

CHAPTER I

THE PSEUDONYM

Pharais

The summer of 1893 was hot and sunny: and we delighted in our little garden with its miniature lawns, its espalier fruit trees framing the vegetable garden, and its juvenile but to us fascinating flower beds. Horsham, our nearest town, was seven miles distant and the village of Rudgwick lay a mile away up a steady ascent beyond the station. William Sharp was happy once more to be resident in the country, although the surroundings were not a type of scenery that appealed to him. But, as he wrote to a friend, it was not so much the place that he liked "as what is in it conducive to that keen perturbation, elation, excitement of mind, which is life worth living."

At Phenice Croft his imagination was in a perpetual ferment. Out of the projected work that he had noted in his diary, out of those subjects that lay in his mind to ger-

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minate and mature, or to wither and be rejected, grew one or two achievements; and in particular after the completion of *Vistas*, a romance of the Isles, *Pharais*, about which his friend George Cotterell in acknowledging a copy of the Dramatic Interludes, wrote to the author:

“*Vistas* should mark a point in your career from which you should go forward to greater things. I am eager to see the Celtic romance.”

The quiet and leisure at Phenice Croft, the peace, the “green life” around were unspeakably welcome to my husband. Once again, he saw visions and dreamed dreams; the psychic subjective side of his dual nature predominated. He was in an acutely creative condition; and, moreover he was passing from one phase of literary work to another, deeper, more intimate, more permanent. So far, he had found no adequate method for the expression of his “second self” though the way was led thereto by *Sospiri di Roma* and *Vistas*.

The *Sospiri di Roma* was the turning point. Those unrhymed poems of irregular metre are filled not only with the passionate delight in life, with the sheer joy of existence, but also with the ecstatic worship of beauty

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that possessed him during those spring months we spent in Rome, when he had cut himself adrift for the time from the usual routine of our life, and touched a high point of health and exuberant spirits. There, at last, he had found the desired incentive towards a true expression of himself, in the stimulus and sympathetic understanding of the friend to whom he dedicated the first of the books published under his pseudonym. This friendship began in Rome and lasted throughout the remainder of his life.

And though this newer phase of his work was at no time the result of collaboration, as certain of his critics have suggested, he was deeply conscious of his indebtedness to this friend, for—as he stated to me in a letter of instructions, written before he went to America in 1896, concerning his wishes in the event of his death—he realised that it was “to her I owe my development as ‘Fiona Macleod’ though, in a sense of course, that began long before I knew her, and indeed while I was still a child,” and that, as he believed, “without her there would have been no ‘Fiona Macleod.’”

Because of her beauty, her strong sense of life and of the joy of life; because of her keen intuitions and mental alertness, her per-

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sonality stood for him as a symbol of the heroic women of Greek and Celtic days, a symbol that, as he expressed it, unlocked new doors in his mind and put him "in touch with ancestral memories" of his race. So, for a time, he stilled the critical, intellectual mood of William Sharp to give play to the development of this new found expression of subtler emotions, towards which he had been moving with all the ardour of his nature.

From then till the end of his life there was a continual play of the two forces in him, or of the two sides of his nature: of the intellectually observant, reasoning mind — the actor, and of the intuitively observant, spiritual mind — the dreamer, which differentiated more and more one from the other, and required different conditions, different environment, different stimuli, until he seemed to be two personalities in one. It was a development which, as it proceeded, produced a tremendous strain on his physical and mental resources; and at one time between 1897-8 threatened him with a complete nervous collapse.

And there was for a time distinct opposition between these two natures which made it extremely difficult for him to adjust his life, for the two conditions were equally im-

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perative in their demands upon him. His preference, naturally, was for the intimate creative work which he knew grew out of his inner self; though the exigencies of life, his dependence on his pen for his livelihood — and, moreover the keen active interest “William Sharp” took in all the movements of the day, literary and political, at home and abroad — required of him a great amount of applied study and work.

