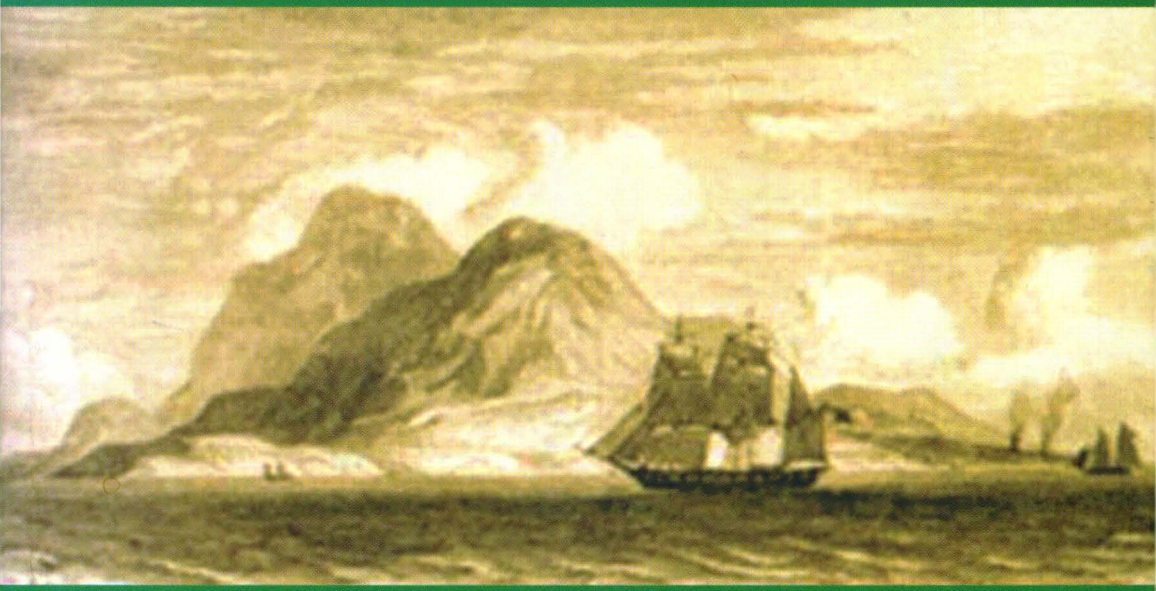
M. P. Shiel



A Biography of His Early Years

HAROLD BILLINGS

M. P. Shiel: His Early Years

Phipps as Master, Hunt Bridge House 1886

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

The University of Texas at Austin

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By Harold Billings

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Introduction

M. P. Shiel, West Indian born British novelist and short story writer, will be remembered for several enduring prophetic novels and a handful of supernatural stories that can stand with anyone's best. He is an especially interesting literary figure whose life embraced the final effects of slavery in the West Indies, the culture of the British Empire at its most refulgent, and the sobering years of Edwardian England.

Shiel was a masterful stylist. His writing still trembles with a wild imagination and an adoration for words that are made to sing. At times regarded as a cult figure, as self-indulgent as Corvo, the broad scope of his novels and stories continues to attract new cycles of readers, who relish the apocalyptic vision of *The Purple Cloud*, the decadent tales from *Shapes in the Fire*, that great adventure *The Lord of the Sea*, or the detective, fantasy or Edwardian adventure-romances that are encompassed in some thirty books. *The Yellow Danger* established a genre almost by itself. Withal, there is a philosophical and provocative depth to Shiel's work that defies genre. Some call this literature.

The present work is devoted to the forces that shaped his character and his writing, those early years in the life of Shiel that led him from birth and youth in the West Indies to a point of major

change in his writing career in London at the end of 1897. He had already written profusely, but this was the year that saw him commence writing serial novels—wildly imaginative and stylish beyond any expectation of the publication source—that would provide an immediate income and that he could rework for book publication.

This is the story of the families that shaped him, the Irish generation that reaped unholy benefits from the bondage and concubinage constructed around the slave-based sugar industry in the West Indies, and the family that represented the white and olive-blooded illegitimate cast-offs from the demise—in just a generation's time—of the plantation wealth and society built by their fathers. This is the story of his youth on a beautiful, volcanic-peaked island that was struggling to survive the poverty left by the death of its sugar industry and the social structure built upon it. This is the story of Shiel's sail-away to England and how he began a fascinating life of his own in the glory of another empire, fading in its most colorful days.

