silky purple, every muscle is playing about

under their polished skins, and their forms are magnificent. Buffaloes, camels, apes, cows, and horses go along the banks led by young naked boys, and sometimes these ride the beasts, making perfect groups for a sculptor. The river sometimes is disturbed as the sea, but at others it is like a mirror in reflectiveness, and boats sail along with sheets large enough to carry them into the sky, and in the boats are sailors in long shirts, nearly always blue, light and dark, but always of the most heavenly colour, telling against the blue sky and the coppery wavelets."

The letter goes on to describe a ride to the Temple of Philae and a wonderful scene where some Nubian boys swam the rapids astride logs of trees, and ends with sympathetic reference to Shields' welcome letter: "Your account of Brown's acceptance, and the manner of acceptance of the testimonial subscription, greatly pleased and interested us."

Intensely interesting and enlightening to Shields must have been Holman Hunt's next letter of eight or nine pages, written from Jerusalem, where he was struck afresh with the splendour of the chance of painting pictures of the New Testament there, and lamented the necessity of returning to London.

Knowing how much Shields desired to be able to visualise the scenes in which most of the incidents he was painting had taken place, he says:—

"I wish very much you could see the country just now; spite of the want of vegetation of large kind, it appears to me most lovely in its character. When in the day I look up from my drawing and turn towards the landscape through the window, I think that the particular preciousness and clearness of colouring of the view transcends anything I have ever seen, and you know how very much I dote upon English landscape. My window shows me on the left the walls of Jerusalem surmounting the mount, with large firs and cypresses as ornaments and

plumes behind the walls. The slope falls down to the lower (dry) pool of Gihon, separated from Hinnon by a causeway leading up to the plain of Rephaim, now green with young corn and bordering the line that leads traceably for two or three miles to a hill range which shuts out the view of Bethlehem (three miles beyond)."

He goes on to describe the convent bearing the name of Mar Elyas, because Elijah is said to have rested there in his flight from pursuit, in witness of which there is a depression in the limestone made by his recumbent body. Interesting, too, is the amusing description of a wonderful building half-way up the Mount of Olives, with four bulging domed towers like German skittles, built by a lady as to whose sanity the artist expresses doubt, and, in contrast to this vandalism, a wonderful triple arch spanning the road called the Via Dolorosa, which recent excavations had led Holman Hunt to believe to be the very arch under which Jesus Christ was marched to and from the judgment-seat of Pilate, and the pavement the very pavement worn by His sacred feet. With what delight must Shields have perused these fascinating letters, but permission to reproduce them here is unfortunately withheld.

In this year he first undertook the work of examiner at South Kensington, having as co-examiners in that year William Morris and Lewis Day. Shields never believed much in schools of art, and the students had doubtless never before been examined by anyone who took so gloomy a view of their future and of the decadence of modern art. The system of teaching at the Royal College of Art is much improved since those days, largely on account of the energetic reports of Shields, Morris, Walter Crane, and Sir William Richmond.

A year or two later he gave an earnest address to the students at the Lambeth School of Art. After much

sound advice on the subject of draughtsmanship, he said :—

“ Such counsel, I know, is old-fashioned amid the loud and insistent claims of the Impressionists and their advocates, crying out, ‘ We are the people, and wisdom shall be with us.’ Impressionism indeed ! but surely the nature of an impression is according to the substance receiving it. If the finely-moulded seal be pressed on mud the impression must be blurred, indefinite, formless, muddled ; but if on plaster or on wax, the impression received will be clear, defined, a shapely rendering of all the fine mouldings of the die. There are mud minds and there are wax minds brought to Nature’s exquisite seal, and you may know them by their works. The worst of it is that the mud splutters so loud and volubly of its superior powers of receptivity that the fine wax is increasingly discredited, until, as Rossetti once said despairingly to me, ‘ I am ashamed to belong to a profession in which the possession of intellect is rather a hindrance than an advantage.’ And Blake defines the noblest form of Impressionism for those who can receive his words when he says : ‘ We are led to believe a lie—when we see with, not through, the eye.’ In other words, your sight and use of Nature must be reverently sacramental, ever seeking to discern the inward spiritual powers that lie within her material and sensuous manifestations. Thus only can you ever hope to influence and affect the spirits of those whose eyes your work addresses.”

And again he goes on to say :—

“ If when you enter upon your profession the people’s clamour is that you make them a golden calf, then look upon yourselves as bound to uphold the truth you know, and rather to endure all neglect, poverty, and odium than give way, especially in a day like this, when all the forces of malformed devilry seem united to root out the sense of beauty from the modern mind, so that our boasted civilisation shows scarce an object of its own creation that is not full of deformities or lifelessly mechanical, and the

settled state of hopelessly mean rigidity of our male dress is not to be paralleled in any previous age. At least we must not willingly consent to become blind, through the sufferance of habitude, to the widening realm of deformity, or become ourselves subject to its deathly insensibility to its own hideousness—we, who are set to contend against it."

In October 1893 Madox Brown died, leaving a terrible blank for Shields, who had been so near a friend since the early Manchester days. During the last few months their intercourse had needed all Shields' love and tact, for difficulties had arisen with regard to the last picture for the Manchester Town Hall, also with the artists who had subscribed to the scheme originated by Shields, and who were at first not in agreement as to the subject of the picture they had commissioned. A pathetic letter from Shields to the writer was received a day or two after Madox Brown's death:—

SIENA HOUSE.

MY VERY DEAR CHILD,—I am terribly depressed. Owing to the direful embroglio of that Manchester last picture and the subscription picture he wanted to exchange for the former, and the fear of words with dear Brown, I had not been near him for eight weeks until Friday last week, when I found him all alone, without a word of reproach, receiving me just as if I had paid my weekly call. But he was very low, and I was troubled for him. And now—the more thanks for your dear sympathy—another of my dearest ones gone—my very dearest. How lonely one grows in age.

Holman Hunt wrote an affectionate letter begging Shields not to grieve at the death of their great and good old friend:—

"He had done his work, and done it nobly and well, and it was evident that he could not have made much of

further life in his art, and from his nature I think it is pretty clear that he had made up his mind about other matters, and would learn no more here, while elsewhere he may, with his singular honesty and consistency, rise to the highest pinnacle of wisdom. Death is a very little change, seen from the other side, and yet it must be a great clearer away of mists."

Later in the month Mrs. Gurney wrote:—

"I rejoice that you are able to give forth your living thoughts again on canvas. I ought to have sent you back your scroll before this—there is only one suggestion I should like to make. It is in the Noah, who in his white garment represents the cleansing of water-baptism. Might he not speak, as John the Baptist did, of the further purification needed of the Holy Ghost and of Fire—Matthew iii. 2.

"It seems to me that the Annunciation of these two great Baptisms at the commencement of your series is very important, and as Enoch has prophesied of judgment, the note of Noah might be its Object. Purification or Righteousness, the Dove also promises this.

"You cannot think how thankful two or three of my friends have been for the triumph of Life out of Death pictured in your magnificent Jonah! Everyone delights in St. Andrew and the little lad, but my elect rejoice yet more in Jonah."

In spare hours this year was finished the large oil painting of "Knott Mill Fair"—the only work quite of its kind produced by the artist, and interesting as showing the extraordinary versatility of his genius. Madox Brown having only commenced the great picture of Wycliffe, it was necessary to decide upon some other work of his as a substitute, and after much negotiation "Christ Washing Peter's Feet" was acquired, and with the balance of the fund some of the artist's fine cartoons were purchased and distributed among the various Schools of Art. Hol-





KNOTT MILL FAIR

Water-colour, 1869. Oil replica, 1893



man Hunt wrote in December saying that it was the best fortune for Brown's reputation that they could expect, to have "Christ Washing Peter's Feet" placed in the National Gallery, and that he was altogether pleased at it, although in his opinion there were other pictures—"The Last of England," for instance, or "Work"—which might have done him still more honour. Shields wrote to Mrs. Watts on February 9th:—

"I have never thanked you for your gracious letter. Why? Because I've not been myself alone, but plus three—lumbago, sciatica, and rheumatism possessing me and rendering life and work an effort indeed. I carried your letter with me to Manchester, whence I've just returned, for I thought to write thence; but that air made me worse. One refreshing thing I saw, the Signor's great picture of 'The Good Samaritan' at last hung where the eye can gloat on its grandeur of drawing and execution. All else seems beside it so small and feeble. Ah me, it made me feel so very small also! Truly I am glad that Mr. Watts is well enough to take riding exercise. It is wonderful and joyous to hear of it, and that he is painting the beautiful 'embodiment of innocence and purity' which some time, when the swallow's return emboldens yours, I hope to see.

"It is indeed a great satisfaction to us to have placed Madox Brown's work (one of his finest) in the National Gallery. Mrs. Hueffer declines to receive the surplus, except as the price of some of his cartoons, and we are seeking how to meet her, possibly by buying the 'Willhelmus Conquistator,' if only we can find any institution that will find wall-room for it. The photograph I sent to you is not from one of the works for Mrs. Gurney's chapel. It was painted for the crypt of St. Barnabas', Pimlico, a few years ago. Do I hear aright that Mr. Watts has again declined a baronetcy. I hope it is true—it would be like him, and all true hearts will praise him for it. With all sincerity do I reciprocate your wishes. May the New Year be rich in God's good and perfect gifts to you both."