During those two years at Phenice Croft, to which he always looked back with deep thankfulness, he was the dreamer — he was testing his new powers, living his new life, and delighting in the opportunity for psychic experimentation. And for such experimentation the place seemed to him to be peculiarly suited. To me it seemed “uncanny,” and to have a haunted atmosphere — created unquestionably by him — that I found difficult to live in, unless the sun was shining. This uncanny effect was felt by more than one friend; by Mr. Murray Gilchrist, for instance, whose impressions were described by his host in one of the short “Tragic Landscapes.”

Pharais was the first of the books written and published under the pseudonym of “Fiona Macleod.” The first reference to it is in the afore noted diary: “Have also done

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the first part of a Celtic romance called *Pharais*." The next is in a letter written to Mrs. Janvier from St. Andrews, on 12th August, 1893, before the author had decided on the use of a pseudonym:

“. . . The white flowers you speak of are the moon-daisies, are they not? — what we call moonflowers in the west of Scotland and ox-eye daisies in England, and marguerites in France? . . . It is very strange that you should write about them to me just as I was working out a scene in a strange Celtic tale I am writing, called *Pharais*, wherein the weird charm and terror of a night of tragic significance is brought home to the reader (or I hope so) by a stretch of dew-wet moonflowers glimmering white through the mirk of a dusk laden with sea mists. Though this actual scene was written a year or two ago — and one or two others of the first part of *Pharais* — I am going to re-write it, your letter having brought some subtle inspiration with it. *Pharais* is a foil to the other long story I am working at. While *it* is full of Celtic romance and dream and the glamour of the mysterious, the other is a comedy of errors — somewhat in the nautre, so far, of *A Fellowe and His Wife* (I mean as to style). In both, at least the plot, the central action,

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the germinal *motif*, is original: though I for one lay little stress on extraneous originality in comparison with that inner originality of individual life. . . . I have other work on the many occupied easels in the studio of my mind: but of nothing of this need I speak at present. Of minor things, the only one of any importance is a long article on a subject wherein I am (I suppose) the only specialist among English men of letters — the Belgian literary Renaissance since 1880. It is entitled 'La Jeune Belgique,' and will appear in (I understand) the September number of *The Nineteenth Century*. . .

" . . . We must each 'gang our ain gait.' I'm singularly indifferent to what other people think in any matter where I feel strongly myself. Perhaps it is for this reason that I am rarely 'put out' by adverse criticism or opinion — except on technical shortcomings. I do a lot of my own work here lying out on the sand-dunes by the sea. Yesterday I had a strange experience. I was writing in pencil in *Pharais* of death by the sea — and almost at my feet a drowned corpse was washed in by the tide and the slackening urgency of the previous night's gale. The body proves to be that of a man from the opposite Forfar coast. It had been five days in the water, and death had played havoc with

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his dignity of lifeless manhood. I learned later that his companion had been found three days ago, tide-drifted in the estuary of the Tay. It was only a bit of flotsam, in a sense, but that poor derelict so sullenly surrendered of the sea changed for me, for a time, the aspect of those blithe waters I love so well. In the evening I walked along the same sands. The sea purred like a gigantic tigress, with a whisper of peace and rest and an infinite sweet melancholy. What a sepulchral fraud. . . .

“Life seems to move, now high and serene and incredibly swift as an albatross cleaving the upper air, now as a flood hurled across rocks and chasms and quicksands. But it is all life—even the strangely still and quiet backwaters, even, indeed, the same healthful commonplace lagoons where one havens so gladly often. . . .”

Three months later, he wrote to Mr. Richard Stoddard and proposed for serial publication in *Lippincotts* a romance to be called *Nostalgia*—which was never written. In the same letter he speaks of “another story, *Pharais*,” which he describes as “written deeply in the Celtic spirit and from the Celtic standpoint.” Neither suggestion was ac-

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cepted: and the author decided to issue *Pharais* as soon as possible in book form, and not under his own name.