Harold Billings

Chapter One

"Whose glossy black to shame might bring ..."

It was on Montserrat, in the port of Plymouth, now ravaged and buried by recent volcanic eruptions—where even the dead were covered again—that Matthew Phipps Shiell was born on July 21, 1865.[1] (He shortened his surname to "Shiel" after he commenced writing in London.) For five hundred years, Montserrat was recognized as the loveliest of that sun-lit chain of islands known as the Lesser Antilles (or Leeward Islands), even when storm-drenched or shaken by earthquake. Thirty-nine square miles of green, ragged mountains, long ago limned with forest and savannah, lime orchards and fields of cane, Montserrat was wracked at the end of the twentieth century by volcanic destruction. Its raw verdant beauty still holds in the north. Its south is sodden with ash.

Discovered by Columbus in 1493, Montserrat later was heavily settled by Irish, as was St. Christopher (more generally called St. Kitts), and Antigua. And increasing numbers of African slaves were imported to those islands throughout the 18th century to provide labor for the sugar industry. For years it was reputed that the Irish influence was so strong on Montserrat that the dark descendants of the island's white plantation owners and those who worked in bondage for them spoke with an Irish brogue. Linguists disagree. This was simply Caribbean Creole English. The lingering surnames were the chief legacy of the Irish.

Phipps's father, Matthew Dowdy Shiell, was a ship-owner, trader, shopkeeper, and lay Methodist minister. He appears to have been an apprentice tailor in his youth. He was born September 18, 1824 and died January 7, 1888.[2] The history of his family is important in understanding the background from which M. P. Shiel grew.

Phipps's mother, Priscilla Ann Blake, was identified as "free" on her birth record, indicating that she was, at least to some degree, a descendent of slaves. (Her parents were William and Sarah (Harman) Blake, family names of long history in the Leeward Islands.) Priscilla was born April 13, 1828 and died April 14, 1910.[3]

Phipps's sister Harriet Shiell later wrote of her: "My mother's maiden name was Blake, hence 'Cousin Blake' (Lilian's father). She, like myself, was dark and the wonder is that my father, a most prejudiced man, should have picked her out, but we know, don't we, that love will not be hindered. Her mother, Granny Blake, was I think what you call an octoroon, with hair hanging below her waist, 'Whose glossy black to shame might bring the plumage of the raven's wing,' as my brother was to say of mine once.

"And this old lady was very intellectual—for her day. She composed little poems by the hour and on a spur of the moment would criticize Captain Piper's poorer attempt to compose. Hear what she says, 'Like fruit that's wanting to be riper are the lines of Captain Richard Piper.'"

The only formal information that is available regarding the birth and death dates of Matthew and Priscilla exist in the few parish records that have survived when A. Reynolds Morse and Jon Wynne-Tyson were able to photograph them in 1979. When T. Savage English tried to search out the "records of Montserrat" in the Court House of Plymouth to compile his typescript history of the island in the 1920s, he noted "Many of these documents are in fragments eaten by insects and rotted by the soakings they have had when the roof over them has been wrecked by the

hurricanes ...." Subsequent hurricanes and volcanic destruction have left these records only extant in this work by English. The originals have been destroyed. With the recent destruction of Plymouth by volcanic fire and ash, it can only be hoped that the remaining records of church and court have been moved to a place of security elsewhere on Montserrat.

Both of Phipps's parents may have been of a mixed racial heritage, although there is not enough evidence regarding his father to be certain of this. No birth record for him has survived and his children did not appear to know who his mother was. Harriet Shiell said that her father "was of course illegitimate—a rather intellectual man for his day but with a temper of the devil and so stuck up he was called the 'Governor.'" "His father," she said, "was Irish, James Phipps Shiell, by name, an aristocrat, I think." From what she had to say of her father, including his selection of Priscilla Blake for a wife, he was likely "white" in appearance, if his blood in part of color.

Some bloodlines had so thinned by the time of Phipps's birth that shade of color and financial circumstances were not as distinctive arbiters for accepted social levels as once they were. By this time, only some fifty white families remained on Montserrat, but there were hundreds of free men of color who carried the same family name as generations of interred white West Indians.[4] It is not known what definition of "white" was used for this census. As the number of whites decreased, through emigration and intermarriage, the island's population began darkening again, so that the one-time presence of the white Irish majority and the children of concubinage might never have been.