## CHAPTER XIX

The chapel built—Mrs. Russell-Gurney's enthusiasm—Death of Christina Rossetti—Sir Noel Paton's letter—The opening of the chapel—Death of Mrs. Gurney—The new studio at Wimbledon—Letters from Lady Mount-Temple, Dr. Alexander M'Laren, G. F. Watts, Hall Caine—The Chancery suit—Illness.

THE building of the chapel was now practically completed, and the two little lunettes over the entrance were painted in fresco. Of these Mrs. Gurney wrote in June 1894:—

"I left your studio yesterday quite uplifted with thankfulness for your blessed given-gift for the entrance of our little shrine. You cannot think how it spoke to me, and though it will not have the inward personal whisper I alone could distinguish, it cannot fail to bring to many hearts a fuller appreciation of the wonderful parable it points to. . . . I trust many, multiplying and increasingly, will thank God with me for the fulness of His that has been poured out through your hands.

"I know well you must be profoundly lonely—and in spite of your inner voice and teaching received and given, must feel this loneliness in its anguish at times. Perhaps it is *because* you are thus led into the lonely wilderness that you gather so much for all of us who traffic with one another in more beaten paths.

"What a privilege for me out of the Mammon of unrighteousness to have been permitted to set free your 'long repressed aims.' Please remember that when I hint at some vision, as I called it, of a possible Text and Angels in the gable, that I merely mean a bare shadow of a suggestion that may or may not be glanced at, and refused or moulded into something better.—Always with affectionate reverence, yours,  
EMILIA R. GURNEY."

Throughout the year Mrs. Gurney was constantly at his side, discussing and thinking out every detail with the artist. Another dear friend died this year—Christina Rossetti—whose touching last letter of farewell, written to Shields a few days before she died, has already been published in her biography by Mr. Mackenzie Bell. She died on December 29th, and on New Year's Day 1895 Mrs. Gurney wrote, having arranged that Shields should come to her at Cheltenham for a few days:—

“All blessings of Heaven and Earth be with you this day and all the days! Alas! for ourselves—and especially for you, in Christina's flight. What a reunion, what a consummation of Life for her! If you find yourself too tired to come after the Memorial Service, telegraph and come on Thursday.”

In this month Sir Noel Paton wrote from Edinburgh on receiving a photograph of one of the angels in the chapel frieze:—

“Your beautiful ‘Angel of the Chimes’ did me no end of good, and has since stood within hand reach of my bed, a pleasanter and withal more efficacious anodyne to my special aches than as yet my pharmacist has supplied. I thank you for it very heartily. What was my pleasure when a little while ago the photographs of the grand series of designs, of which *my* angel forms part, were brought for my inspection by a friend of Mrs. Russell-Gurney's.

“I knew that you were engaged on a very important work of a sacred character; but I was not prepared to find it one in every way so congenial to your genius, and so fitted to call forth those unique qualities of invention and execution which the grand cartoons for Eaton Hall chapel first revealed to me. How thankful I am that these designs are being carried out under the auspices of a friend evidently so well fitted to appreciate their

thought, fulness, and beauty. That they will speak to many a listening heart above the rush and roar of London, when we have all passed beyond the dark river, must be a grateful reflection to her and to you. I earnestly trust that strength will be accorded to you to carry the noble work to completion. I wish I could hope to see it even in progress, but it is very certain that I shall never again bring my blue bonnet over the Border."

In February Shields was obliged to leave off work for a time, the weather being exceptionally severe; indeed Holman Hunt wrote saying that it was really dangerous for Shields to continue to work in that chilly chapel; he had been obliged to dismiss his own model day after day because the man was unable to stand in the cold. He sent a vivid description of frozen pipes, and the poor Thames near their house at Fulham, looking like the Polar seas, with wrecked barges, and icy winds. However, Shields was soon back at the chapel, finishing the beautiful "Adam and Eve," working at the friezes on both sides, the long panels, and the angels between them, so that the great scaffoldings upon whose giddy height he and those assisting him had to work, might be cleared away as soon as possible. Mrs. Gurney's health began to fail very much in this year, and she became impatient to see the effect of the first pictures in the chapel. In August Shields wrote to her:—

"I have made arrangements now whereby the man who will fix the pictures to the wall, can come up at three days' notice, for now I see the light gleaming brightly through the daily thinner streak of wood that has yet to be got through—for a few days now, if no untoward hindrance comes, will see the end scaffolding taken down. I write this to cheer you with the good tidings. I don't wish the text, 'When all the morning stars sang together' put up, because it would confuse my purpose in the circular design—wherein I mean Adam and Eve to be



THE DESPISED MANNA

From the Frieze in the Chapel of the Ascension





glorifying God for His wondrous work in the heavens at eventide, as the stars are revealed when the sun goes down.

“What say you to ‘All thy works praise thee, and all thy saints bless thee’? There has been many a problem of design and colour to solve these last few weeks, as piece has got joined to piece, but I think that all is happily coming into unity now, and I am as anxious as yourself to see the scaffolding removed.”

In October, writing to Mrs. Gurney from Brighton where he was staying for a brief holiday at the house of a friend, he says:—

“It is a great comfort to me that in return for all your patience and deferred hopes, you have joy in what is already accomplished. It supports but does not elate me, though if you had been disappointed I must have sunk. There is too much of difficulty before me to admit of my feeling but fear and trembling of some false step. If Michael Angelo had had a mistress like you, instead of those dreadful Popes, what might we not have had? But they could not comprehend his aims, nor his work when done.”

Troubles as hard to bear as Michael Angelo's Popes were in store for Shields. Early in 1896 the question of a new house became imperative, a vigorous crusade in the press and elsewhere failed to abate the plague of organ-grinders, the railway extension still threatened, his house-keeper developed some form of religious mania and had to be taken away hurriedly, and her place was not easily filled; other troubles of a deeper nature beset him, and Mrs. Gurney's failing health was a constant anxiety. Some books sent by the writer in the hope of cheering his solitude were acknowledged:—

“Thank you so much for the books—anything to divert me from chewing my own heart. I have drunk in

that beautiful, most pure and exquisite *Monk of Fife*. I truly think it has kept me sane this last fortnight to have this to turn to. I thank Andrew Lang and you, dear friend, for its diversion. Mrs. Gurney is so, so weak, and filled now with an anxiety about the chapel strangely in contrast with her former trust and patience. She sends pitiful messages begging me to get on with the important parts, and I to ease her will do anything. Indeed her life seems to hang on my fidelity and energy just now. One thing only appears to bind her spirit to the weary body, and that is the chapel; so, with all my sorrow, I brace myself up to go on as if nothing grieved me, that I may report progress to her."

In July Shields went to Manchester, at the request of the Corporation, to repair some of Madox Brown's frescoes which had been injured by the umbrellas or sticks of too enthusiastic admirers; only to do a service to the memory of his old friend would he have left the chapel work just then. He was still looking for a house, and very nearly decided on one at Ealing, but, taking the writer with him for a final inspection, a parrot in the next house set up a loud screech. That was enough; Shields fled the place at once. Finally an old house at Merton was found, secluded in a garden of three acres, affording ample room for the building of a studio large enough for the immense canvases projected for the chapel.

The negotiations were hardly concluded when Shields, returning from another short visit to Brighton, received the news of Mrs. Gurney's death on October 17th.

On the day on which the chapel had been opened for the first of a series of addresses on the pictures by the Rev. R. Corbet, Mrs. Gurney had been present. Shields records in his *Story of the Chapel*: "The next day she was stricken with illness, which after seven months of lingering suffering, endured with patient resignation, took away her whose gracious presence, I had trusted, would

have long remained my stimulating impulse and encouragement upon a lonely, toilsome path. . . . It may be conceived what drear vacancy this lady's loss leaves in the heart of her servant."

However, with his indomitable courage Shields did not allow his grief to interrupt his work ; only a few weeks later he was collecting information as to the banks of the Jordan, and Holman Hunt sent him a helpful letter, illustrated with slight sketches showing the steep banks of alluvial drift with short trees surmounting them, the higher cliffs in other places, and explaining the seasonal differences in the appearance of the stream and its banks.

The studio in the garden of the old house at Merton was now being built, and all Shields' friends must have been relieved when he left the depressing little house where he had suffered so much, and settled in the more cheerful surroundings at Wimbledon. The year, however, was a very sad one. In March he had planned a visit to Italy with a friend, when he was seized with neuritis in his foot, the beginning of the long and painful complaint which troubled him to the end of his days.

For a time any work was out of the question. At the end of April a letter was received, written in more cheerful mood :—

MERTON, *April 22nd*, 1897.

MY DEAR T—,—Instead of the promised hope of a glint of your own sunshine, there comes a heavy-laden weary postman. If the poor fellows strike, I shall know that you have precipitated that national calamity by heaping this last straw on the camel's back. The mysterious pulpy parcel opened into a brilliant crimson plush dressed bottle, capable of huge enlargement, and then I knew that you had carried out your dreadful threat, and sent down upon my already miserable head another debt of gratitude which I am not caryatid vertical enough to bear up under. I am lying under it now, cruel child—I am mash! Flattened! Pressed out! Crushed flat and only fit to be

hung up like the victims of a cruel Ottoman tyrant. Well, it is at my feet, and cosy. I am sitting up in an armchair and a little better. . . . But the affection is most obstinate in its hold. I hope you are able to enjoy that lovely country. Sketch whatever you see, with absolute omniverous greed devour—devour insatiably, small and great, near and distant, trivial and important, rest and action, high and low, heaven and earth, quadruped and biped, fish and insect, if ever you hope to disgorge in the shape of inventive design.