When in the following year the book was published the author, forgetting that he had ever written Mrs. Janvier about it, sent a copy of it to her, and said merely that it was a book in which he was interested. Whereupon she wrote and asked if the book were not his own, and he replied:

“. . . Yes, *Pharais* is mine. It is a book out of my heart, out of the core of my heart. I wrote it with the pen dipped in the very ichor of my life. It has reached people more than I dreamt of as likely. In Scotland especially it has stirred and created a new movement. Here, men like George Meredith, Grant Allen, H. D. Traill, and Theodore Watts hailed it as a ‘work of genius.’ Ignored in some quarters, abused in others, and unheeded by the ‘general reader,’ it has yet had a reception that has made me deeply glad. It is the beginning of my true work. Only one or two know I am ‘Fiona Macleod.’ Let you and my dear T. A. J. preserve my secret. I trust you.

“You will find more of me in *Pharais* than in anything I have written. Let me add that

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you will find *The Mountain Lovers*, at which I am now writing when I can, more elemental still, while simpler. . . . By blood I am part Celt, and partly so by upbringing, by Spirit wholly so. . . . One day I will tell you of some of the strange old mysteries of earlier days I have part learned, and part divined, and other things of the spirit. You can understand how I cannot do my true work, in this accursed London."

A little later he wrote:

" . . . I resent too close indentification with the so-called Celtic renaissance. If my work is to depend solely on its Gaelic connection, then let it go, as go it must. My work must be beautiful in itself — Beauty is a Queen and must be served as a Queen.

". . . You have asked me once or twice about F. M., why I took her name: and how and when she came to write *Pharais*. It is too complex to tell you just now. . . . The name was born naturally: (of course I had associations with the name Macleod). It, Fiona, is very rare now. Most Highlanders would tell you it was extinct — even as the diminutive of Fionaghal (Flora). But it is not. It is an old Celtic name (meaning 'a

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fair maid') still occasionally to be found. I know a little girl, the daughter of a Highland clergyman, who is called Fiona. *All* my work is so intimately wrought with my own experiences that I cannot tell you about *Pharais*, etc., without telling you my whole life."

As a matter of fact *Pharais* was not the first written expression of the new work. It was preceded by a short story entitled "The Last Fantasy of James Achanna" that in the autumn of 1893 was sent to *The Scots Observer*. It was declined by Mr. Henley who, however, wrote a word of genuine encouragement. He accepted Mr. Henley's decision, and the story was never reprinted in its first form. It was re-written several times; it was included in *The Dominion of Dreams* as "The Archer." During the writing of *Pharais* the author began to realise how much the feminine element dominated in the book, that it grew out of the subjective, or feminine side of his nature. He, therefore, decided to issue the book under the name of *Fiona Macleod*, that "flashed ready made" into his mind. Mrs. Janvier wrote later and asked why he, a man, chose to send forth good work under the signature of a woman. He answered:

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“. . . I can write out of my heart in a way I could not do as William Sharp, and indeed I could not do so if I were the woman Fiona Macleod is supposed to be, unless veiled in scrupulous anonymity. . . .

“This rapt sense of oneness with nature, this *cosmic ecstasy* and elation, this wayfaring along the extreme verges of the common world, all this is so wrought up with the romance of life that I could not bring myself to expression by my outer self, insistent and tyrannical as that need is. . . . My truest self, the self who is below all other selves, and my most intimate life and joys and sufferings, thoughts, emotions and dreams, *must* find expression, yet I cannot save in this hidden way.”

He was wont to say “Should the secret be found out, Fiona dies.” Later in the year he wrote: “Sometimes I am tempted to believe I am half a woman, and so far saved as I am by the hazard of chance from what a woman can be made to suffer if one let the light of the common day illuminate the avenues and vistas of her heart. . . .”

A copy of *Vistas* and one of *Pharais* were sent to George Meredith, who wrote in acknowledgment to the author:

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BOX HILL, July 5, 1894.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

“Vistas” gave me pleasure, and a high lift at times. There is the breath in it. Only beware of a hurried habit of mind that comes of addiction to Impressionist effects. They engender that mood in readers ultimately.

“Pharais” is in many respects most admirable — pure Celtic salt. I should have written to thank the writer before this: but I am at work up to an hour of the dinner bell day by day at the finish of this novel — and not too happy about it.

Will you beg Miss Macleod’s excuse of me for the moment? Her book is one to fly sure to the mark. I hope you will come to me in September, when I shall be back there.

Give my warm respects to your wife.

Ever faithfully yours,

GEORGE MEREDITH.