One thing is apparent from these family histories: many of the black antecedents from which the mixed-blood West Indians emerged were absolutely brilliant people, for all their differences in culture, their superstitions, their obeisance to the rules of captivity forced upon them.

There were many writer travelers that visited the West Indies during the early years of Matthew Shiell's and Priscilla Blake's youth, and each added description and dimension to the earth in which the Shiell family was born and now lies at rest. When Henry Coleridge, the nephew of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, visited Montserrat on a trip to improve his health in 1825, he complained loudly at the ducking he endured at Plymouth while trying to get from his ship onto the shore. There was no deep-water port to ease the passage. "Though a jetty or pier might be constructed with a trifling expense by simply rolling a few large blocks of the stone, which abounds on the spot, into the water, yet these provoking people would rather that themselves and every human being, who visits or leaves their island, should get drenched, than stir one step towards erecting it."

Coleridge liked the turtle soup that lay like a feather on one's stomach. It required serving up in a capacious tin shell, well lined with a thin crust of pastry. He decried the refusal of religious instruction for most of the island's 6,396 slaves, especially those the property of "a noted Papist of great influence."[5] But he complimented Mr. Luckcock who was able to teach the catechism to some few of the slaves, and "who also preaches and expounds portions of Scripture" with a frequency depending on the slaves' proximity to Plymouth. (Benjamin "Luckock" signed the birth record for Priscilla Blake.) Coleridge commented, without apology, on the evil that "the methodists ... have done upon the long run both at home and abroad." The Anglican faith was being overwhelmed.

He admired the cloud-topped peaks sliding into meadow-green savannahs and the miraculous Soufrières, where water boiled and clouds of sulphur fumed. The scarlet-feathered hibiscus and drooping amaryllis were lusher than the flowers of home, and the lime and orchard trees that lined the paths added a darker green as contrast. This was the place and the years in which Matthew Dowdy Shiell and Priscilla Blake were born.

Harriet's comment and other evidence indicates that Matthew Dowdy Shiell was a natural son of James Phipps Shiell whom M. P. Shiel identified in the 1929 version of his "About Myself" as "Sir" James Phipps Shiel, his "great-grandfather," a doctor and namesake. (In fact, James Phipps Shiell had no title, nor was he a doctor. He was the son of a wealthy progenitor of the family, Queely Shiell, of St. Kitts and Montserrat, and was Phipps's grandfather.)

The most interesting description of M. P. Shiel(l)'s possible origins has proceeded from the genealogical research of Richard Shiell and Dorothy Anderson, of Australia, on the Shiell family.[6] Their great-grandfather was William Shiell (1823–1899), natural son of William Shiell (1785–1853), long-time member and president of the Montserrat Legislative Council and a prominent, if insidious, plantation manager. He, too, was a son of Queely Shiell. Mary McNamara, probably William's mistress, who operated a ships' chandler store on Plymouth, was young William's mother. (Her sister, Lucy, was a school teacher—"Headmistress" per Anderson-Shiell—on the island in 1841.) After apprenticeship as a West Indian seaman, the younger William Shiell emigrated to London and sailed on to Australia in 1853.[7] Mary had probably died by 1853, perhaps in this same year that William's father and his wife died, a period marked by vicious attacks of smallpox and cholera in the Indies.

William might well have crewed on his own relatives' vessels. Before the death of young William's grandfather, Queely Shiell, in 1847, and his own departure from Montserrat for Australia in 1853, a ship, the "Queely Shiell," is recorded as having arrived 24 March 1841 at Bermuda (nationality Bermuda) under Captain John T. Watlington. The ship stopped at Montserrat in 1842, and it arrived August 19, 1843 at Vera Cruz (nationality England) under Captain Watlington.[8] One must assume this was the property of the Shiell we know, and that given these distant ports of call it was a larger vessel than those that were constructed simply

to ply the Antilles. Its call at Montserrat seems significant. This could help corroborate the Australian Shiell family tradition that William had opportunities to visit South America, California and other distant ports before he left Montserrat for London.