In May he went to Buxton for several weeks. The diary is blank, but a long letter from Holman Hunt shows that Shields visited Ireland in July for some necessary landscape material. In August he was able to get to work again at the chapel, having in the interval completed the first edition of the handbook. At the end of the year he went to Morocco for a few weeks with his friend Mr. Beckett, being still troubled with pain in his foot.

In April 1898 Lady Mount-Temple wrote:—

BABBACOMBE, TORQUAY.

MY DEAR MR. SHIELDS,—Ever since I received your deeply interesting vision presentation of the sacred shrine I have of course been longing to thank you in words, as I have constantly in heart and spirit. How can we gather thankfulness enough to God for the beautiful realisation of this long-cherished inspiration, surely we only faintly echo her hymn of praise in the heavenly chorus of the blessed *Te Deum*. I cannot write as I would, for I am very weak, and have but few borrowed gleams of her angelic spirit. It all makes me long to see you. Will you come some day? At all events believe how gratefully my heart turns to you, and among the many blessings of my long life I shall ever count among the chief the honour bestowed on me of bringing you and my best and most blessed friend together. I do trust you are pretty well—as well as your ardent spirit can allow the poor earthly tabernacle to be. I have been living very much in the

Rossetti circle lately, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Mackenzie Bell, who sent me his beautiful *Life of Christina*. What the melody must be of the choir invisible! Pray for me that I may be permitted to hear its strain some day, from however humbly distant a position. Come here, please, some day, that we may listen together for its echoes.

—Your ever sincere and affectionate friend,

G. MOUNT-TEMPLE.

In January Shields was again at work in the chapel. The beautiful figure of "Patience" was completed in this month.

Dr. McLaren, with all his old enthusiasm, wrote in July:—

"I am ashamed to look at the date of your letter; but I have been torn in pieces by a multitude of daily recurring trifles, the vermin that gnaw continually, and have been able to do nothing that I wished to do, because there was so much that I must. I was very sorry to find that I had missed you. I had gone for a fortnight to the Isle of Man!—the Paradise of Oldhamites, but with plenty of glens without tea-gardens, where clear water runs and cuckoos shout; but I would rather have heard you than them, if I had only known you were to be here. Thank you for your noble 'Paul' (what do you call him saint for?). I think you have never done a truer embodiment of a great soul. The wasted eagerness, the weakness reinforced by supernatural strength, are magnificently rendered. I wish every lazy, smooth-haired and smooth-souled preacher had a copy of it hanging in his 'study' to flame down rebukes at him. I have had him framed to hang in mine, and you through him will spur me often. I grieve to hear of your being out of health, and I surely need not add that my deepest, truest sympathy shares in your burdens. Is it quite true that, as you say, 'it profits not to speak'? Perhaps suppression aggravates the pain. You will not suspect me of seeking to extort confidences; I only mean that if any time you feel that speech would ease you, I am more than ready to listen, to share the burden."

The work steadily proceeded until in September, after fixing in the chapel the large pictures of "Nazareth," the "Well of Samaria," "Transfiguration," "Baptism," and others, the artist started for Italy with his friend Mr. Bodington, revisiting Assisi, Perugia, and Venice. On November 8th he wrote to Mr. Mackenzie Bell:—

"I have got back in better case for my work, and much humbled by close contact with the mighty masters of old Italy. I can scarcely suffer the sight of modern art at present, while my impressions are unfaded."

The next year passed uneventfully in work broken by frequent ill-health and depression. In January 1900 he wrote to Mrs. G. F. Watts:—

"I have longed to again pay my respects to 'the Signor,' for I would not that it should be thought that I can be forgetful of the kind interest he has shown in my work and self. But all the past year till November I was glued to my easel, labouring might and main to finish the large pictures for the chapel. ('The Raising of Lazarus' and 'Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.') This I did, and in so doing, nigh finished myself, being stricken with an illness which has held me to bed for five months past in much pain. I am slowly mending, but quite unable to resume work, and forbid by the doctors also, who bundle me off, as soon as I can move, to Algiers. You may conceive how I mourn over the snapped threads of my work-loom, all tangled and distraught, with all there is yet to do to complete my long and loved task. But I have learned submission, and it may be that this sore discipline is part of the needed education of my spirit for so exalted and pure a task. My love and admiration to the large-hearted great master, to whom I do not write direct, that I may not burden him to reply."

In this year he began to be much troubled with legal proceedings with regard to the terms of Mrs. Gurney's

will, which were apparently somewhat involved, and her relatives found no settlement to be arrived at short of a Chancery suit, which to a person of Shields' temperament was indeed a terrible blow. To be bereaved of such a friend, whose whole life had been bound up in this work, and who had ever treated the artist with the most generous devotion, was hard enough, but when her inspiring presence was replaced by business-like lawyers who questioned every statement and estimated all service in terms of hard cash, the sensitive heart shrank into fierce resentment, and his closing years were embittered and saddened. In December of 1900 he wrote:—

“I was getting steadily better until that Monday, when I was put under cross-examination for three hours about the chapel dispute, and ever since I have been so low and exhausted that I have little heart for anything, sleep broken, and full of evil dreams.”

G. F. Watts wrote to the trustees on Shields' behalf on January 4th, 1901, saying:—

“I am not surprised at criticism upon the progress of the work; it is too often made in England, when an important piece of wall decoration, or a work of monumental character, requiring the full powers of the artist's creative faculty at its best and in its highest moods, has been taken in hand. I would beg those who would urge you to move upon this point of time, to remember the result of Mr. Ayrton's (First Commissioner of the Board of Works) action with regard to the Wellington monument, action which was generally condemned at the time, and which it may not be too much to say cost the sensitive artist his life, and deprived the country of perhaps the greatest artist since Michael Angelo! Mr. Shields is, I know, making every possible endeavour to leave upon the walls of the chapel his highest spiritual convictions, expressed in a series of finely executed pictures. That he has been

able to complete so many of the designs in the time, is, it appears to me, really remarkable."

It would serve no purpose now to enter fully into the rights and wrongs of this miserable dispute, suffice it to say that after being threatened that, under the ambiguous wording of the will, it would be quite possible for the trustees to take the work altogether out of Shields' hands, and call in some other artist to complete the chapel, he consented to sign a document promising—as he wrote to Miss Gurney—"to finish the chapel in an impossible time, for an impossible sum."

Mr. Hall Caine, of whom Shields always spoke with affection, wrote:—

GREEBA CASTLE, ISLE OF MAN,  
October 3rd, 1901.

MY DEAR SHIELDS,—Forgive my long silence. I was in London when your first letter came, and I set out to see you, getting as far as Putney where Mackenzie Bell told me that even if you were at home (which seemed doubtful) you did not like to be visited on Sunday. I was sorry to forego my visit, but perhaps in any case it would have been fruitless. You misconceived the passage in the *Bookman*. In speaking of Rome, the writer was using the name in Mazzini's sense, not in the sense in which we in England use it—to represent the Catholic Church. If you ever read the *Eternal City* you will find it in all essentials a Protestant book. It does not deny the presence of deep and true piety in the Catholic Church, and it recognises in the Vatican and the Pope the power and operation of the gospel; it is above all else a plea for the individual will and mind, and that I take to be essential Protestantism. I have lived a great deal in Rome, and I am outside all the churches, but I hold on to the fundamental things in the faith as Christ gave it us, and I feel a very true charity towards all who kneel to the one God, whether they approach Him by way of Christ or Christ by way of the Virgin Mary. Yesterday I spoke from a Catholic platform, and I had the difficult task of holding





THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Wall painting in the Chapel of the Ascension (ante-chapel)



my independence untrammelled, and saying for the Catholic Church what I thought to be its due. I know well I shall please neither Catholics nor Protestants, but that is not my first concern. You say very truly that my book has been misconceived. The trouble is that it has been dealt with chiefly by the *literary* critics who, speaking of them as a whole, know nothing about religious questions and very little about political ones. But there have been very clear-sighted critics of the book too, and among them were Ian Maclaren, Dr. Parker (in a letter, to be followed I hear by a sermon), Mr. Hugh Price Hughes, and Dr. Aked of Liverpool, whose sermon I will try to send. On the whole I ought to be satisfied that the message of my book is being heard. With the merely malignant abuse of the literary critics I am not much concerned. The book can take care of itself on their lines.

I am sorry to gather that you are in the midst of worries. Are they about work? If so, that will right itself in due course. I am also in the midst of worries, and among them are two lawsuits, but I am not afraid. It seems long since we met; and how long it is since our days with poor Gabriel I was made to feel very acutely a few days ago when his niece (little Olive, William's daughter, you remember) wrote to ask permission to translate my new book. She is a married woman now, and her father is seventy-two years of age. I was a youngster of twenty-six when you saw me first—how well I remember the night, and see you where you stood on the hearthrug in Gabriel's studio—and now I am forty-eight. But with all the changes I have gone through one thing remains unchanged with me—and that is the sincere affection with which I always think of you, which is a good deal oftener than I write.—Yours very truly,

HALL CAINE.