The following letter to Mr. Grant Allen is one of the earliest that were signed with the pseudonym:

1894.

DEAR SIR,

I have only now ascertained that you are in England. I was informed that you were in the south of France. Some short time ago

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I asked Mr. Frank Murray of Derby to forward to you a copy of my just published romance *Pharais*. I now write to ask if you will accept it as a slight token of homage from the youngest and latest of Celtic writers to the most brilliant champion of the Celtic genius now living. I do not, however, send it by way of inveigling you to write about it, much as any word of yours would mean to me both in service and honour: but primarily because of your deep and vivid sympathy not only with nature but with the Celtic vision of nature — and, also, let me add, because of the many delightful hours I have enjoyed with your writings.

Faithfully yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

Mr. Grant Allen replied:

THE CROFT, HINDHEAD.

DEAR MADAM,

I thank you for your book, and still more for your charming and too flattering letter. *Pharais* strikes me as a beautiful and poetical piece of work. It is instinct with the dreamy Celtic genius, and seems to come to us straight from the Isles of the Dead. That shadowy Ossianic spirit, as of your misty straits and your floating islands, reminds me

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exactly of the outlook from the western mountains over the summer-blue belted sea as I saw it once on an August morning at Oban. Too shadowy, sometimes, and too purely poetical, I fear, for your Saxon readers. But the opening sentences are beautiful, and the nature-studies and the sense of colour throughout are charming. Now, after so much praise, will you forgive a few questions and a word of criticism? You are, I take it, a young writer, and so an older hand may give you a hint or two. Don't another time interlard your English with Gaelic. Even a confirmed Celtomoniac like myself finds it a trifle distracting. Don't say "the English," and "the Gaelic." Give a little more story to less pure poetry. Of course I recognise that your work is an idyll, not a novel, a cameo, not a woodcut; but even so, it seems to me a trifle too dreamy. Forgive this frankness, and remember that success still lies in the lap of the Saxon. Also that we Celts have our besetting sins, and that perfection in literature lies in avoiding excess in any direction, even that of one's own best qualities. Now a question or two — because you interest me. How in English letters would you write *Pharais* phonetically, or as near it as our clumsy southern lips can com-

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pass? (I have not "the Gaelic," and my Celtic blood is half Irish, half Breton.) And how "Fiona?" Is it something like Feena? And are you Miss or Mrs.? And do you live in Edinburgh? If ever you come south, we hope you will let us know; for my wife read your book before I did, and interested me in it by sketching the story for me. Now see how long a letter I have written unto you, going the Apostle one better, with my own left hand: only the busiest man in England could have found time to do it.

Faithfully yours,

GRANT ALLEN.

Questions as to the identity of the author were already "in the air"; "F. M.'s" answer to Mr. Allen shows that the author felt "her" security menaced:

KILCREGGAN, ARGYLL,

1894.

DEAR MR. GRANT ALLEN,

You are very kind indeed — both to write to me, you who are so busy, and to promise to do anything you can for my book. It is very good of you. Truly, it is the busiest people who find time to do what is impossible to idle folk. . . .

I have just had a letter of deeply gratify-

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ing praise and recognition from Mr. George Meredith, who says he finds my work "rare and distinctive." He writes one phrase, memorable as coming from him: "Be sure that I am among those readers of yours whom you kindle."

Permit me, dear Mr. Allen, to make a small request of you. If you are really going to be so kind as to say anything about my book I trust you will not hint playfully at any other authorship having suggested itself to you—or, indeed, at my name being a pseudonym. And, sure, it will be for pleasure to me if you will be as scrupulous with Mr. Meredith or anyone else in private, as in public, if chance should ever bring my insignificant self into any chit-chat.

My name is really Fiona (i. e. Fionnagh) — of which it is the diminutive: as Maggie, Nellie, or Dair are diminutives of Margaret, Helen, or Alasdair).

I hope to have the great pleasure of seeing Mrs. Allen and yourself when (as is probable) I come south in the late autumn or sometime in November.

Sincerely and gratefully yours,
FIONA MACLEOD.

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ST. ANDREWS, 1894.