Taking advantage of family shipping to provide an occupation for the young William would have made good sense, and could have provided the background that enabled him to so easily pass in London the nautical Master's Certificate. His father William Shiell could have helped place him before the mast. The shipping business of his mother and her sea-faring McNamara family could also have helped provide an opportunity for him to learn a skill that was lacking for so many in those impoverished islands at the time.

To sort out this confusion of family relationships, it is useful to understand a well-accepted practice of human property owners during that time. Concubinage was simply another ugly product of West Indian slavery, both routinely practiced by plantation owners and managers but widely condemned by the increasingly influential young Methodist Church. In place of the Roman Catholicism to which the original white Irish population clung, and the official Church of England that lay over the populace, Methodism rapidly expanded from its original island base in Antigua, and began to dominate the religious life of slaves and the increasing number of free persons of African descent in the West Indies—"people of colour," as they were willing to describe themselves.

It was from the practice of concubinage that many young West Indians found themselves of obvious mixed bloodlines from the end of the 18th century until late in the 19th. This represented a precarious economic and social situation for everyone. English law forbade the right of inheritance for illegitimate children. Some were provided an education and moved into apprenticeships or basic service positions. Young women might hope for positions as household servants. Others were simply dropped back into plantation stews or given wooden hoes. Before the middle of that

century, most of the "white" plantation owners, managers, and their family members had removed to England or elsewhere, leaving an increasingly "colored" population, and sons from illegitimate lines, to assume power, responsibility and enormous problems throughout the economically distressed West Indies.

The Rev. John Horsford, of St. Vincent (a self-described "man of colour" and likely relative of Samuel Horsford, who married into the Shiell family), wrote in his book, *A Voice from the West Indies* (1856), that even at that late date, "Concubinage exists still in the West Indies. The antiquated and iniquitous system adopted by the planters, for every overseer or manager to keep a mistress, still largely prevails ..." The situation was improving, however, said Rev. Horsford, thanks in large measure to the missionary-driven Methodist church and a growing sense of morality among the former slaves and their families.[9]

"Respectable coloured gentlemen generally marry their equals in point of intellect and character. The fact is, a just and honorouble ambition has for a long time fired the coloured classes, to be as well qualified for society, or for business, as are the whites, who have long monopolized every situation of any emolument or influence. Complexional differences being now swept away by statute, and, in our older Colonies at least, the recollection of them being detested by all the whites possessed of high-mindedness and honour ..."[10] It was within these moral and social conditions that members of the Shiell and other West Indian families originally engaged in this heinous practice, within which the complications of family relationships must be understood, though they confuse us still.

William (1785–1853), John (1788–1847) and James Phipps Shiell (1790–1834) were the known sons of Queely Shiell (1755–1847), the major plantation and slave owner on Montserrat in the early 19th century. In 1824, Queely owned 656 slaves, by far the most of any plantation proprietor on Montserrat. He had been Comptroller of Customs from 1805 until 1827. His

parents, the great-great grandparents of M. P. Shiell, were very probably William Shiell and Margaret Queely, (daughter of John Queely, attorney), who married by license in Basseterre, St. Kitts, on June 17th 1756. An earlier Shiell, Luc (or Lucan) Shiell, was a major slaver out of France. Some of the Queely Shiell family wealth may have come from traffic in slavery. Slaves from some source continued to pour into the West Indies until the trade's abolishment by Great Britain in 1807.[11]

The mother of these three sons was most likely Ann Gordon, from an exceedingly prominent family, who married Queely about 1783. In addition to the three known sons, a daughter Maria died from smallpox a few months after birth (on September 16, 1792), and daughter Eleanor married an Allen, probably William. Since Ann Gordon Shiell was deceased, Eleanor inherited most of what was left of her father Queely's actual wealth when he died at age 92 at his Clarges Street residence in London. His debt-ridden estates were left to his two sons, William and John (James was deceased), with William assuming their management since John had died a few months earlier than his father.[12]

When Quakers Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey visited the West Indies in 1836 to review the condition of the "negro population" following the advent of manumission, Sturge could only exclaim over a situation in which the President who administered the government of Montserrat was also a planter and apprentice holder. He controlled all appointments, including those of well paid Magistrate and Serjeant of Police. These positions oversaw each other and could be held *by the same person*, a fit situation for abuse. And the freed slaves "had no voice to plead their own wrongs."[13] The worst results of such inbred excesses are visible in the machinations of William Shiell, Phipps's great-uncle.

