

## CHAPTER XIII

1905

*There is a great serenity in the thought of death,  
when it is known to be the Gate of Life.*

FIONA MACLEOD.

April my husband spent in the West of Scotland, for which he pined; and on his way North broke his journey in Edinburgh whence he wrote to Mr. W. J. Robertson, the translator into English verse of *A Century of the French poets of the XIX Century*:

April, 1905.

DEAR MR. ROBERTSON,

After our most pleasant evening à deux I had a comfortable journey north: and last night luxuriated in getting to bed early (a rare thing for me) with the sure and certain knowledge there would be no glorious resurrection therefrom at any untimely hour. So after sleeping the sleep of the true Gael—who is said to put 85 to the poor Sassenach 40 winks—I woke in peace. I was thereafter having a cigarette over the *Scotsman*

when my youngest (and secretary) sister brought me my letters, papers, etc., and with them a long narrow box which I soon discovered to be your generous gift of 100 of these delectable Indian cigars. It is very good of you indeed, and I am grateful, and may the ancient Gaelic God Dia-Cheo, God of Smoke, grant you remission of all your philological sins and derivative "howlers" — and the more so as there is no authority for any such god, and the name would signify hill-mist instead of pipe-smoke! And may I have a hundred "rêves de Notre Dame de Nicotine!" I couldn't resist trying one. Wholly excellent. And in the meditative fumes I arrived through intuition at the following derivation which I hope will find a place in your book:

Roab ancient Celtic for a Good Fellow  
 H'Errt " " " Smoker-Maker or  
 Smoke-Bestower

's contraction for *Agus* "and,"

*Omn* ancient Celtic for "May Heaven Bless"

*W. J.* ancient Celtic Tribal tattoo —

which, assisted in dreams by the spirits of Windisch, D'Arbois de Jubainville, Loth, Whitely Stokes and Kuno Meyer, I take to be *W. J. Roab-H'Errt-S-onn* — i. e., *Bill-Jack*, or in mod. English "William John" of

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the Clan of Heaven-Blessed Friendly Smokers — i. e., William John of the Roaberrtsson, or Roberston Clan. This of course disposes of Donnachie once and for all.

Ever sincerely yours

WILLIAM SHARP.

From Edinburgh he and his secretary-sister Mary went to Lismore, so that he might "feel the dear West once more." From Oban he reported to Mr. W. J. Robertson on a post card addressed to "Ri Willean Iain MacRiobeart mhic Donnachaidh"——

"Awful accident in a lonely Isle of the West.

"A distinguished stranger was observing the vasty deep, and had laid a flask-filled cup on a rock beside him when a tanned gull upset it and at same time carried off a valuable Indian cheroot. Deep sympathy is everywhere expressed, for the distinguished stranger, the lost cheroot, and above all for the spilt cup and abruptly emptied flash. A gloom has been cast over the whole island.

*"Verb: Sap."*

From Lismore he wrote to me:

"*April 19.* It was sweet to fall asleep last night to the sound of the hill-wind and

the swift troubled waters. We had a lovely walk in the late afternoon, and again in the sombre moonlit night. It came on too stormy for me to go round to the Cavern later, however. I'll try again. I was there about first dusk, with Mary. To my chagrin there was neither sound nor sight of the sea-woman, but she must be there, for MacC. has *twice* heard her sobbing and crying out at him when he passed close in the black darkness. There was only a lapwing wailing near by, but both Mary and I heard a singular furtive sound like something in a trailing silk dress whispering to itself as it slid past in the dusk — but this, I *think*, was a curious echo of what's called 'a sobbing wave' in some narrow columnar hidden hollow opening from the sea. Mary got the creeps, and loathed a story I told her about a *midianmara* that sang lovely songs but only so as to drown the listener and suck the white warm marrow out of his spine.

"Later I joined MacC. for a bit over the flickering fire-flaucht. I got him to tell me all over again and more fully about the Maighdeann Mhara. The first time he heard 'something' was before his fright last November. 'There was *cèol* then,' he said. . . .

"I asked in Gaelic, 'Were songs sung?'

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He said, 'Yes, at times.' Mrs. MacC. was angry at him, he said, and said he hadn't the common-sense of a jenny-cluckett (a clucking hen) — *but* (and there's a world of difference in that) *she hadn't heard what he had heard*. So to cheer him up I told him a story about a crab that fed on the brains of a drowned man, and grew with such awful and horrible wisdom that it climbed up the stairway of the seaweed and on to a big rock and waved its claws at the moon and cursed God and the world, and then died raving mad. Seeing how it worked upon him, I said I would tell him another, and worse, about a lobster — but he was just as bad as Mary, and said he would wait for the lobster till the morning, and seemed so absurdly eager to get safely to bed that the pleasant chat had to be abruptly broken off. . . .

"P. S. The cold is very great, and it is a damp cold, you couldn't stand it. When I got up my breath *swarmed* about the room like a clutch of phantom peewits. No wonder I had a dream I was a seal with my feet clemmed on to an iceberg. A duck went past a little ago seemingly with one feather and that blown athwart its beak, so strong was the north-wind blowing from that snowy mass that Ben Nevis wears like a delicate

veil. Cruachan has covered herself with a pall of snow mist.