DEAR MR. GRANT ALLEN,

How generous you are! If it were not for fear of what you say about my Gaelic phrases I should quote one to the effect that the wild bees that make the beautiful thoughts in your brain also leave their honey on your lips.

Your *Westminster* review has given me keen pleasure — and for everything in it, and for all the kind interest behind it, I thank you cordially.

What you say about the survival of folklore as a living heritage is absolutely true — *how* true perhaps few know, except those who have lived among the Gaels, of their blood and speaking the ancient language. The Celtic paganism lies profound and potent still beneath the fugitive drift of Christianity and Civilisation, as the deep sea beneath the coming and going of the tides. No one can understand the islander and remote Alban Gael who ignores or is oblivious of the potent pagan and indeed elementally barbaric forces behind all exterior appearances. (This will be more clearly shown in my next published book, a vol. of ten Celtic tales and episodes — with, I suppose, a more wide and varied outlook on life, tho' narrow at that! — than either of its predecessors.) But excuse this

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rambling. Your review is all the more welcome to me as it comes to me during a visit to friends at St. Andrews, and to me, alas, the East Coast of Scotland is as foreign and remote in all respects as though it were Jutland or Finland. . . .

Again with thanks, dear Mr. Allen,

Most sincerely yours,

FIONA MACLEOD.

P. S. In his letter Mr. Sharp says (writing to me in his delightful shaky Gaelic) that "both Grant and Nellie Allen are *clach-chreadhain*." It took me some time to understand the compliment. *Clach-chreadh* means "stone of clay"—i. e. a *Brick!*

That Mr. Grant Allen was half persuaded as to the identity of the author is shown in the following invitation:

THE CROFT, HINDHEAD,

July 12, 1894.

MY DEAR SHARP,

Kindly excuse foolscap, I am out of note-paper, and on this remote hilltop can't easily get any. As for the type-writing, I am reduced to that together, through writer's cramp, which makes my right hand useless even for this machine, which I am compelled to work with my left hand only.—As to

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Pharais, I will confess I read it with some doubt as to whether it was not your own production; and after I had written my letter to Miss Macleod, I took it to my wife and said, "Now, if this is William Sharp, what a laugh and a crow he will have over me!" Le Gallienne, who is stopping with us, was sure it was yours; but on second thoughts, I felt certain, in spite of great likeness of style, there was a feminine touch in it, and sent on my letter. All the same, however, I was not quite satisfied you were not taking us in, especially as your book with Blanche Willis Howard had shown one how womanly a tone you could adopt when it suited you; and I shan't feel absolutely at rest on the subject till I have seen the "beautiful lassie" in person. If she turns out to be W. S. in disguise, I shall owe you a bad one for it; for I felt my letter had just that nameless tinge of emotion one uses towards a woman, and a beginner, but which would be sadly out of place with an old hand like yourself, who has already won his spurs in the field of letters.

We shall be glad to make your cousin's acquaintance (supposing her to exist) in October. It will afford us the opportunity we have long desired of asking you and Mrs. Sharp to come and see us in our moorland

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cottage, all up among the heather. Indeed, we have had it in our minds all summer to invite you — you are of those whom one would wish to know more intimately. I have long felt that the Children of To-morrow ought to segregate somehow from the children of to-day, and live more in a world of their own society.

With united kindest regards, and solemn threats of vengeance if you are still perpetrating an elaborate hoax against me,

I am ever

Yours very sincerely,

GRANT ALLEN.

Unfortunately, there was an imperative reason for bringing our residence at Rudgwick to a close. The damp, autumnal days in the little cottage on its clay soil, and the fatigue of constantly going up and down to town in order to do the work of the Art critic for the *Glasgow Herald* — which I for some time had undertaken — proved too severe a strain on me, and I found that in the winter months I could not remain at Phenice Croft without being seriously ill. So with great reluctance we decided to give it up at midsummer. I was anxious that we should seek for another cottage, on a main line of railway, and on

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sandy soil; but my husband feared to risk another experiment and preferred that we should make our headquarters in London once again, and that he should go into the country whenever the mood necessitated. But his regret was deep. Phenice Croft had seen the birth of "Fiona Macleod"; he had lived there with an intensity of inner life beyond anything he had previously experienced. He knew that life in town would create difficulties for him, yet it seemed the wisest compromise to make. Our difficulty of choice was mainly one of ways and means; a considerable part of the ordinary work was in my hands, and I found it difficult to do it satisfactorily away from London. He expressed his regret in a letter to Mr. Murray Gilchrist:

PHENICE CROFT,
27th March, 1894.