William served on the Montserrat Council for many years, from 1808 until 1850, when he resigned because of insolvency (and several charges hanging over his head). He served as elected Council

President from 1834 until 1846, and as appointed Administrator of the Island Government from 1840 to 1846. He managed his father Queely's plantations after Queely left to live in London sometime after 1827. Shiell-Anderson describe his duties and own property thusly:[14]

> William Shiell was listed as the manager of 16 sugar estates and a number of stock estates (H of C 1848, V45). These included 7 belonging to his father Queely valued at £44,700 and 5 belonging to the "Heirs of Dudley Semper," valued at £27,500 (these heirs would probably have included William's wife and his surviving children). William was Lessee of another 5 estates valued at £28,500. He was Executor for another 3 properties valued at £23,200. These prices were quite unrealistic as the properties all carried heavy debts and were virtually un-saleable. He personally owned only one small stock estate (Morris's) valued at £1000.

It appears that William Shiell never got too far from questionable financial practices. Professor Douglas Hall has described how in 1846 after the President of Montserrat, Edward Dacre Baynes, went to London on leave, William Shiell was named Acting President in his place. A Friendly Society, established under auspices of the Anglican clergyman on Montserrat, had foundered and a review of the Society's accounts by President Baynes indicated its accounts were short £300.[15]

Mr. Shiell was asked by the Governor of the Leewards to investigate. He produced papers showing that the shortage was only £4 17s 7d. During the same year, President Baynes had reported to the Colonial Office that an inspection of the island's Treasury accounts revealed that £3,000 sterling was missing; the Treasurer, a merchant, had substituted bills of exchange for cash from time to time against accounts he held against a London firm. Shiell was again asked to investigate.

He reported, "For more than a year past, a very irregular system of conducting the affairs of the Treasury seems to have prevailed at Montserrat. I mean by this, that the Treasurer has resided at a distance of ten miles from town, in a mountainous [part of the] country, and managed the estates of a Merchant, which Merchant in return transacted the affairs of the Treasury in his own Country House." (The Treasurer was replaced in office by Edmund Semper, a *relative* of a member of the investigating committee!)

Professor Hall's explanation for how these numerous travesties of morality and responsibility could develop was that it was not a matter of political differences among groups; it was a matter of getting along in a tiny island society, where everyone was known to one another, and indeed were (as Baynes said) "generally connected either by blood, or marriage."

"The prizes here were not administrative authority and legislative power, but rather personal privilege and perquisites," Hall says.[16]

A good sense of William's reputation and the workings of financial, economic and political enterprises on the tiny island, and the relationships between families and individuals, are illustrated in this letter that Anderson-Shiell obtained from official colonial records. By this time the value of sugar had so heavily declined, as had the value of land, that William was beginning to feel the weight of heavy losses from the debt-burdened estates left to him by his father Queely Shiell:[17]

President Baynes alerted the Governor of the Leeward Islands regarding Williams' problems and his ambition:

> **Letter from Edward D. Baynes President, to the Governor in Chief of the Leeward Islands (Mr. I. M. Higginson Esquire) dated 9th April 1850**
> Government House
> Montserrat 9th April 1850

Confidential
Sir,

Circumstances have occurred since I addressed Your Excellency my confidential despatch of the 28th ultimo that render it, I think advisable that I should communicate again with Your Excellency on the subject. An overwhelming number of executions have been recorded against Mr. Shiell the President of the Council, and the Marshal has in consequence levied on the stock of every property belonging to, or rented by him in the island. The result will be, that as he is, under one designation, or another, proprietor, lessee, attorney, Receiver, or Executor, in possession of 17 out of the 35 Sugar Estates in the island that what from the want of cattle and want of means half of the growing crops will not be taken off and the cane in all probability will be left to perish on the ground. At the mean time the labourers remain unpaid and have such large sums due to them while there is not the remotest chance of their ever obtaining even their half of the sugar belonging to the negroes on the properties marked on the metayer system has been seized. It is to be feared with this example of bad faith before their eyes; the labourers on the other properties conducted on this plan will throw up the work on their hands.