“*April 20.* . . . Fiona Macleod has just been made an honorary member of a French League of writers devoted to the rarer and subtler use of Prose and Verse, a charming letter from Paul Fort acting for his colleagues Maeterlinck, Henri de Roquier, Jean Moréas, Emile Verhaeren, Comte Antoine de la Rochefoucault, Duchesse de la Roche-Guyon, Richegny, Sully Prudhomme, Henri Le Sidaner, Jules Claretie, etc., etc.

“We’re glad, aren’t we, you and I? She’s our daughter, isn’t she?”

“*23rd April.* . . . You will have got my note of yesterday telling you that I have reluctantly had to relinquish Iona. The primary reason is its isolation at present. . . .

“But from something I heard from old Mr. C. I fancy it’s as well for me not to visit there just now, where I’d be the only stranger, and every one would know of it — and where a look out for F. M. or W. S. is kept! And, too, anything heard there and afterwards utilised would be as easily traced to me. . . . After Tiree and Iona and Coll, and Arran in the South, I don’t care just now for anywhere else — nearer: as for Eigg, which I loved so much of old, Rum or Canna and the

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Outer Isles, they are too inaccessible just now and Skye is too remote and too wet and cold. However, it is isolation plus 'atmosphere' I want most of all — and I doubt if there is any place just now I could get so much good from as Lismore. I love that quiet isolated house on the rocks facing the Firth of Lorne, all Appin to Ben Naomhir, and the great mountains of Morven.

“It was on the sandy bindweed-held slope of the little bay near the house, facing Eilean-nan-Coarach, that F. wrote the prelude to *The Winged Destiny* — and also the first piece, the 'Treud-nan-Ron,' which describes that region, with Mr. MacC.'s seal legend, and the dear little island in the Sound of Morven (do you remember our row to it one day?) There one could be quiet and given over to dreams and to the endless fascination of outer nature. . . . And I have got much of what I want — the *in-touch* above all, the atmosphere: enough to strike the keynote throughout the coming year and more, for I absorb through the very pores of both mind and body like a veritable sponge. Wildlife and plant-life too extremely interesting here. There does seem some mystery about that cave, tho' I cannot fathom it.

“I've all but finished the preparation of the

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new Tauchnitz vol. (*The Sunset of Old Tales*) and expect to complete it (for May) to-night.

“*24th April.* . . . Yes, I was sorry to leave Lismore. It may be my last time in the Gaelic West. (I don't say this ‘down-ly’—but because I think it likely. There is much I want to do, and now as much by W. S. as by F. M. and that I realise must be done abroad where alone can I keep well and mentally even more than physically (*How* I hope Fontainebleau may some day suit us.) Dear MacC. was sorry to part to. He shook hands (with both his) and when I said in Gaelic ‘Good-bye, and Fare-well upon that, my friend,’ he said, ‘No—no’—and then suddenly said, ‘My blessing on you—and good-bye now!’ and turned away and went down the pier-side and hoisted the brown sail and went away across the water, waving a last farewell.”

The cold proved so disastrous that my husband was ordered to Neuenahr for special treatment. Thence he wrote to the Hon. A. Nelson Hood:

June, 1905.

MY DEAR JULIAN,

Just a brief line, for I am still very re-

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stricted in permission as to writing, as so much depends on the rest-cure which is no small factor in my redemption here. . . .

It has been "a narrow squeak." Briefly, after a hard tussle at the brink of "Cape Fatal" and a stumble across "Swamp Perilous" I got into the merely "dangerous condition" stage—and now at last that's left behind, and I'll soon be as well in body as I'm happy and serene in mind.

It is at best, however, a *reprieve*, not a life-time-discharge. *N'importe*. Much can be done with a reprieve, and who is to know how long the furlough may be extended to. At any rate, I am well content.

To me he wrote—for I was unable to accompany him:

NEUENAHN,  
16th June, 1905.

". . . . Here, at the Villa Usner, it is deliciously quiet and reposeful. I had not realised to the full how much nervous harm I've had for long. To live near trees is alone a joy and a restorative. The heat is very great but to me most welcome and strengthening. . . . In my room or in the garden I hear no noise, no sounds save the susurrus of leaves and the sweet monotony of the rushing Ahr, and the cries and broken songs of birds. . . .

“I could see that Dr. G. can't understand why I am not more depressed or, rather, more anxious. I explained to him that these physical troubles meant little to me, and that they were largely the bodily effect of other things, and might be healed far more by spiritual well-being than by anything else: also that nature and fresh air and serenity and light and warmth and nervous rest were worth far more to me than all else. ‘But don't you know how serious your condition may become at any moment, if you got a bad chill or setback, or don't soon get better?’ ‘Certainly,’ I said; ‘but what then? Why would I bother about either living or dying? I shall not die before the hour of my unloosening comes.’

“I want to be helped all I may be — but all the waters in the world can only affect the external life, and even that only secondarily very often. . . .”

Monday evening.