MY DEAR GILCHRIST,

You would have heard from me before this — but I have been too unwell. Besides, I have had extreme pressure of matters requiring every possible moment I could give. My wife's health, too, has long been troubling me: and we have just decided that (greatly to my disappointment) we must return to Hampstead to live. Personally, I regret the

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return to town (or half town) more than I can say: but the matter is one of paramount importance, so there is nothing else to be done. We leave at midsummer. As for me, one of my wander-fits has come upon me: the Spring-madness has got into the blood: the sight of green hedgerows and budding leaves and the blue smoke rising here and there in the woodlands has wrought some chemic *furor* in my brain. Before the week is out I hope to be in Normandy — and after a day or two by the sea at Dieppe, and then at beautiful and romantic Rouen, to get to the green lanes and open places, and tramp “toward the sun.” I’ll send you a line from somewhere, if you care to hear.

And now, enough about myself. I have often meant to write to you in detail about your *Stone-Dragon*. . . .

I believe in you, camerado mio, but you must take a firm grip of the reins: in a word, be the driver, not the driven. I think you ought to be able to write a really romantic romance. I hope *The Labyrinth* may be this book: if not, then it will pave the way. But I think you should see more of actual life: and not dwell so continually in an atmosphere charged with your own imaginings — the

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glamour through which you see life in the main at present.

Probably you are wise to spend the greater part of each year as you do: but part of the year should be spent otherwise—say in a town like London, or Paris, or in tramping through alien lands, France or Belgium, Scandinavia, or Germany, or Italy, or Spain: if not, in Scotland, or Ireland, or upon our Isles, or remote counties.

It is because I believe in you that I urge you to beware of your own conventions. Take your pen and paper, a satchel, and go forth with a light heart. The gods will guide *you* to strange things, and strange things to you. You ought to *see* more, to *feel* more, to *know* more, at first hand. Be not afraid of excess. "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," says Blake, and truly. . . . Meanwhile let me send you a word of sunshine. To be alive and young and in health, is a boon so inestimable that you ought to fall on your knees among your moorland heather and thank the gods. Dejection is a demon to be ruled. We cannot always resist his tyranny, but we can always refuse to become bondagers to his usurpation. Look upon him as an Afreet to be exorcised with a cross of red-hot iron. He is a coward

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weakling, after all: take him by the tail and swing him across the moor or down the valley. Swing up into your best.

Be brave, strong, self-reliant. Then you live.

Your friend
WILLIAM SHARP.

We took a small flat in South Hampstead (Rutland House. Greencroft Gardens) that stood high enough for us to see, on clear days, the line of the Surrey hills from the windows, and give us a fine stretch of sky above the chimney pots.

The night before leaving Phenice Croft, a lovely still evening, he wrote the little poem:

THE WHITE PEACE

It lies not on the sunlit hill
Nor in the sunlit gleam
Nor ever in any falling wave
Nor ever in running stream —

But sometimes in the soul of man
Slow moving through his pain
The moonlight of a perfect peace
Floods heart and brain.

and sent it to me in a letter (for I had gone to town in advance of him), and told me:

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“Before I left I took up a handful of grassy turf, and kissed it three times, and then threw it to the four quarters — so that the Beauty of the Earth might be seen by me wherever I went and that no beauty I had seen or known there should be forgotten. Then I kissed the chestnut tree on the side lawn where I have seen and heard so much: from the springing of the dream flowers, to the surge of the sea in *Pharais*.”

Thence he went to Scotland and wrote to me from Kilcreggan, where he was staying with his mother and sisters till I could join him:

“I told you about Whistlefield? how it, and all the moorland parts about here just now, is simply a boggy sop, to say nothing of the railway works. I hope we’ll have fine weather in Iona: it will be lovely there if we go. . . .