This man is possibly the evil genius of the colony, not only has he by bad management ruined himself but he drags down the island by him. It would be hazardous under any circumstances to allow him ever again to administer the government.

I stated in my last that he interfered too much with the Treasury. I have since learned that during my absence he was not only in the habit of forcing the Treasurer to pay the Treasury paper in his hands before all other demands but even in preference to the prior lien prescribed by law such as the amounts allotted for the maintenance of the poor on one of which occasions Mr. Burns a Member of the Board of Guardians resigned his seat.

When I returned here in August 1847 I found that the people refused to pay the cattle tax then due. Mr. Shiell the Administrator of the Government in conjunction with Mr. Armstrong and others having spread about a report that the tax was illegal. Under the resistance manifested against this impost when Your Excellency was in the island. Mr. Shiell had actually encouraged the people to oppose it by suffering his name to be included in the levy warrant, for every estate under his charge.

Before he left Montserrat in August 1847 and whilst still in the Administration of the Government he drew on his father the late Mr. Queely Shiell for £419-13-7 to pay the interest on the loan from Government. Being in London when the Bill arrived, he went to Messrs Kensington of Mincing Lane who had it possession, and there accepted the bill which he himself had drawn as his father's attorney in Montserrat, which he was, alleging that he was also his father's attorney in England, which he was not. I send a copy of the original bill which is in my possession. It was of course protested and returned unpaid. I however compelled him to pay the Commissioners on his return.

I wish specially to observe that in communicating these facts, they are by no means to be received in the light of charges now brought against Mr. Shiell, but as given simply in order to afford Your Excellency the fullest information on Your Excellency's question as to the expediency of Mr. Shiell being again allowed to administer the Government.

I may however remark in conclusion that setting aside the additional and immediate blow, the country is likely to receive from the failure of Mr. Shiell and the too probable destruction in consequence of half the crop spared by the drought his removal and that of Mr. Trott who is in similar circumstances from the list of proprietors both of them so long the drawback and the deadweight of the colony and the inveterate opposers of everything in the shape of improvement will be the most fortunate event than can befall the country supposing their

large and valuable estates pass into the hands of parties possessed of capital to carry on the cultivation on a wiser system and more liberal scale.

I have the honor to be
Edward D. Baynes
President

William's derelictions are so well documented, and provide such a vivid picture of Montserrat life in the early 19th century, that it is useful to include these legal records of the man who was M. P. Shiel's great-uncle. While President Baynes was cautioning against the reappointment of William as president of the Legislative Council, William was busily soliciting several important positions, while claiming to have been swindled out of his property at a mere fraction of its value. Anderson-Shiell discovered that to help establish that claim, he was anonymously posting the following announcement in newspapers throughout the West Indies in late 1850.[18]

Montserrat

****

Lately sold in this Island, by Marshal's Sale, the following under-mentioned Sugar and Cotton Estates, including Stock of every description, with a variety of Furniture, Silver and Plated articles, &c., &c., three Houses in the Town of Plymouth, with Plantation Stores attached, and Lumber Yards to two of them, Twenty hogsheads of Sugar, and Three puncheons Molasses, the whole of which did not exceed the amount, or realize more than twelve hundred pounds sterling.

Six Sugar Estates comprising by estimation, 1000 acres of cane, pasture and provision land, with two Wind Mills and two Horse Mills, in complete repair, three sets of Works, all

recently repaired, with Clarifyer and Coppers in them, sufficiently capable of boiling off annually, 400 heavy hogsheads Sugar, with large Still, Condenser, and Worm attached to one of them, also a Dwelling House, containing large dining room and drawing Rooms, five bed Chambers, with a Marble Gallery around the house with Out offices attached, all recently repaired, and a large Garden contiguous.

Four of these Sugar Estates gave the late Proprietor, when Sugar was very high, £20,000 sterling in one year, and for several consecutive years, upwards of £5000 per annum after deducting expenses.

Two Cotton and Provision Estates, situated at the South part of the Island, containing upwards of 600 acres of Land, with fifty Mules, one hundred and fifty head of Cattle, forty Asses, several Horses, and a flock of Sheep, with Furniture, Silver and Plated articles, an extensive and valuable Library, a four wheel Carriage and Gig with Harness complete to the former, twenty hogsheads of Sugar, three puncheons Molasses, the whole of which did not sell for more than £1200 Sterling. This enumeration of Property specified, and which has been sacrificed for one fortieth part of its value, is only brought under the notice of the Public to shew the manner in which property is confiscated in this island, when sold and brought under the hammer of a Marshal's Sale.