“. . . *How* I enjoyed my breakfast this morning! (in the lovely garden, in a vine-shadowed arbour or pergola, with great tall poplars and other trees billowing against the deep blue). Then a cigarette, a stroll in the lovely sunlit-dappled green shadowiness of an adjoining up-sloping avenue — and a seat

for a little on a deserted south-wall bench (because of the blazing heat) for a sun-bath, while I watched a nightingale helping its young to fly among the creaming elders and masses of wild-rose, while her mate swung on a beech-branch and called long sweet exquisite cries of a thrilling poignancy (which, however, might only be 'Now then, Jenny, look out, or Tommy will fall into that mass of syringa:—hillo! there's Bobby and Polly gone and got scratched pecking at these confounded white wild-rose!')

"Then I got up to come in and write to you (gladly in one way, reluctantly in another, for I seem to drink in life in the strong sunlight and heat), but first stopped to speak to a gorgeous solitary dandelion. I stroked it gently, and said 'Hullo, wee brother, isn't the world beautiful? Hold up your wee head and rejoice!' And it turned up its wee golden nose and said 'Keep your hair on, you old Skidamalink, I'm rejoicing as hard as ever I can. I'm *always* rejoicing. What else would I do? You *are* a rum old unshiny animal on two silly legs!' So we laughed, and parted — but he called me back, and said gently in a wee soft goldy-yellow voice, 'Don't think me rude, Brother of Joy. It's only my way. I love you because you

love me and don't despise me. Shake pinkies!'—so I gave him a pinkie and he gave me a wee golden-yellow pinkie-petal. . . .

“Tell Marjorie<sup>1</sup> the wee Dandelion was asking about her and sends her his love — also a milky daisy that says *Hooray!* every morning when it wakes, and then is so pleased and astonished that it remains silently smiling till next morning.

“This flower and bird talk doesn't bother you, does it? Don't think I don't realise how ill I have been and in a small way still am: but I don't think about it, and am quite glad and happy in this lovely June-glory. . . .”

He broke his return journey at Doorn with our friends M. and Mme. Grandmont and wrote to me:

July, 1905.

“. . . How you'd love to be here!

“Nothing visible but green depths fading into green depths, and fringing the sky-lines the endless surf of boughs and branches. From the forest-glades the cooing of doves and the travelling-voice of a flowing cool sweet wind of this delicious morning. I always gain immensely in mind and body from

<sup>1</sup> The little daughter of our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Tomson.

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nearness to woodlands and green growth — hence in no small part my feeling for Fontainebleau. I'd such a lot tell you about it — and of what we should strive to obtain for ourselves in restful, fine, dignified life, and much else, apropos and apart — as you lay happy and contented on the long luxurious lounge beside my chair on the deep balcony, half listening to me and half to the soft continuous susurrus of the pine-fragrant breeze — that more than an hour elapsed while I drank my tea and read your letter. . . .

“It is no exaggeration to say that, so greatly do I value and treasure afterwards certain aspects of beauty, I would quite willingly go through all the suffering again for the sake of the lovely impressions here last night and this morning. The beauty and charm of this house and its forest-environment, the young moon and the night-jar at dusk (and then to soothe and sleepify me still more, the soft, sweet, old-fashioned melodies of Haydn from 9 to 9.30) — one or two lovely peacocks trailing about in front — the swallows at corner of my great verandah — a thousandfold peace and beauty, and the goodness of these dear friends, have not only been, and are, a living continuous joy, but

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have been like the Heralds of Spring to the return of gladness and energy into my mind. To-day I realise that too, for one thing, 'Fiona' has come back from afar off. It is peace and greenness she loves — not the physical and psychical perturbation and demoralisation of towns.

"Yes, we'll make 'green homes' for ourselves now. No more long needless months in London. . . ."

Despite his serenity of mind, London as usual wrought him harm, and as he explained to Dr. Goodchild:

30th July.

". . . August is always a 'dark' month for me — and not as a rule, I fancy a good one: at any rate an obscure and perhaps perilous one. But this time I fancy it is on other lines. I believe strong motives and influences are to be at work in it perhaps furtively only: but none the less potently and far reachingly. Between now and September-end (perhaps longer) many of the Dark Powers are going to make a great effort. We must all be on guard — for there will be individual as well as racial and general attack. But a Great Unloosening is at hand.

"Yours ever,

"W. S."

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We therefore went to Scotland to say good-bye to his mother and sisters, and to see one or two friends, among others, Miss Mary Wilson, the pastellist, at Bantaskine, her home on the site of the battle of Falkirk; Mr. D. Y. Cameron, with whom my husband planned an unfulfilled wander among the Western Isles; and Mr. David Erskine of Linlathen.

While in the North he wrote to Mr. John Masefield:

KESSECK COTTAGE,  
NAIRN.