Writing on March 27th, 1902, to Mr. Mackenzie Bell, who with many other friends had spared no pains to help him through these troubled days, Shields says:—

“I was much touched by your last words of assurance that in this long, wearing, and unjust trial you have re-

membered me before the just Judge, that He would avenge me of mine adversaries (not *revenge* me). I am enclosing letters from G. F. Watts, Holman Hunt, &c., which are absolute in the terms employed concerning the sum of work done in the chapel; there is also the President's letter of regret that I left the Royal Water-Colour Society—for the sake of the chapel work, and my doctor's certificate that my last illness was induced by overwork. . . . They have compelled me 'to boast,' as noble St. Paul says—for I want only to pursue my work unnoticed and undisturbed, and they will not let me. It is very midsummer madness to accuse me of delaying the work, and to disorder my mind and break up my days with the legal persecutions I endure—*only for the work's sake*—otherwise I would free myself from them instantly."

In 1903 several friends, notably the Rev. Hugh Chapman, Dr. Moir, and Mrs. Jervis decided to appeal for a fund of £3000, the payments to extend over eight years, to enable the artist to complete his labours with freedom from pecuniary anxiety, the payment awarded by the Court being entirely inadequate, especially when the expense of materials and for workmen employed in the fixing of the large pictures had to be defrayed by the artist.

"We feel sure" (so runs the document) "that there must be many who would be distressed to think that London might be deprived of the fulfilment of the pious Foundress's wishes, or that the work should suffer from transference to other hands. It is too delicate a subject on which to dilate at length, but having satisfied ourselves as to the absolute needs of the case, we earnestly ask those who are able to contribute, and who believe in the services of art as the handmaid to religion, practically to recognise the devotion and ability of the artist, who has brought to bear on his work unstinted sacrifice and diligence."

The appeal was generously responded to, both by friends to whom Mrs. Gurney's memory was dear, and by

many who appreciated the work for its own sake, but the subject was always a bitter one to Shields, and no doubt he was a little inclined to impute hostility and cruelty to those whose actions were solely actuated by a desire to be definite, business-like, and unemotional.

This attitude was in such fierce contrast to that of the pious foundress, whose one idea had been to cherish and support the sensitive artist whose heart and soul were, with her own, so bound up in their sacred work, that Shields, rightly or wrongly, had a burning sense of insult and injury under which he smarted to the end of his days.

In 1904 the diary is more regularly kept. The first few weeks were spent in designing the great pictures of the Crucifixion and Ascension for the end of the chapel. Among the many entries relating to visits to Holman Hunt is the following:—

“*March 3rd.*—To Holman Hunt’s to design smoke for his frame for ‘Lady of Shalott.’ He told me the strange tale of his grandfather’s wife and the game cocks (she chopped off their heads).”

It is to be regretted that this evidently weird story remains a mystery—perhaps never to be solved.

During this spring Shields was much troubled by constant pain in his foot. In May he stayed for some days at Danehill with Mr. Hall Caine, and in June went to Manchester to try some hydropathic treatment. He wrote in low spirits:—

“I begin to wonder if I am permanently a cripple—and there’s no help in doctors—none! As old Carlyle said: ‘I might just as well have poured all my sorrows into the hairy ears of the first jackass I came across;’ where nervous diseases torment they are ignorant and impotent (unless you know one that is not). I moon away my useless days fretting at my neglected work and all the

watchful bitterness of my enemies who wait to trap me, and accuse me of delay."

Neither the many hydropathic treatments, nor the most eminent specialists could avail in this painful complaint. At one time amputation of the foot was recommended, and probably this would have saved him much suffering, but his horror at the mere suggestion of this operation was such that it was vain to urge it, and the suffering, now dull, now excruciating, continued with intervals of relief until the end. A sea voyage was suggested, and Shields went to Morocco in July.

In August he stayed with the Holman Hunts at Sonning, and wrote:—

"I am here for three days, unable to decline the invitation, for life grows short, and I now feel that such opportunities must be few, and any one of them may be the last. But I sit in the garden all day, unable to walk for pain in this peccant foot. All remedial measures appear vain—the sea voyage from which I hoped so much has not affected this trouble. This is a lovely place—so peaceful, but for the accursed motor car's sputter and roar."

In the following year the foot troubled him severely. Many friends endeavoured to alleviate the suffering, which seemed at times unendurable. Mr. Hall Caine wrote from St. Moritz on New Year's Day 1905:—

"Your letter of so many days ago has only just reached me. We were several days in London on our way here, but they were the days of the fog, and I tried in vain to get out to see you. It was quite impossible to get out at all. We are both dreadfully troubled to hear of your continued illness. I can well believe that you must have suffered the most excruciating agony with your foot, but I trust it is now better and that you are in a fair

way for recovery. It must be a joy to you to realise that your work at the chapel is fast (I hardly dare to say fast) attaining to the recognition it so richly deserves. When the publishers of a book entitled *The Gospels in Art* sent me a copy the other day, I took occasion to speak of your own work in terms which, though far from adequate, were at least enthusiastic. Turning over the pages of that book, I did very strongly feel how much you had done which even the old masters had imperfectly compassed, and I do trust that in your dark hours you are cheered by the certainty that the work of your life will not only achieve a great distinction in the time to come, but bring to many a real solace and a true understanding of the mighty themes you have dealt with. Yet I know that you long for health to complete your task, and I pray you may have it, and have it abundantly, both for its own sake and for the sake of the high uses you will surely put it to. We had to come here again, for my health, though not utterly broken (as the papers said), was getting low, and I was feeling the strain of life severely. So here we are with blue skies over our heads and the white ground under our feet and the air full of sunshine. It is a strange and almost miraculous change from the dark days of a fortnight ago in London. I should have been happy indeed to hear your impressions of *The Prodigal Son*, but you must not give yourself one moment's pain to write on that subject. The book has apparently had a generous reception—more favourable than perhaps any other book of mine, although allowance has to be made for the operation of those inevitable laws of poor human nature which express themselves in certain little shrieks and squeaks. On the whole I have reason to be thankful and happy, and if the work as a whole does not cover all that I meant by it, I think it expresses more of my best self than anything I have done. You may know that it has been a subject of many sermons in many countries, and I think it has done good. I ought to have sent you a sort of long sermon of my own which I preached to an audience of one—my secretary, Miss Waddy (daughter of the Judge-preacher)—and afterwards printed in the *Daily Chronicle* on November 17th. Apparently it made a good impression and called out many interesting opinions.

There are other aspects of the book which it is less pleasant to me to think about, and one of them concerns our friend —, who has written both to and of me in a spirit that it is a little painful to remember. However, I put this as far back in my mind as possible and try to think of pleasanter things. . . .

“*P.S.*—I trust you have heard of the very warm reference to yourself in the *Life of Hugh Price Hughes*.”

Continued illness during this year sadly hindered Shields' work, but on November 14th he was able to record the completion of the great picture at the end of the chapel in the words, “Finished Ascension this day, by God's grace.”

A few days later he was again at work on a new subject, and during the spring of 1906 he was able to work steadily with models sitting constantly. In May he came to London to see the large picture, and several of the smaller ones, fixed in the chapel, staying with friends in Kensington for about three weeks, being unfit, with his painful lameness, to journey backwards and forwards to Wimbledon.

Mr. Arthur Hughes, on seeing the new pictures, wrote warmly on May 30th:—

“This is only a line of sincere congratulation on the glorious progress of the chapel. When I think over the enormousness of the undertaking, it seems incredible that I saw it yesterday with my eyes. The innumerable figures in the innumerable designs and their full pregnant meaning and pathos and beauty, compel me to send my most respectful homage, and if my appreciation is anything at all, to hope you will see in it what I feel sure will be a general or more-like unanimous one when the final touch is given to your crowning life's work. I thought you looked splendidly strong yesterday, in spite of the foot.”



At the end of July Shields again suffered terribly from his foot; an operation gave relief for a time, and in the autumn he was again at work.

His extraordinary courage and devotion to his great task is well illustrated in the diary of 1908, when, in spite of incessant pain, on the last day of January the entry runs: "Sketched from live horse in the garden for Eunuch. Keen north wind," and a few weeks later: "Went to Cannon Hill Pond to study water for Eunuch. Tree in garden blown down by gale."

## CHAPTER XX

Exhibition at the Manchester City Art Gallery—Porlock revisited—Correspondence with Charles Rowley—Death of Dr. M'Laren and Holman Hunt—The chapel finished.

IN the spring of 1908 an exhibition of Shields' collected works was held at the Manchester City Art Gallery. Writing in March to his old friend Mr. Charles Rowley, who had just returned from Italy, he says:—

“ I wish I had been with you, for I just pant after Italy. The more you study the early art of Italy the more you will see that it sought its inspiration in the deep fount of imaginative feeling to give out what men's *hearts* would welcome if they would read it, and that when perfect in this aim it lost itself in the vain glory of personal executive skill and slowly consumed away. English art began in Hogarth, in like healthy wise, and has now sunk into inanity. Nobody really cares for it; and since it has long, under the baneful shade of the Academy, been the slave of fashionable society, blown about with every wind of evil foreign influence, it has come to such a condition that I can find no one with whom I have any art sympathy except dear Holman Hunt and Arthur Hughes.”