This generation of the Shiell family had not been wanting for a long time. But William now faced absolute ruin. Richmond Estate, the luxurious likely home-site of Queely when he was a resident of the island, was probably the most valuable of the plantations sold.

Queely's second son, John Shiell (1788–1847) commenced studies in law at Lincoln's Inn, London in 1808 and was admitted to the Bar in 1813; he served on the Montserrat Assembly, later as King's Council, Antigua, and became Chief Justice of Antigua in 1844.[19] He appears to have been the most responsible of Queely's sons.

James Phipps Shiell, grandfather of Phipps, brother of John and William (the "evil genius of the colony") was appointed Customs Search Officer in 1811 and Acting Comptroller of Customs in 1828, and later Comptroller until his death in 1834. His father was pensioned off from that position in 1827 at the age of 72. In 1831, James also carried the title of "Tide Surveyor." He served as an elected member of the Legislative Assembly (the Lower House) from 1823 until his death. A once-extant local record indicated that James attended the marriage of his brother William Shiell and Mary Cabey Semper in 1826. This would have been two years after Matthew Dowdy Shiell was born. James married Elizabeth Carey approximately late 1825 or early 1826, and they had two known legitimate children, Henry (b. 1826) and Mary Ann (b. 1830). Both migrated in later years to Australia.

Apparently, however, James Phipps Shiell was never a doctor or naval officer, as some Shiell family descendents believed, nor was he a knight, as his grandson, Matthew Phipps Shiell, said.[20] Neither does he appear to have ever accumulated the wealth of his brother William prior to the bankruptcies that began to ruin the absentee landowners and plantation managers after the decline of the sugar industry and following the manumission of slaves in 1834, the year that James Phipps Shiell died. There is no doubt, however, that James was able to use the power of the offices that he held to gather a number of personal benefits, including all the privileges of concubinage.

Anderson-Shiell have gathered documents from Colonial Office and other records that suggest, with imaginative detective work, that Phipps's father, Matthew Dowdy Shiell, was the son of James Phipps Shiell and a slave-child, Priscilla, one-time property of Mrs. Sarah Dowdy.[21] Matthew's parentage could have derived from a more ordinary relationship between James Phipps Shiell and a mistress, but the facts gathered by Anderson-Shiell provide compelling support for the tragic story that follows.

Priscilla's mother took her daughter and ran away with other slaves to the Dutch island of St. Eustatius early in 1823, apparently to escape the ownership of Dudley Semper who had acquired them from foreclosure on Mrs. Sarah Dowdy's property. Some were captured and returned to Montserrat in the fall of 1823. Others were not found and returned until January 1824, when they were placed in the custody of Edmund and Dudley Semper and James Phipps Shiell, who said they could identify the runaway slave Priscilla from personal knowledge. This suggests that the slave girl might have been attractive enough to catch James' attention earlier at the Dowdy home, south of Plymouth. She would have been of mixed blood, but very fair to have had a son with Matthew's appearance, and very handsome to have captured the attention of James so strongly. There were certainly hundreds of other young black slave girls on Montserrat that had no escape from ravishment or concubinage.[22]

Captain J. M. Saba played an official part by transferring the captured slaves from Dutch government hands into those of Captain Allers of the British sloop, "Dasher." who delivered them into the official, but unscrupulous, hands of Montserrat authority. He provided for the record the following document:

Letter from the Governor of St. Eustatius, regarding the return of several runaway slaves.

27th January 1824
Government House St Eustatius.
Sir,

I have delivered over to Captn Allers of the British Sloop "Dasher" four Slaves by name Simon, Ino Matthews, Ned and William which it appears are the same of whom Your honor gave me Notice under date the 24th July last and which were at the time searched for in vain.