DEAR MR. MASEFIELD,

A brief word to tell you what pleasure I have had in your little book, *A Mainsail Haul*. It is not only that it is written with delicate art: but it is rich in atmosphere — a much rarer thing. The simplicity, the charm, the subtle implication of floating, evasive yet fluctuating romance, your own keen sense of the use of words and their veiled life and latent as well as obvious colour, combine to a winning and often compelling effect. I do not think anyone who has read Don Alfonso's drinking bout with the little red man and the strange homegoing of the weed and flower-grown brigantine with the Bible name, will forget it: and what dream charm also there

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is in "Port of Many Ships," "Sea Superstition," "The Spanish Sailor's Yarn." In such a splendid and delightful colour fabric as "From the Spanish" "high words and rare" are of course apt—but is it not a mistake to introduce in "Sea Superstition" words such as "august" and "wrought" in a sailor's mouth? (In the text the effect seems to be enhanced, not lessened, by the omission of these words—"were like things in bronze," "the roof of which was of dim branches.")

In "From the Spanish" I would, as a matter of personal taste, prefer that the end came at the close of the penultimate paragraph, the shore-drift of the Italian lute. I think the strange dream-like effect would be much enhanced without (what seems to me) the superfluous "realistic" tag. Otherwise the piece is a gem of its kind.

But you will forgive the critic (and it shows he has read closely) in the admirer, I hope?

Let us have more work of the kind. There is much need of it, and you are of the few who can give it.

Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM SHARP.

Mr. Masfield— who had written con-

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cerning Fiona Macleod to a friend: "I think the genius of a dead people has found reincarnation in her. Wherever the Celt is, thence come visions and tears"—replied:

GREENWICH,  
Aug. 19, 1905.

DEAR MR. SHARP,

I was deeply touched by your kind letter about my little book [*A Mainsail Haul*]. If it should go to a second edition I will make use of your suggestion. I prepared the book rather hurriedly, and there is much in it that I very much dislike, now that it cannot be altered.

The mood in which I wrote the tales you like, has gone from me, and I am afraid I shall be unable to write others of the same kind. In youth the mind is an empty chamber; and the spirits fill it, and move and dance there, and colour it with their wings and raiment. In manhood one has familiars. But between those times (forgive me for echoing Keats) one has little save a tag or two of cynicism, a little crude experience, much weariness, much regret, and a vision blurred by all four faults. One is weakened, too, by one's hatreds.

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I thank you again for your very kind and cordial letter. Yours very sincerely,

JOHN MASEFIELD.

To an unknown correspondent F. M. wrote:

Sept. 15, 1905.

“ . . . I have been away, in the isles, and for a time beyond the reach of letters. I wish there were Isles where one could also go at times, where no winged memories could follow. In a Gaelic folk-tale, told me by an old woman once, the woman of the story had only to burn a rose to ashes and to hold them in the palms of her hands and then to say seven times, *A Eileanain na Sith*, ‘ O Isles of Peace ’! and at once she found herself in quiet isles beyond the foam where no memories could follow her and where old thoughts, if they came, were like phantoms on the wind, in a moment come, in a moment gone. I have failed to find these Isles, and so have you: but there are three which lie nearer, and may be reached, Dream, Forgetfulness, and Hope.

“ And there, it may be, we can meet, you and I. . . .

“ Yes, your insight is true. There is a personal sincerity, the direct autobiographical utterance, in even, as you say, the most remote

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and phantastic of my legends as in the plainest of my words. But because they cover so much illusion as well as passion, so much love gone on the wind as well as love that not even the winds of life and death can break or uproot, so much more of deep sorrow (apart from the racial sorrow which breathes through all) than of joy save in the deeper spiritual sense, they were thus raimented in allegory and legend and all the illusion of the past, the remote, the obscure, or the still simpler if more audacious directness of the actual, the present, and the explicit. There is, perhaps, a greater safety, a greater illusion, in absolute simplicity than in the most subtly wrought of art. . . .

“But you will understand me when I say that you must not count on our meeting—at any rate not this year. I too stand under obscure wings.

“Your friend,

“F. M.”

To the Duchess of Sutherland:

“. . . I have the memory that recalls everything in proportion and sequence. I have often written that art is memory, is in great part memory, though not necessarily a recalling of mere personal experience: and the

more deeply I live the more I see that this is so. . . .

“When you write, I mean imaginatively, you must write more and more with concentrated vision. Some time ago I re-read your *Four Winds of the World*; much of it is finely done, and in some of it your self lives, your own accent speaks. But you have it in you to do work far more ambitious. The last is not a word I like, or affect; but here it is convenient and will translate to your mind what is in my mind. These stories are *yours* but they are not *you*: and though in a sense art is a wind above the small eddies of personality, there is a deeper sense in which it is nothing else than the signature of personality. Style (that is, the outer emotion that compels and the hidden life of the imagination that impels and the brooding thought that shapes and colours) should, spiritually, reflect a soul's lineaments as faithfully as the lens of the photographer reflects the physiognomy of a man or woman. It is because I feel in you a deep instinct for beauty, a deep longing for beautiful expression and because I believe you have it in you to achieve highly in worth and beauty, that I write to you thus. . . . There is that Lady of Silence, the Madonna of Enigma, who lives in the heart

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of many women. Could you not shape something under *Her* eyes — shape it and colour it with your own inward life, and give it all the nobler help of austere discipline and control which is called art? I have not much to tell you of myself just now. At the moment I do not write to you from the beloved west where I spend much of each year and where my thoughts and dreams continually are. To-night I am tired, and sad, I hardly know why.