In April he went to Lynton, and thence revisited Porlock, where so much of his beautiful early work was done nearly forty years before. His diary sadly records:—

“ To Porlock. The church interior changed and ruined. Everyone I knew—Pulsfords, Brown, Floyd—all dead. A melancholy experience.”

On May 2nd he returned home.

“ *May 3rd.*—To Holman Hunt's at 4, by the horrible

electric railway. He fell while I was out of the room a moment, and hurt his cheek. So full of the past—talking of it, and of the future of Art in England as *stricken*."

As an illustration of his unceasing energy in collecting information or materials for his pictures, his diary records a search for a head of some particular type:—

"To Minorities to seek for Jews' Home; could find no such place there. Hunted about Aldgate and Whitechapel (pouring rain). To Asiatic Home, West India Docks; assaulted by a Chinese. Went to Jews' place, Leman Street, and Hebrew Christians' Home, Whitechapel. Home at 9 P.M."

The end of his great task was now in sight; slowly the vacant spaces on the walls of the chapel were filled, and those friends who saw the veteran artist during the last few years could not help feeling that with this work's completion his long strenuous life would be rounded to a close. In 1909 he wrote to Mr. Charles Rowley:—

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—If you got it into your dear old noddle that I had utterly forgotten you it would not be strange. But though I was deeply touched with your words, and under common conditions would have hastened to reply, I have been and am, after the day's painting, which *must* be done, so exhausted that to many a friendly letter it would seem I was indifferent when truly I have not strength to keep up with correspondence. And then came a precious reprint of the Pre-Raphaelite designs to Tennyson, which sent my memory back to young days, when these were a stimulus and a delight of the fullest kind. An awakening to higher aims and effort, and the effect yet remains. Those wonderful Rossetti drawings—ah me! There has been none in my age like to him, and life has been impoverished since he passed away—the great mind, the generous soul. And one after another has gone: Madox Brown with his great brave heart, full of welcome always; Holman Hunt is left, but blind and helpless, though still with his marvellous memory active,

talking of every experience of his life in the most vivifying way. How terrible is the thought of blind darkness, and most of all to a painter, who truly sees; whereas most men are purblind, while they think they see the glories of this marvellous world. But worse infinitely is the blindness of man's spirit, often wilfully barring out every avenue by which Light might enter. That word I know by experience is true. "The entrance of Thy Word giveth Light;" and those who glory in their acquaintance with the discoveries of modern Science, and in Literature, Art, Music, and every sensuous pleasure, are feeding on husks, like the Prodigal, if their souls are estranged from God our Father and from the True Light of man, Jesus Christ. You and I have been friends so many long years, and life, long life, has been given to us so long that we know it cannot be much prolonged. None can answer for a single day. What a message of the purpose of the Scripture is this, "These things are written that you *may know* that you have Eternal Life, and that this Life is His Son" . . . were it not that I see that "there is no condemnation to them that believe in Jesus," the Lamb whom God has provided to be the one sacrifice, I should sink into despairing melancholy with the apprehension of the putting off this feeble body and being a disembodied spirit, with all the now unseen terror of judgment open before me in my prison house. One does not often feel pressed thus to open one's mind even to an old friend; but I feel that another omission of duty would be added to my charge if I did not discharge my soul when you are in trouble, and in that last stage of life when man craves for peace. There is peace only in the faith that Christ Jesus claims from us. . . . For the calmest peace the world gives us is a fading wreath that crumbles into dust. There, I weary you, and this I would not do! I recall so many benefits from your hands that, believe me, nothing but old love could move me to write thus. I have to face, in the two last subjects of the chapel, the most difficult of all the problems that have encountered me, when physically I am weaker than ever before.

Interesting as showing that difference of opinion even upon such vital matters had never lessened a friendship



MAN REPELS THE APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE

Chapel of the Ascension, Bayswater



unbroken for forty years, is Mr. Rowley's cheerful reply, written, not in answer to this particular letter, but evidently to one of similar import.

HANDFORTH, CHESHIRE.

MY DEAR OLD BOY,—What a charming letter you send me. Mind and body as sound as nuts. It has always been a great delight to me to hear your orthodoxies. I wonder if I am a Pagan or what? I do not like being ticketed. If I presumed to call myself a Christian I should burn to behave as such a one ought. The fact is, I have read and heard so much about beliefs, philosophies, and faiths, that I am muddled. I am just reading a wonderful Indian book by the Swami Viv-Renanda, one of the most recent holy men produced by the hundred in that wondrous land. Our good friend Margaret Noble is one of his followers. His sanity and his charity in finding good in all faiths touches me. This kind of devoutness and devotedness to good in everything strikes on my box. The resulting light may be poor, but I fancy it is better than darkness. I am certain always that our Lord would shudder with horror at the sayings and doings of those who loudest shout His name. In all things beyond my ken I am going to wait and see, and do what little I can to increase healthy joy, true knowledge, and love for everything good and beautiful. If I'm to be damned for not doing and believing more, well, I can't help it. To few is it given to believe and to do as you have done. What a life! Would it could be told by a Defoe or a Borrow. Send me as complete a set of the photos as you can; I want a couple of the "Widow and her Son." Our love and best wishes to you.—As ever yours,

CHARLES ROWLEY.

That the artist's powers of invention and execution were not failing, in spite of continued ill-health and sorrow, is evidenced by the two designs of "Man and his Conscience," which were made in 1910 for the walls of the ante-chapel. These are in some ways equal to any of the artist's finest work, in their dignified strength and

simplicity they are unsurpassed. In this year he lost two of his dearest and oldest friends.

To Miss M'Laren, on hearing of her brother's illness in May, he wrote:—

“So fresh in my vision is the entrance of Dr. M'Laren into my studio, so honoured did I regard his dear visit, that it seems but the briefest time since we parted, with his ‘Perhaps I shall come again.’ Though he appeared in health and strength above his years, I could not look, I knew, that he should ‘come again’ . . . I recall what his warm interest in me has been from the day, long ago, when I was privileged with an introduction to him, how steadfast and helpful has been his friendship in many relations, ever entering with earnest sympathy into my sorrows and joys alike. His friendship has been a bright gift of God in my being. I cannot hold back this word, though I have no expectation that you will have opportunity even to say that I have him in most loving memory, thinking of him when I wake in the dark night, and praying for him in the passage through the dark river, whither it cannot be long, at the longest, ere I follow him.”

And writing again, he said:—

“Your beloved brother's friendship has been one of the sweetest and most unclouded of my life, and his influence mentally and spiritually always a blessing to one who has drunk deep of the brook of sorrow.”

Close upon this loss came the death of Holman Hunt, the warmth of whose affection for Shields throughout their long years of friendship is amply testified by his many letters. Shields continued his work for the chapel in spite of his deep sorrow and loneliness. In July the diary records: “Put up the last two pictures in the chapel,” and in September, “Finished ante-chapel.”

But the supreme task being completed, he felt his





MAN HEARKENS TO THE APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE

In the Ante-Chapel, Chapel of the Ascension

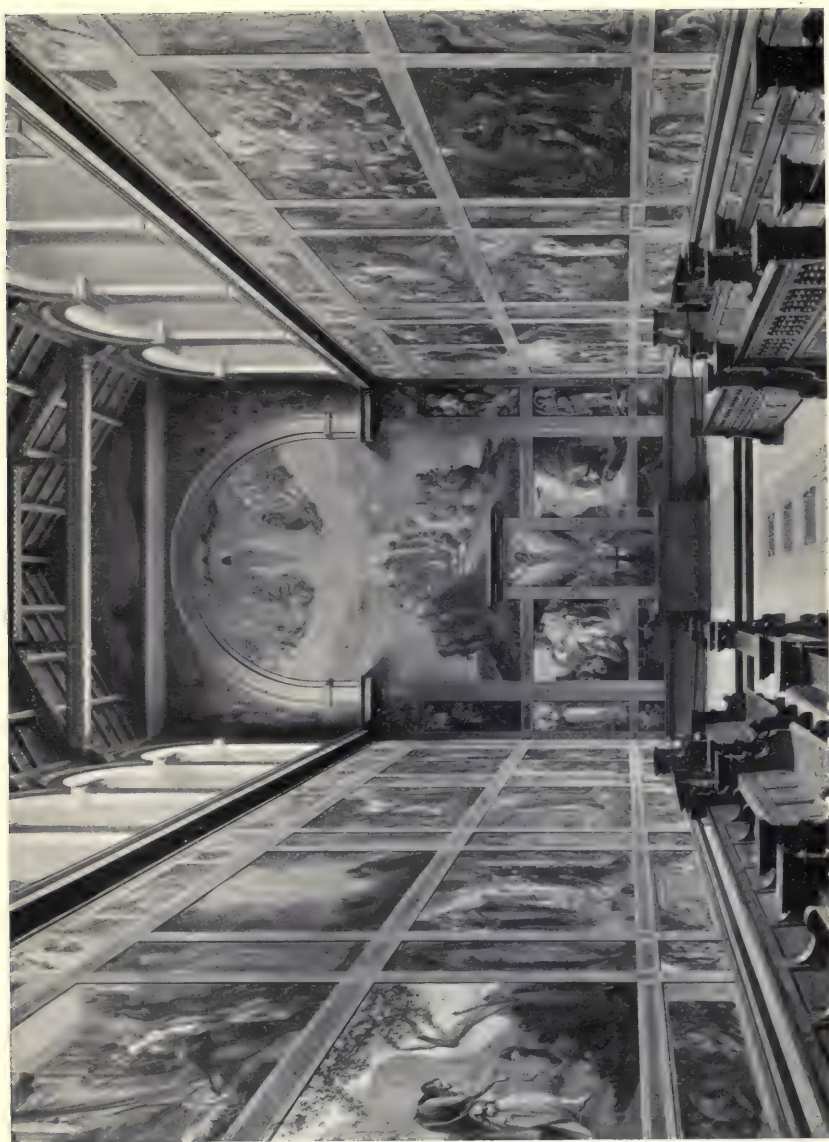


occupation gone. In September he began making some notes for an autobiography, but his strength rapidly failed, and after a few months of painful illness and profound depression, the end came on February 26th, 1911.