(“By the way Mr. Traill had a gratifying notice of *Pharais* in the *Graphic* a week or two ago.)

“I have made friends here with a Celtic Islesman from Iona who is settled here: and have learned some more legends and customs etc. from him — also got a copy of an ancient MS. map of Iona with all its fields, divisions, bays, capes, isles, etc. He says my pronunciation of Gaelic is not only surpris-

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ingly good, but is distinctively that of the Isles.

“I have learned the rune also of the reading of the spirit. The ‘influence’ itself seems to me purely hypnotic. I was out with this man McC. on Saturday night last in a gale, in a small two-sailed wherry. We flew before the squalls like a wild horse, and it was glorious with the shriek of the wind, the heave and plunge of the boat, and the washing of the water over the gunwales. Twice ‘the black wind’ came down upon us out of the hills, and we were nearly driven under water. He kept chanting and calling a wild sea-rune, about a water-demon of the isles, till I thought I saw it leaping from wave to wave after us. Strangely, he is a different man the moment others are present. He won’t speak a word of Gaelic, nor be ‘Celtic’ in any way, nor even give the word as to what will be doing in the isles at this time or any other. This, however, I have noticed often: and all I have ever learned has been in intimacy and privily and more or less casually. On Sunday and Monday he avoided me, and would scarce speak: having given himself away and shown his Celtic side—a thing now more than ever foreign to the Celtic nature, which has become passionately

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reticent. But a few words in Gaelic, and a private talk, put all right again. Last night I got the rune of the 'Knitting of the Knots' and some information about the *Dalt* and the *Cho-Alt* about which I was not clear. He has seen the Light of the Dead, and his mother saw (before her marriage, and before she even saw the man himself) her husband crossing a dark stream followed by his four unborn children, and two in his arms whom afterwards she bore still-born. . . ."

To me the summer was memorable because of my first visit to Iona. While there he wrote part of *The Sin-Eater*, and its pre-fatory dedication to George Meredith, and projected some of the St. Columba tales; he renewed impressions of his earlier days on the sacred isle, and stored new experiences which he afterwards embodied in his long essay on Iona published in *The Divine Adventure* volume.

From that Isle of Dreams "Fiona" wrote to Mrs. Tynan-Hinkson:

ISLE OF IONA,
September, 1894.

DEAR MRS. HINKSON,

I am, in summer and autumn, so much of a wanderer through the Isles and Western Highlands that letters sometimes are long in

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reaching me. But your kind note (and enclosure) has duly followed me from Edinburgh to Loch Goil in eastern Argyll and thence deviously here. It will be a great pleasure to me to read what you have to say in the *Illus. London News* or elsewhere, and I thank you. I wish you could be here. Familiar with your poetry as I am, I know how you would rejoice not only in the Iona that is the holy Icolmkill but also in the Iona that is Ithona, the ancient Celtic Isle of the Druids. There is a beauty here that no other place has, so unique is it. Of course it does not appeal to all. The Sound of Iona divides the Island from the wild Ross of Mull by no more than a mile of water; and it is on this eastern side that the village and the ancient Cathedral and ruined Nunnery etc. stand. Here it is as peaceful as, on the west side, it is wild and grand. I read your letter last night, at sunset, while I was lying on the Cnoc-an-Angeal, the hillock on the west where the angel appeared to St. Columba. To the north lay the dim features of the Outer Hebrides: to the west an unbroken wilderness of waves till they fall against Labrador: to the south, though invisible, the coastline of Ireland. There was no sound, save the deep hollow voice of the sea, and a

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strange reverberation in a hollow cave underground. It was a very beautiful sight to see the day wane across the ocean, and then to move slowly homeward through the gloaming, and linger awhile by the Street of the Dead near the ruined Abbey of Columba. But these Isles are so dear to me that I think everyone must feel alike!

I remain

Sincerely yours,

FIONA MACLEOD.

