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## Letters from Gosse and Benson

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## 134 Colby Library Quarterly

peared in the *Atlantic* for January, 1907. It is now clear that the letter *should* have been dated 1908 instead of 1907, for Miss Jewett was referring to "A Second Motor-Flight through France" which *The Atlantic* published a year after the initial flight. The first of four installments appeared in January, 1908, and it was on the third of *this* January that Sarah Orne Jewett wrote her second rather than her first letter to Miss Paget. Letter No. 43 should be corrected accordingly.



### LETTERS FROM GOSSE AND BENSON

VERNON LEE had a veritable genius for eliciting interesting letters from friends and strangers alike. Some of the men who wrote to her sent remarks which we are glad to have, remarks which we might have missed but for Vernon Lee's catalytic services.

Arthur Christopher Benson, the son of a former Archbishop of Canterbury, had been a Master at Eton College from 1885 to 1903. (At a later date he became the president of Magdalene College, Cambridge.) In 1905 he published a life of Edward FitzGerald in the English Men of Letters series, and in 1906 his *Walter Pater* was added to this same series of critical biographies. It was probably upon the announcement of Benson's selection for the English Men of Letters *Pater* that Violet Paget wrote to him, saying that she was greatly interested in the subject of aesthetics, on which Walter Pater had also written. Benson's reply came from Wordsworth's Lake District:

Skelwith Fold, Ambleside.

July 16, 1905

Dear Miss Paget,

Thank you for your kind and interesting letter. I only knew Mr Pater a very little, but I *seem*, by reading his books and talking to

## Colby Library Quarterly 135

people who knew him and cared for him, to have come to know him, I won't say well, but perhaps as well as he could or would permit.

It would be a pleasure to have a few words with you on the subject—but I am much afraid that I cannot be in town on any of the days you are good enough to mention—but as soon as I can, when I return to Cambridge, I will see if I can arrange it; and in that case I will write to you again.

The only side I saw of Mr Pater was a kind of weary courtesy, which seemed to desire to be sympathetic, to be prodigal of kindness, but to shrink from the effort of producing it; one felt that it was there in a sense; as though some one pointed to a heavy sack of gold and said—"you may carry that away if you will and can: it is yours; but I cannot rise and hand it to you!"

Believe me,

Very truly yours

ARTHUR C BENSON

Nearly a year later, Violet Paget addressed a letter to Edmund Gosse, who in 1904 had been appointed Librarian of the House of Lords, and sent him a copy of one of her books. He replied:

17, Hanover Terrace,  
Regent's Park [London], N.W.  
Passion Sunday, '06

Dear Miss Paget

I have delayed too long in thanking you for the gift of your very beautiful volume, and for your letter which I deeply and cordially appreciated. But if my thanks are tardy they are sincere. I have read your book with great delight. Shall I confess that "Ariadne in Mantua" is still the jewel in it? My impression of the extraordinary adroitness and beauty of that little play increases, instead of diminishing.

In your kind letter, I detect a certain undertone of sadness. I understand it fully. Although I have the misfortune to be, I believe, some years older than you, we belong to the same generation.\* We belong to a generation which has—to be blunt—passed away. I feel, as you feel, as such other friends of ours who survive must feel, the vague disappointment that Mr. Punch must feel when the crowd of gapers goes on to the next entertainment, and some fresher booth. Our tricks are precisely what they were, perhaps they are even more smoothly performed, but the crowd wants novelty. Well, it seems to me that we can only prove the reality of the faith that is in us, by go-

\* Gosse was born in 1849; Vernon Lee, in 1856.

## 136 Colby Library Quarterly

ing serenely on. We must do our best, and our own personal best, even if it is to empty benches. And if we do, fresh stragglers will come up and seat themselves. I do not know whether you will not even resent the suggestion that your crowd has moved on? I hope it hasn't. Mine has. At least, I think so: but how can we tell what our crowd is? Perhaps, when we are most disconsolate, somebody is reading us with infinite joy at Coolgardie or at Vancouver.

Always sincerely and admiringly yours

EDMUND GOSSE

[P.S.] Why do you give me a "W."?

It is pleasant to be able to observe that Gosse took his own advice and proved "the reality of the faith that was in him by going serenely on." A year later, he published (anonymously) his famous *Father and Son*; in 1908 appeared his admirable *Life of Ibsen*, and in 1911 his *Collected Poems*. Violet Paget also took his advice to heart. She suppressed the "undertone of sadness" and went resolutely ahead with her study of "psychological aesthetics," and in 1913 her book on *The Beautiful* was published by the Cambridge University Press.



### RECENT GIFTS

AMONG the volumes recently presented to the Library are two which can be most appropriately announced at this time. From Mr. Dan H. Laurence, of New York City, we have received two of Vernon Lee's books. One is a copy of the 1907 illustrated edition of *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* which was once the property of Maya Owen, for whom Vernon Lee obligingly autographed the book and added: "wishing I had given it to her myself." The other volume is *Louis Norbert* (London, John Lane, 1914), inscribed: "To dear Maya | from Vernon | Summer 1914." We are not sure but we think it likely that the Maya Owen of these inscriptions was Lady Mackenzie.