His old friend, the Rev. Hugh Chapman, who had ministered to him in his last days, said at the funeral service at Merton Old Church:—

“It is indeed a genuine instance of the labourer’s task being done, and few stories are more eloquent of heroism and romance than the completion of his work at the Chapel of the Ascension, followed by the collapse which was but the prelude to his crown. After a friendship of twenty-five years, I have no hesitation in saying that Frederic Shields knew and lived on his Bible as few whom I can recall. Literalist to a large extent he ever was, however mystically inclined in his rôle of artist, and there was about him somewhat of the rugged Covenanter who brooked no compromise where for him the honour of his Master seemed to be concerned. Severe to himself, he was infinitely tender towards those who suffered, nor could he hear the mention of pain without his eyes filling with tears. True that the thunders of Sinai played about his head, and though part of him leant on the breast of Jesus, another and quite a large part might have merited the title of Boanerges, out of which he possibly never wholly grew. But for those who knew him well, and who had sounded the depths of this remarkable personality, he had a unique charm, nor could you be with him for long without leaving his presence a better man. Frederic Shields hated money as much as he loved God, and it is these two points which stand out as I think of him now, promoted to his well-earned rest. Not that I can imagine him in any stereotyped peace, seeing that activity was the very breath of his existence, but to no single soul can I picture a greater relief than to our brother who at last knows freedom from all conventions and shams, where the standard of truth alone prevails, and where the curse of gold is unknown. He had suffered to an extent which occurs to few, and

it were asking too much that such a training should not have left behind it a legacy of sternness and impetuosity, but the man himself had a single passion, namely: that every bit of his being should be used up in illustrating Jesus Christ, and in almost forcing the world to probe the mystery of the Gospel. . . . This is what really meant to him most, and compared to the thought of his Saviour all the disappointment, all the hardships, all the rivalries, all the self-imposed loneliness, due to exceptional sensitiveness, all the private anguish over which, as he would have wished, I draw the veil, passed away, and folding his hands over his breast, he grew supremely content. Shortly before his passing he expressed a hope that the Chapel of the Ascension might never be used except to carry out the intention of its foundress, and more than once he asked that every care might be taken to prevent its being treated as an ordinary church, or for the purposes of a ritualism which he abhorred. 'Keep it,' he said again and again, 'for simple contemplation and for private prayer, so that men and women may learn the inner meaning of the book, and become soaked with the thought of God's great Love so portrayed in its pages.' This was his dying request, which I most earnestly pray may be observed, nor can I doubt but that the authorities will put his desires on record, lest they be transgressed, and so his sacrifice be robbed of its chief reward, which was to fulfil the wish of his beloved friend, and help towards a holy retreat for the refreshment of the souls of men."



THE CHAPEL OF THE ASCENSION, BAYSWATER



## CHAPTER XXI

Frederic Shields' will—Personal recollections.

It is perhaps a point of biographical interest to mention the terms of Frederic Shields' will. To his friends the fact that he left a considerable sum of money was a matter of great surprise. Subject to the payment of a few small legacies, and a small annuity to his widow who survives him, but who had ceased to live with him for many years, the whole of his estate was bequeathed to two foreign missionary societies.

The grand cartoons, over seventy in number, executed for the Duke of Westminster's windows, were left, under certain conditions, to be presented at the discretion of his executors, to some public institution which would undertake to frame and hang the entire series, the artist having always refused to divide or separate this magnificent group of designs. They form a consecutive series and include some of his finest work, the artist was therefore anxious that they should be kept together to be hung in unbroken continuity. Their disposal was a matter of some anxious consideration for the executors, as few buildings in London—certainly no museum or picture-gallery—had sufficient space available to hang the whole of these cartoons at once. It was finally decided to offer them to the Young Men's Christian Association for their new London headquarters in Tottenham Court Road, the walls of which they now adorn. The magnificent draughtsmanship of the cartoons, their wealth of sym-

bolism and invention, and withal their unique tenderness and beauty of feeling and design, will surely place them, as years go on, among the distinguished achievements of a period when English Art was still a living force.

It has been suggested that the writer should give some personal recollections of Frederic Shields, but it is difficult for one who was for many years looked upon by him almost as his own child, to attempt to give any adequate impression of his strong and remarkable personality. Especially perhaps is it difficult for one who, though yielding to none in admiration for the greatness of the artist and the loveliness of his nature, was never able to appreciate or accept his views on many vital subjects. But it was a part of the sweet unreasonableness of Shields' nature to be in some cases very tolerant where his friends were concerned, and although occasionally his anxiety for their spiritual welfare would, as we have seen, make him furiously eloquent, after a time he seemed to accept the situation, as in the case of Madox Brown, Rossetti, and his always well-beloved Charles Rowley. In his long life he suffered more perhaps from the "unco' guid" than from any of his agnostic friends, and the pious model who tried to please him by reading Wesley's hymns diligently during his rests, turned out far worse than the Syrian carpet merchant who delighted Shields by telling him that even the Mussulmans joined the universal grief in Jerusalem when the news came that Gordon was slain, because "General Gordon he Mussulman, he Jew, he Christian—he for everyone."

My first recollection of Shields is a vision of a fascinating but rather alarming giant, appearing at infrequent intervals, whose invariable salutation was to seize the little girl who gazed at him with three-year-old eyes, and to throw her up towards the ceiling with an unearthly laugh. To this day I remember the awful feeling of



coming down—far worse than any rapid descent in a lift—and the gasping fear lest he should fail to catch me. I am sure he thought I liked it, and I certainly never complained.

As a child of seven I was taken to sit for him, but that occasion I only recollect as an afternoon of extreme boredom—evidently shared by the artist, for his diary records: “Miss Bell brought little Tina to sit—made an awful failure of it.” The failure was doubtless due to my restlessness and to the loquacity of the former principal of Winnington, who talked to keep me amused.

Shields was always fond of children, as his exquisite studies of child life testify; some of his pictured babes are surely as beautiful and tender as can be found in art of any period. I believe he conducted Sunday-school classes for children for many years, but I cannot help thinking that he must have made all the naughty ones laugh, and all the good ones cry. He held terribly strict views on the subject of discipline and teaching of every kind, and can never at any time have been an easy person to work with or under.

I remember many evenings at Lodge Place (for he could seldom spare daylight hours for teaching), the little gate in the high garden wall in which there was a tiny peephole for the person opening the door to look through, the great gloomy studio lighted only in one spot by a tall gas-stand with a reflector, with grim lay figures attitudinising in dark corners, and more than one skeleton in the cupboard. And then out of the darkness would step a figure, rather below the average height, always thin almost to emaciation, with large head and towering brows, crowned with long wavy hair, with earnest deep-set eyes, and what seemed to a child a terrifying expression, until a smile irradiated the whole face, and the outstretched hands inspired confidence.

Many days have I spent with him at South Kensington Museum, and at various picture galleries; no more delightful companion could be found and no more instructive guide; his eloquence before some picture about which he was particularly enthusiastic sometimes attracted a gaping crowd of listeners. His standard both for teachers and students was very high; to go into a classroom and find a student talking or whistling at his work would simply infuriate him, this, of course, partly owing to his highly nervous condition. Perhaps his physical state also accounted to some extent for his fiery temper, which was, I believe, throughout his life capable of volcanic explosion. But though nervous irritability may be inevitable to the intense and overstrung artistic temperament, and depression is perhaps natural to those who always strain at seemingly unattainable heights of achievement, in the case of Shields his mental outlook was largely affected by his sad early experience of poverty, illness, death, and loneliness. When Rossetti was boisterously enlivening Academy Schools, Shields, a half-starved boy of fourteen, was feverishly drawing early and late, in every moment he could snatch from his drudgery at the lithographers' shop, or his knife and boot cleaning for his poor overworked mother. When the Pre-Raphaelites were gaily painting each other's portraits at Millais' house, Shields, hungry and scantily clad, was wandering wearily from door to door, sketching heads for a few pence, that he might buy bread.

And worst of all, instead of happy fellowship with kindred spirits, he was alone, and already imbued with those terribly narrow religious views which made fear the dominant feeling of his early youth. Fear—of the wrath to come, fear of idleness, fear of illness, fear of poverty, fear of sin, fear of God, fear of the devil, always this terrible fear causing that extreme morbid depression which



A FORTY-FIVE MINUTES' SKETCH

(1887)

*By permission of J. Hyslop Bell, Esq.*



seemed ever to be warring against the indomitable courage, strength, and even gaiety of disposition which were really the natural characteristics of the man. For although his early sufferings and his tragic domestic life might well have saddened the most buoyant heart, Shields had a keen sense of humour and an immense capacity for enjoyment to the end of his days.