P. S. I enclose a gillieflower from close to St. Columba's tomb.

In November came a letter from Mr. Stedman:

137 WEST 78TH ST.,
NEW YORK.

MY DEAREST FRIEND BEYOND SEAS,

For this in truth you now are. An older poet and comrade than you once held that place in my thoughts, but Time and Work have somehow laid the sword between us — and neither of us is to blame, I never so well obeyed Emerson's advice to recruit our friendship (as we grow older) as when I won, I scarcely know how or why, your unswerving and ever increasing affection. In truth, again, it has been of the greatest service to me, during the most trying portion of my

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life — the period in which you have given me so much warmth and air — and never has it been of more worth than now you might well think otherwise.

My birthday began for me with the "Sharp number" of *The Chap-book*. I don't know what fact of it gave me the more pleasure (it came at a time when I had a-plenty to worry me) — the beautiful autographic tribute to myself or the honour justly paid to my dear Esquire-at-arms, whose superb portrait is the envy of our less fortunate Yankee-torydons. The last five years have placed you so well to the front, on both sides of the Atlantic, that I can receive no more satisfying tributes than those which you have given me before the world. I feel, too, that it is only during these years that you have come to your full literary strength, there is nothing which the author of your *Ballads* and of *Vistas* cannot do.

It is a noteworthy fact which you will be glad to hear, that your letter lay by my plate, when I came down to breakfast on the morning of October the eight! The stars in their courses must be in league with you. . . .

Mrs. Stedman sends her love, and says that your portrait is that of a man grown handsomer, and, she trusts, more discreet and

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ascetic! The month and this letter are now ending with midnight.

Ever affectionately yours,

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

The Chap-book was a little semi-monthly issue published by Messrs. Stone and Kimball, Chicago. No. 9, the "William Sharp" number, appeared on the 15th of September, three days after that author's birthday. It contained the reproduction of an autograph signed poem, by William Sharp "to Edmund Clarence Stedman in Birthday Greeting 8th October"; an appreciation of William Sharp's Poems by Bliss Carman; "The Birth of a Soul" one of the Dramatic Interludes afterwards included in *Vistas*, and a portrait of the Author.

Notwithstanding the paramount interest to the author of the "F. M." expression of himself as "W. S." he was not idle. After a visit to Mr. Murray Gilchrist in the latter's home on the Derbyshire moors, W. S. wrote his story "The Gypsy Christ," founded on a tradition which he had learned from his gipsy friends, and set in a weird moorland surroundings. In *Harpers'* there appeared a description of the night-wanderers on the Thames' embankment, pathetic frequenters of

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“The Hotel of the Beautiful Star.” The July number of *The Portfolio* consisted of a monograph, by him on “Fair Women in Painting and Poetry” (afterwards published in book form by Messrs. Seeley) which he, at first, intended to dedicate to Mr. George Meredith. His “second thought” was approved of by the novelist, who wrote his acknowledgment:

“You do an elusive bit of work with skill. It seems to me, that the dedication was wisely omitted. Thousands of curdling Saxons are surly almost to the snarl at the talk about ‘woman.’ Next to the Anarchist, we are hated.”

The month of July was saddened by the death of our intimate and valued friend Walter Pater; upon that friend and his work William Sharp wrote a long appreciation which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Another death, at the year-end, caused him great regret, that of Christina Rossetti, whom he had held in deep regard. He felt, as he wrote to her surviving brother: “One of the rarest and sweetest of English singers is silent now. 1882 and 1894 were evil years for English poetry.” Later he wrote a careful study of her verse for *The Atlantic Monthly*.

As a Christmas card that year he gave me

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a little book of old wood-cut illustrations, reproduced and printed on Iona. On the inside of the cover he wrote what he held to be his creed. It is this:

CREDO

“The Universe is eternally, omnipresently and continuously filled with the breath of God.

“Every breath of God creates a new convolution in the brain of Nature: and with every moment of change in the brain of Nature, new loveliness is wrought upon the earth.

“Every breath of God creates a new convolution in the brain of the Human Spirit, and with every moment of change in the brain of the Human Spirit, new hopes, aspirations, dreams, are wrought within the Soul of the Living.

“And there is no Evil anywhere in the Light of this creative Breath: but only, everywhere, a redeeming from Evil, a winning towards Good.”