O wind, why break in idle foam  
This wave that swept the seas — . . .  
Foam is the meed of barren dreams,  
And hearts that cry for peace.

Lift then, O wind, this heart of mine  
And swirl aside in foam —  
No, wander on, unchanging heart,  
The undrowning deeps thy home.

Less than a billow of the sea  
That at the last doth no more roam  
Less than a wave, less than a wave  
This thing that hath no home,  
This thing that hath no grave!

“But I shall weary you. Well, forgive me. . . .”

The next letter is to Mrs. Helen Hopekirk,

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the Scottish-American composer, who has set several of the F. M. poems to music:

18th Oct., 1905.

MY DEAR MRS. HOPEKIRK,

I was very pleased to hear from you again. I am busy with preparations for Italy, for the doctors say I should be away from our damp Scottish climate from October-end till Spring comes again. How far off it seems. . . . Spring! Do you long for it, do you love its advent, as I do? Wherever I am, St. Bride's Day is always for me the joy-festival of the year — the day when the real new year is born, and the three dark months are gone, and Spring leans across the often gray and wet, but often rainbow-lit, green-tremulous horizons of February. This year it seems a longer way off than hitherto, and yet it should not be so — for I go to Italy, and to friends, and to beautiful places in the sun, there and in Sicily, and perhaps in Algeria. But, somehow, I care less for these than I did a few years ago, than two or three years ago, than a year ago. I think outward change matters less and less as the imagination deepens and as the spirit more and more "turns westward." I love the South: and in much, and for much, am happy there: but

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as the fatally swift months slip into the dark I realise more and more that it is better to live a briefer while at a high reach of the spirit and the uplifted if overwrought physical part of one than to save the body and soothe the mind by the illusions of physical indolence and mental leisure afforded by long sojourns in the sunlands of the South. . . .

How I wish I knew Loeffler and Debussy and others as you do: but then, though I love music, tho' it is one of the vital things in life for me, I am not a musician, alas. So, even if I had all their music beside me, it would be like a foreign language that must be read in translation. Do you realise—I suppose you do—how fortunate you are in being your own interpreter. Some day, however, I hope to know intimately all those wonderful settings of Verlaine and Baudelaire and Mallarmé and others. The verbal music of these is a ceaseless pleasure to me. I have a great love of and joy in all later French poetry, and can never understand common attitude to it here—either one of ignorance, or patronage, or complete misapprehension. Because of the obvious fact that French is not so poetic a language as English or German, in scale, sonority, or richness of vocabulary—it is, indeed, in the last respect the

poorest I believe of all European languages as English is by far the richest — people, and even those who should be better informed, jump to the conclusion that therefore all French poetry is artificial or monotonously alike, or, at best, far inferior to English. So far as I can judge, finer poetry has been produced in France of late years than in England, and very much finer than any I know in Germany. However, the habitual error of judgment is mainly due to ignorance: that, and the all but universal unfamiliarity with French save in its conventional usage, spoken or written. . . .”

“Fiona” received that summer, from Mr. Yoni Noguchi, a volume entitled *From the Eastern Sea* by that Japanese author, and sent acknowledgment:

ON THE MEDITERRANEAN.

DEAR MR. NOGUCHI,

Your note and delightful little book reached me, after considerable delay, in southern Europe. I write this at sea, and will send it with other letters, etc., to be stamped and posted in Edinburgh — and the two reasons of delay will show you that it is not from indolence!

I have read your book with singular plea-

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sure. What it lacks in form (an inevitable lack, in the circumstances) it offers in essential poetry. I find atmosphere and charm and colour and naïveté, and the true touch of the poet; and congratulate you on your "success of suggestion" in a language so different in all ways from that wherein (I am sure) you have already achieved the "success of finality."

Believe me, yours very truly,

FIONA MACLEOD.

Later, Mr. Noguchi sent his subsequent book *The Summer Cloud*, a collection of short prose-poems, which, as he explained in his note of presentation: "In fact, I had been reading your prose-poems, *The Silence of Amor*, and wished I could write such pieces myself. And here is the result!"

It was our habit, when talking to one another of the "F. M." writings, to speak of "Fiona" as a separate entity—so that we should not be taken unawares if suddenly spoken to about "her" books. It was William's habit also to write and post to himself two letters on his birthday—letters of admonition and of new resolutions. On the 12th Sep., 1905, he brought me the two birthday letters when they reached him, and gave them to me to read, saying, with a smile,

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“Fiona is rather hard on me, but she is quite right.” Both letters are in his handwriting and are as follows:

GU FIONAGHAL NIC LEOID  
SLIABHEAN N'AN AISLING  
*Y-Breasil* (NA TIR-FO-TUINN)

AN DOMHAIN UAINE,  
12th Sept., 1905.