As to the future of art in England Shields always took a gloomy view; writing of the talented son of a well-known Academician, he said:—

“A.’s son began by painting poetic pictures—could not sell them—they are in his possession still. Compelled to resort to portraiture to live. *Self* is the only subject of a painter’s art really desired by Englishmen. Well, Stothard, Blake, and others lived by illustration of books,—poetry, fiction, history, wonderful and lovely imaginings—precious for all time. Can the modern painter of imaginative powers turn to this as a resource? No—photography usurps the old place of design in our illustrated newspapers and books. Gilbert, Kenny Meadows, Cruickshank—what opening now to such men? Every successive year shows some development of its usurpation—wood engraving murdered, its skilled artists extinct. Steel and copper also gone. Nothing now but muddled photo prints, with all the values of the pictures they represent falsely rendered.”

His friend Mr. Charles Rowley says in his book *Fifty Years of Work without Wages*: “I knew Shields for forty years, and never knew him without an agony of some kind”—and this I can well believe. Shields probably never accomplished a railway journey without a sense of wonder and thankfulness that he had escaped with his life, nor boarded a ship without feeling that he must prepare for immediate wreck and disaster. This habit of thought became a second nature, and although in congenial company Shields could be intensely amusing, full of anecdote, and

a most brilliant talker, there always came a time when he pulled himself up short, and felt that he ought not to forget, even for a moment, the wickedness of the world and the hollowness of it all. But occasionally, in moments of forgetfulness, he would "let himself go" and have a really good time. I remember his wild buoyancy of spirits one summer in Sark, and how, on a sketching expedition, he suddenly turned to me with a face radiant in delight at some exceptionally lovely view and exclaimed, "Child, let's both turn head over heels!" But he never felt quite sure that it was proper for a man of his faith to enjoy himself except so far as joy in his work was concerned, and he never lost the feeling which made him record in his boyish diaries, his self-reproaches for a late tea-party, or an hour wasted in "profitless conversation."

Shields always had a horror of Science in any form. I remember expressing surprise at seeing a copy of Krapotkin's *Mutual Aid* in the studio, whereupon Shields seriously explained that he had bought the book because some one had told him that it entirely disproved Darwin's theory of evolution! A motor car was to Shields literally an invention of the devil, and in the early days of bicycles they came under like condemnation.

It is hardly necessary to say that Shields was a man of intense feeling, and to those he loved he could show the tenderest affection. Writing to a young friend in 1898 on hearing that she was engaged to be married, he said:—

"At the first sentence of your letter a great gulp of anguish choked me, so that I put it away unread for two days, self-tormenting with dread for you. For marriage holds within itself such terrible possibilities of unmitigated misery that I shook with fear for you. But now I have dared to read both yours and his, and my trembling heart is reassured and a sweet hope steals into me that in this hearts' love shall lie your dear heart's peace, safe hid with one who shall indeed husband you."

The old house at Wimbledon was much too large for his needs, and many of the rooms were always kept shut up. A characteristic letter written early in 1897 described his first few days there :—

MORAYFIELD, KINGSTON ROAD.

“Yes, a bright New Year to you, my sweet sunshine. How long it is since I have seen you,—or myself,—for my life here has been unspeakable. The stove proves an utter failure. Hence impossible to work in the studio or to unpack or to—anything. Then I have to get rid of the new housekeeper who is a tartar, and filled with such high notions of her own importance that there is no standpoint where we can approach. I really think of getting rid of the female kind altogether, and getting a man into the house who can cook, &c. Did I tell you that the cat saw a ghost, and that the house is haunted? She did.

I care little, if aught, for Whistler or his art—neither to my poor mind merits the attention a trivial world has given. His chosen Butterfly signature characterises all he did and said—Ephemeral. But we must not blame him for the stupid scrawls that dealers gather and exhibit to his injury—scrawls never meant to be seen.”

A letter a few days later refers to another housekeeper who was so obviously unsuitable that he was persuaded not to engage her :—

“Well, as the Swiss said to the Englishman, ‘Why do you grumble at your short summer? You have the long winter.’ Such consolation is ours to-day and haply for many days to come. It is like your dear self to have taken such pains for me—the little medallions were admirably done—much more so than I needed. Absolutely I defer to your judgment in a matter where a man is usually dense—and I denser than most men, because more apt to trust implicitly in spite of sore experiences. So I shall renew the search for a housekeeper and try to be very careful if you are absent and I can’t refer to you. I am needing thy dear face for a morning or an afternoon if you can spare it to me before you go—but

don't distress yourself to come. I have tried after two models and they can't come. As Holman Hunt says, this difficulty to get models experienced by those who can make use of them is another of the many evils caused by art schools."

Shields was generous to a fault, and was, as he said, "apt to trust implicitly in spite of sore experiences." To the many who from time to time preyed upon his purse and ruined his peace of mind he showed a forbearance quite exasperating to those who would fain have protected him from imposition and humbug. For a small example: One summer at Wimbledon, a pear tree in the garden bore an unusually fine crop of fruit, which he watched ripening with pride and interest. My faith in the gardener then employed had always been somewhat weak, but it was rudely shattered when I found the pear tree absolutely bare, while Shields gravely assured me that—according to the gardener—on the very day on which the pears were ready to gather, the blackbirds had come in the early morning and completely stripped the tree, apparently carrying the fruit away whole, without leaving a trace! "And it only shows," said Shields earnestly, "that I am justified in calling birds mischievous vermin." One might have been tempted to quote the old lady in *Punch* who on a similar occasion retorted, "Two-legged birds, you mean."

Shields never succeeded in the impossible task of banishing from the delightful old garden at Wimbledon, the crowds of blackbirds and thrushes whose singing was far more irritating to him than any raids upon his fruit. They woke him in the morning and disturbed him at his work. "I hate all birds," he exclaimed indignantly one day, "winged vermin of the air, I detest the whole lot of them!" Glancing at the magnificent eagle in his design of St. John, I said mildly, "You didn't hate



that eagle, surely?" His face changed, and with his fine disregard of logic he said blandly, "Oh my child, I don't call an eagle a *bird!*"

One joy at Wimbledon was a huge bed of dandelions—the despair of the various gardeners who were from time to time allowed to grapple with the wilderness. These dandelions were never disturbed, and certainly when open in the sunshine they were a glorious sight. Shields used to say they were his favourite flowers. Great sheets of Oriental poppies also flourished, and along the pergola leading to the studio wild bryony hung in festoons.

For the last twelve years his comfort was diligently cared for by his housekeeper Miss Dales, and during long months of illness it was largely owing to her devotion that he was able to continue his great task in the intervals of freedom from pain and weakness. Perhaps those last few years, harassed though he was by illness and the troubles of the Chancery suit, were as peaceful as any in his long and strenuous life. To worldly success he was always indifferent. His hatred of the modern system of exhibitions, his scorn of the modern jargon of "Art for art's sake," his passionate devotion of his art to the interpretation of what he really believed to be the only hope for a decadent and fast decaying world—all this kept him aloof from any possibility of popular recognition. There is a story of an enthusiastic student who took a rare and beautiful flower to the Botanical Department of the British Museum, and asked to be told its name and place in the world of flowers. The learned curator shook his head: "No use bringing us a live flower," he explained; "take it home, dry it, press it between blotting-paper for six months, then bring it back and we may be able to name it for you." It is so, perhaps, with the world's estimation of a painter, and it may be long before Frederic Shields can be placed in his rightful niche among the

artists of England. Rossetti called him a greater draughtsman than colourist, yet no sternest critic could condemn the colour of such a drawing as "The Skylark." Exquisite in its poetic feeling and harmony is this little water-colour—a country child in faded blue pinafore, sitting on a stile in hawthorn time, listening entranced to the song of the unseen bird. This was painted in Porlock in the early sixties. "The Bugler," "The Breadwatcher," now in the Manchester Gallery, "The Swing," "Cutting Bread," and others of the same period, now in the collection of Mr. Leicester Collier, are of their kind equally perfect. Again, in an absolutely different sphere, nothing could surpass his designs for Defoe's *Plague*, or that wonderful drawing on wood for "Vanity Fair," which was recently described by one who—like most modern critics—is far from being prejudiced in Shields' favour, as "an absolutely unique achievement, which alone would suffice to establish an artistic reputation." Then the large oil painting of "Knott Mill Fair," with its vivid and romantic realism, shows what the artist might have accomplished in a quite different field, while no one who has studied Shields' landscapes, or his exquisite rapid sketches of English or Italian scenery, can fail to see that in that branch, too, his work was unique. He cared little for portraits, but what a portrait painter he might have made may be imagined by studying the few portraits he was prevailed upon to make from time to time, and such studies as the "Forty Minutes' Sketch of an Old Man," shown at the Memorial Exhibition in London, or the tender pathetic drawings made (under circumstances sadly against successful accomplishment) of his friends Rossetti and Madox Brown after death. It is difficult not to feel that in whatever form of art Shields had applied himself he would have excelled.

Was the didactic work of his later years—the literal

interpretation of the Scriptures by means of large mural paintings enriched with elaborate and researchful symbolism—really the form of expression calculated best to give scope to his undoubtedly unique powers? This may perhaps be questioned by those who have stood amazed at the perfection of his early woodcuts, or charmed by the tender poetic beauty of his water-colours. But he himself felt that his whole life's work had been a preparation for this final task, and in the Chapel of the Ascension he has left a monument which stands alone in English—one might almost say in European—Art, as the achievement of one man in conception and execution from beginning to end. London at least should realise more and more, as years go by, the richness of Mrs. Russell-Gurney's gift.