DEAREST FIONA,

A word of loving greeting to you on the morrow of our new year. All that is best in this past year is due to *you*, mo caraid dileas: and I hope and believe that seeds have been sown which will be reborn in flower and fruit and may be green grass in waste places and may even grow to forests. I have not always your serene faith and austere eyes, dear, but I come to much in and thro' my weakness as you through your strength. But in this past year I realise I have not helped you nearly as much as I could: in this coming year I pray, and hope, it may be otherwise. And this none the less tho' I have much else I want to do apart from *our* work. But we'll be one and the same *au fond* even then, shall we not, Fiona dear?

I am intensely interested in the fuller development of the Celtic Trilogy—and shall help in all ways. You say I can give

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you what you have not: well, I am glad indeed. Together we shall be good *Sowers*, Fionaghal mo rùn: and let us work contentedly at *that*. I wish you Joy and Sorrow, Peace, and Unrest, and Leisure, Sun, and Wind, and Rain, all of Earth and Sea and Sky in this coming year. And inwardly dwell with me, so that less and less I may fall short of your need as well as your ideal. And may our "Mystic's Prayer" be true for us both, who are one.

Ever yours, dear,            WILL.

HILLS OF DREAM,  
Y-BREASIL.

MY DEAR WILL,

Another birthday has come, and I must frankly say that apart from the loss of another year, and from what the year has brought you in love and friendship and all that makes up life, it has not been to your credit. True, you have been in America and Italy and France and Scotland and England and Germany—and so have not been long settled anywhere—and true also that for a month or two you were seriously and for a few months partially ill or "down"—but still, after all allowances, I note not only an extraordinary indolence in effort as well as unmistakable laziness in achievement. Now,

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either you are growing old (in which case admit dotage, and be done with it) or else you are permitting yourself to remain weakly in futile havens of ignoble repose or fretful pseudo rest. You have much to do, or that you ought to do, yourself: and as to *our* collaboration I see no way for its continuance unless you will abrogate much of what is superfluous, curtail much that can quite well be curtailed, and generally serve me loyally as I in my turn allow for and serve *you*.

Let our New Year be a very different one from the last, dear friend: and let us not only beautifully dream but *achieve* in beauty. Let the ignoble pass, and the noble remain.

Lovingly yours, dear Will,

FIONA.

Some of his own copies of his "F. M." books have an inscription to "W. S." from his twin self. For instance, his specially bound copy of *The Winged Destiny* bears this inscription in his handwriting:

To

William Sharp

from his comrade

Fiona Macleod

*William Sharp*

and is dated 12th Sept., 1904. But William did not write or sign his F. M. letters himself. When not typed by him, they were copied and signed for him by his sister Mary, in whose handwriting is the following signature — familiar to F. M.'s correspondents:

*Sincerely yours*  
*Fiona Macleod.*

In the beginning of October we left London accompanied by Miss Mary Wilson and went to Venice by way of Zurich and Innsbruck. Then to Florence to stay with our friends Mr. and Mrs. Lee Hamilton, and finally, to Sicily.

Taormina was beautifully sunny and restful as of yore; and the delicate man rejoiced greatly in the beautiful gardens that the Duke of Bronte was designing and planting with flowers and trees, on the slopes of the hillside below the town.

A letter reached him there from Mr. Hichens:

ST. STEPHEN'S,  
CANTERBURY.

OH, MY DEAR WILL,

I cannot help envying you. It is bitterly cold here, like winter, and neuralgia is flitting about my twitching face and shrinking

1905

head. But I will not inflict my little woes upon you, and only write this word to say I am sending you my book, *The Black Spaniel*. It is a very slight and mixed affair this time—my last book of stories I think. The new novel I have some hopes of your liking, as I hope I have imprisoned something of our beloved Sicily in it. Now I am doing the last act—the last to be done, I mean, of my play for Wyndham. Yes, we will meet in Africa, if the gods are kind. I expect to leave England for Rome on Dec. 3. I am looking forward to Biskra immensely but must try to settle in there, as *must* be working then. . . . How are you both? Happy in the sun? All blessings upon you and your work.

Ever yours affectionately,

ROBERTO.

It had been planned that after the New Year Mr. Hood, Mr. Hichens, my husband and I should go together to Biskra. But as the autumn waned, we realised the unwisdom of making any such plans. On hearing of our reluctant decision Mr. Hichens wrote:

Nov., 1905.

MY DEAR WILL,

Your letter was really a blow, but of course I thoroughly understand that you must not

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risk such a journey. I am grieved about your delicate health. You must take great care and stay in places where you can have your comforts. I wish Rome suited you both. I am suffering from London dyspepsia. To-day there is a thick fog and I envy you all tremendously. I am counting the 'days till I can start for Rome. How is Taormina? Alec describes it as warm and splendid, and pretends that he needs a sun umbrella and a straw hat! Perhaps you are all bathing in the sea! Oh, these travellers' tales! I am going out to bathe in the fog, so au revoir. Love to you both, kindest regards to Etna from

Yours ever affectionately,

ROBERTO.

During one of our visits to Maniace Mr. Hichens was also a guest; on a subsequent visit to that lava-strewn country, on the great western slope of the shoulder of Etna, he wrote to me, in 1906, about my husband: "I have had many walks here with Will. I think my last long walk with him here was towards Maletto. We sat on a rock for a long while, looking at the snow on Ætna and the wild country all around. We talked about death, and he said he loved life but he did

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not fear death at all. I remember well how alive his eyes looked. He always had a very peculiar look of life in the eyes, an unquenchable vitality."

On reaching Maniace W. S. wrote to a friend:

Dec. 4, 1905.

". . . As my card of yesterday will have told you we arrived here all right on Monday afternoon, after a wonderful journey. We left Taormina in a glory of midsummerlike warmth and beauty — and we drove down the three miles of winding road from Taormina to the sea at Giardini; thence past the bay and promontory of Naxos, and at the site of the ancient famous fane of Apollo Archagêtês turned inland. Then through the myriad lemon-groves of Al Cantara, till we crossed the gorges of the Fiumefreddo, and then began the long ascent, in blazing heat, by the beautiful hill road to the picturesque mountain-town of Piedemonte. There we caught the little circum-Ætnean mountain loop-line, and ascended the wild and beautiful slopes of Etna. Last time we went we travelled mostly above the clouds, but this time there was not a vestige of vapour in the radiant air, save for the outriders' trail of white, oc-

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asionally flame-coloured, smoke from the vast 4-mile wide mouth of snow-white and gigantically-looming cone of Etna. At the lofty mediæval and semi-barbaric town of Randazzo we were delayed by an excited crowd at the station, on account of the arrest and bringing in by the carabinieri of three chained and heavily manacled brigands, one of them a murderer, who evidently had the sympathy of the populace. A woman, the wife of one of the captured men, outdid any lamenting Irish woman I ever saw: her frenzy was terrible — and of course the poor soul was life-desolate and probably punished and would likely never see her man again. Finally she became distracted with despair and fury, and between her appeals and furious curses and almost maniacal lamentations, the small station was anything but an agreeable stopping place. The captive brigands were absolutely impassive: not a glance: only, as the small train puffed onward, one of them lifted a manacled arm behind one of the carabinieri and made a singular sign to some one.

“Thereafter we passed into the wild and terrible lava-lands of the last frightful eruption, between Randazzo and the frontier of the Duchy of Bronte: a region as wild and

fantastic as anything imagined by Doré, and almost terrifying in its sombre deathfulness. The great and broad and sweeping mountains, and a mighty strath — and we came under the peaked rocks of Maletto, a little town standing 3000 feet high. Then the carriage, and the armed escort, and we had that wonderful drive thro' wild and beautiful lands of which I have heretofore written you. Then about four we drove up to the gates of the Castle, and passed into the great court just within the gates, and had the cordial and affectionate welcome of our dear host.

“A few minutes later we were no longer at an ancient castle in the wilds of Sicily, but in a luxurious English country house at afternoon tea. . . .”

My husband had taken with him, as material for the winter's work, his notes for the *Greck Backgrounds*, and the finished drafts of two dramas. One, by W. S., was to be called *Persephonæia, or the Drama of the House of Ætna*, and of it one act and one scene had been written at Maniace two years before. It was to have been dedicated to the Duke of Bronte. The other drama was Fiona's projected play, *The Enchanted Valleys*, of which one scene only was writ-

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ten. But he felt unable for steady work, as the following letter to the same friend, shows:

“. . . A single long letter means no work for me that day, and the need of work terribly presses, and in every way, alas. My hope that I might be able for some writing in the late afternoon, and especially from 5 to 7:30 is at present futile. I simply can't. Yesterday I felt better and more mentally alert than I've done since I came, and immediately after afternoon tea, I came to my study and tried to work, but could not, though I had one of my nature articles begun and beside me: nor had I spirit to take up my reviews. Then I thought I could at least get some of that wearisome accumulated correspondence worked off, but a mental nausea seized me, so that even a written chat to a friend seemed to me too exhausting—'cette maladie poignante, ce dégoût de la plume,' as Tourgenieff (or Flaubert?) said out of heart-weariness. So I collapsed, and dreamed over a strange and fascinating ancient-world book by Lichtenberger, and then dreamed idly, watching the flaming oak-logs.”

In William's Diary for December there are the following entries:

*1st, Friday.* Wrote the short poem “When greenness comes again.” Read Zola's wearisome “His Excellency Eugène Rougon,” and

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in the evening the "Jupiter" and "Saturn" chapters in Proctor's "Otherworlds Than Ours."

*2nd, Saty.* Read and took notes and thought out my *Country Life* article on "At the Turn of the Year." Also incidentally "The Clans of the Rush, the Reed, and the Fern," and one to be called "White Weather" (snow, the wild goose and the wild swan). Alec and I walked to the Boschetto. Began (about 1300 words) "At the Turn of the Year."

*3rd, Sunday.* A stormy and disagreeable day. Wrote long letters. In afternoon felt too tired and too sleepy to work or even to write letters: so sat before the fire in my study and partly over that fascinating book I love often to recur to for a few pages, Lichtenberger's *Centaures*, and partly in old dreams of my own, it was 7:30 and time to dress before I knew it. Heard to-day from Ernest Rhys about the production of his and Vincent Thomas' Opera *Guinevere*. Thought over an old world book to be called *Beyond the Foam*.