Arthur Hughes, writing when the last picture in the chapel was completed, said: "I think there never could have been a greater triumph of endurance and character, in any date of Art's history."

And this surely applies not only to his latest work, but to the whole life story of Frederic Shields.

The first part of the book deals with the early history of the United States, from the time of the first European settlers to the end of the American Revolution. It covers the exploration of the continent, the establishment of the first colonies, and the struggle for independence. The second part of the book deals with the early years of the new nation, from the signing of the Constitution to the end of the War of 1812. It covers the development of the federal government, the growth of the economy, and the expansion of the territory. The third part of the book deals with the middle years of the nation, from the beginning of the 19th century to the end of the Civil War. It covers the rise of sectionalism, the struggle over slavery, and the ultimate triumph of the Union. The fourth part of the book deals with the late years of the nation, from the end of the Civil War to the present. It covers the Reconstruction era, the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, and the modern era.

The book is written in a clear and concise style, and is suitable for both students and general readers. It provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the United States, and is an excellent resource for anyone interested in the subject. The book is divided into four main sections, each covering a different period of American history. The first section covers the early years, from the first European settlers to the end of the American Revolution. The second section covers the early years of the new nation, from the signing of the Constitution to the end of the War of 1812. The third section covers the middle years, from the beginning of the 19th century to the end of the Civil War. The fourth section covers the late years, from the end of the Civil War to the present.

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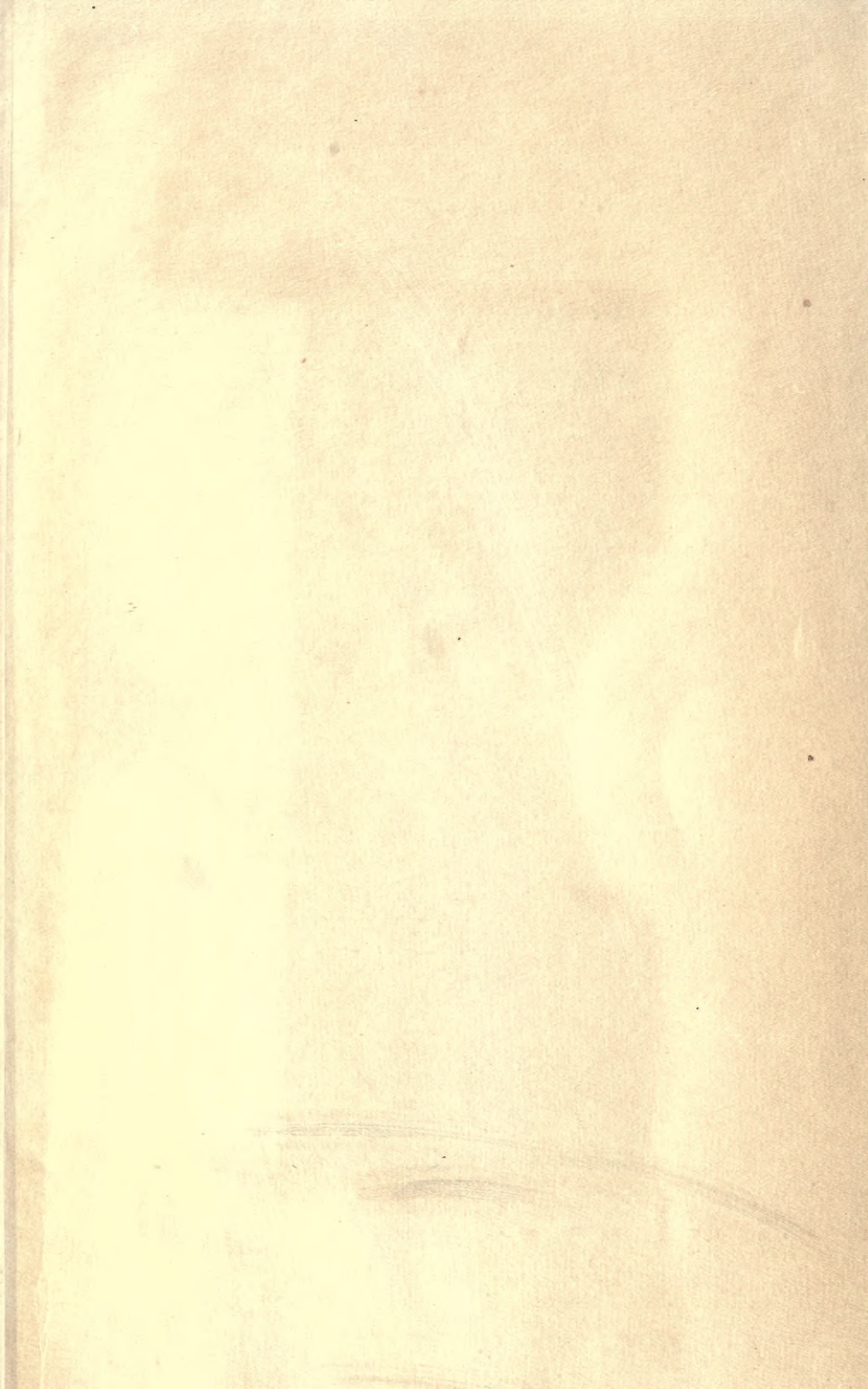
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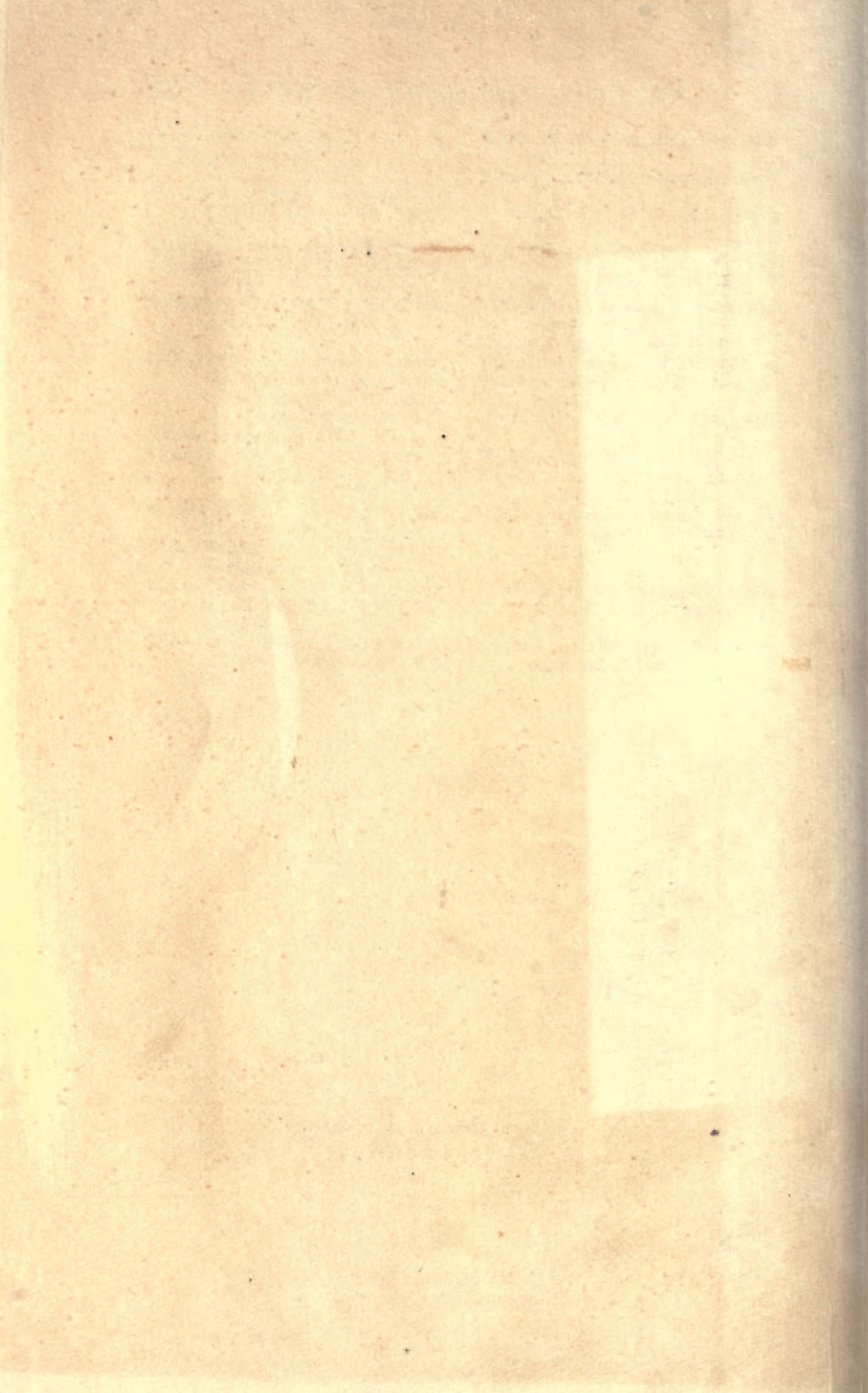
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