*Dec. 4th.* In the forenoon began again and wrote first thousand words of "At the Turn of the Year." At 3 went to drive with Elizabeth along the Balzo to near the Lake of Garrida.

*Dec. 5, Tuesday.* In forenoon wrote the

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remaining and large half of "At the Turn of the Year"; revised the whole of it and posted it to Mary, with long letter.

In afternoon a drive, despite the wet and inclement weather, up to Maletto. I walked back. A lovely, if unsettled sunset of blue and gold, purple brown, amethyst, and delicate cinnamon. A marvellous light on the hills. Luminous mist instead of cloud as of late. For the first time have seen the Sicilian Highlands with the beauty of Scotland.

From 10 till 11:30 P. M. worked at notes for "White Weather" article.

*Dec. 6, Wed.* In the forenoon worked at Gaelic material partly for articles, partly for other things. But not up to writing. There is a sudden change to an April-like heat: damply-hot; though fine: very trying, all feel it. After lunch walked up the north heights with Alec, then joined E. and D. L. in carriage and drove up past Otaheite to the Saw-Mills. Lovely air, gorgeous windy sky in the west, and superb but thunderous clouds in S. and E. Another bad change I fear. Etna rose gigantic as we ascended Otaheite-way, and from Serraspina looked like an immense Phantom with a vast plume of white smoke.

In afternoon (from 5:30 till 7:30) wrote 1200 words of "White Weather."

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*Thursday, 7th.* This morning fresh and bright and clear, a welcome change from these recent days—with the Beechwoods all frosted with snow. The Simeto swollen to a big rushing river.

Worked at and finished the latter part of "White Weather," and then revised and sent off to Mary to forward with note to *Country Life*. Also other letters. Turned out the wettest and worst afternoon we've had yet, and return of severe thunderstorm.

*Dec. 8, Friday.* A fine morning but very doubtful if yet settled. Went out and was taken by Beek to see the observatory instruments and wind-registers and seismographs. Then took the dogs for a walk, as "off" work to-day.

Wrote a long letter to Robert Hichens, also to R. L. S. Also, with poem, "When Greenness comes again," by W. S. to C. Morley, *Pall Mall Magazine*. In afternoon we had a lovely drive up above the Alcantara Valley along the mountain road toward Cesaro. . . .

And here the Diary ends, and here too ends the written work of a tired hand and brain, but of an eager outlooking spirit. Ever since we left London it was evident that his life

forces were on the ebb-tide slowly but surely; and he knew it, but concerned himself little, and believed he had at any rate a few months before him and possibly a whole year. Yet he seemed to have an inner knowledge of what was to be. In Scotland, in the summer, he told me it would be his last visit there; that he knew it, and had said farewell to his mother. On the afternoon when we drove up to the Saw-Mills in the oak-woods he got out of the carriage and wandered among the trees. When I urged him to come away, as the light was waning rapidly, he touched the trees again and again and said, "Ah, dear trees of the North, dear trees of the North, good-bye." The drive on the 8th, so beautiful, to him so full of fascination, was fatal to him. We drove far along a mountain pass and at the furthest point stopped to let him look at the superb sunset over against the hillset town of Cesaro.

He seemed wrapt in thought and looked long and steadfastly at the wonderful glowing light; it was with difficulty that I persuaded him to let us return. On the way back, a sudden turn of the road brought us in face to the snow covered cone of *Ætna*. The wind had changed and blew with cutting cold straight off the snow. It struck him, chilling him through and through. Half way

back he got out of the carriage to walk and get warm. But the harm was done. That evening, before dinner, he said to me: "I am going to talk as much as I can to-night. That dear fellow Alec is rather depressed. I've teased him a good deal to-day; now I am going to amuse him." He was as good as his word, anecdote, reminiscence, followed one another in the gayest of spirits, and in saying good-night to me our host declared, "I have never heard Will more brilliant than he has been to-night."

The next morning my husband complained of pain which grew rapidly more severe. The doctor was sent for, and remained in the house.

On the morning of the 12th — a day of wild storm, wind, thunder and rain — he recognised that nothing could avail. With characteristic swiftness he turned his eager mind from the life that was closing to the life of greater possibilities that he knew awaited him. About 3 o'clock, with his devoted friend Alec Hood by his side, he suddenly leant forward with shining eyes and exclaimed in a tone of joyous recognition, "Oh, the beautiful 'Green Life' again!" and the next moment sank back in my arms with the contented sigh, "Ah, all is well."

On the 14th, in an hour of lovely sunshine,

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the body was laid to rest in a little woodland burial-ground on the hillside within sound of the Simeto: as part of the short service, his own "Invocation to Peace," from *The Dominion of Dreams*, was read over the grave by the Duke of Bronte. Later, an Iona cross, carved in lava, was placed there, and on it this inscription, chosen by himself:

Farewell to the known and exhausted,  
Welcome the unknown and illimitable.

W. S.

and

Love is more great than we conceive, and Death  
is the keeper of unknown redemptions.

F. M.