> The three first were concerned with nine other Slaves of this Colony in cutting out of the Road of the Dutch Sloop "John and Anna" in the Night of the 30th November last. They were pursued and fortunately taken by an Expedition, fitted out by this Government, off Porto Rico, and brought back to this place where they have been tried and punished according to our Laws.
>
> William did not go with them and returns without having been in anywise punished. Three Slaves complain much of ill treatment and some of them bear evident marks of the truth of their assertions.
>
> There is likewise aboard the "Dasher" a female Child, Slave to Mr. D. Semper of your Island, whom it appears, had been clandestinely brought here by Her Mother, a Slave formerly of Mrs. Dowdy. She is sent up to her Master by his Attorney here.
>
> Capt Allers has my direction to report to Your Honor immediately on his arrival and you will direct him farther how to proceed.
>
> I have the Honor to be
> Sir, Your Honor's Most Obedient Servt
> (signed) J. M. Saba
> Post Captain in His Netherland Majesty's Navy
> Governor of St. Eustatius

The slave-child Priscilla and the other slaves could not have been delivered into worse hands. If Matthew Dowdy Shiell's mother was indeed the slave Priscilla, she figured as a victim in a matter of sophisticated thievery as well as possible rape. The matter would have been masterminded by some of the most prominent men in the Lesser Antilles all for the sake of owning and victimizing human property. As Shiell-Anderson develop the story from Colonial Office records and the correspondence from the Governor of St. Eustatius regarding the capture of the runaways, the most unsavory aspects of the punishment of

slaves and their degradation is apparent from the Governor's description of their treatment. They were formally received just as matter of fact by officers of Montserrat, and, as valuable property, simply disappeared back into the circumstances they had tried to escape.[23]

James Phipps Shiell and the brothers Semper were more than glad to receive these runaway slaves and to swear as to their version of who owned them:

Certificate acknowledging the receipt of runaway slaves from St. Eustatius and signed by Edmund and Dudley Semper and James Phipps Shiell

Montserrat 30th January 1824

Mr. Dudley Semper, Edmond Semper Junior and James Phipps Shiell of the Island of Montserrat. Do swear. That the Negroe Slaves just arrived in the Sloop Dasher Ino D. Allers Master are truly and Bonafide the same Slaves as are described in the several Certificates of Registration herewith produced. And that the said Slaves did in the Month of July last 1823 Elope without leave, from this Island taking with them the Boat the Property of a Mr. John Brambles of this Island. And upon receiving advice from a Mr. Martine of the Island of St Eustatius informing us of the Arrest and Detention of the said Slaves did Hire and dispatch the Aforesaid Sloop for the Purpose of bringing them to this Island. So help me God.

(signed and sworn)
Ed. Semper
James Phipps Shiell. (Attorney to the Representatives of James Neave, Deceased)
Dudley Semper

The slave-child Priscilla then disappears from official record, but confirming the basic facts of this incident, the West Indian scholar Riva Berleant-Schiller describes the story in this manner: "Despite Dudley Semper's high standing with the Colonial Office, neither he nor his brother (Michael), both of whom were merchants, come across as savory or principled persons. They had a reputation for bill-buying and lending at high interests, and appear in many contexts as sharp operators motivated by political or financial expedience."[24]

She continues: "In a suspicious succession of events in 1823 the two brothers foreclosed a mortgage on the property of Sarah Dowdy. She had put it up as security for a loan from the Sempers to one of her relatives, who was also kin to the Sempers. When the loan was not paid, the Sempers claimed Dowdy's property. Fearing destitution and arrest, she fled with her twenty slaves on an uncleared vessel to St. Eustatius, pursued by Dudley Semper. Dowdy was defying the laws abolishing the slave trade, but the Sempers appear to have conspired with their common kinsman to do her out of her property."[25]

The identity of this common kinsman of the Sempers and Mrs. Dowdy is intriguing—but unknown. The loan was apparently made in 1822 or earlier. It would be especially interesting if the Shiell family was involved, but that does not appear to be the case. Dudley Semper would soon become a relative in-law to William Shiell when his daughter, Mary Cabey Semper, married Queely's son William. But Dudley hated William so strongly that he expressly stipulated in his will that "it is my intention that no children or child of the said William Shiell shall have any part of my property ... because of the increasing hostility and opposition of the said William Shiell ... upon all occasions to one and mine notwithstanding my earnest endeavors to be upon that kind and friendly footing with him that our near and intimate connection required ... "Mary Cabey Semper Shiell and

her children could not benefit from her father's estate while William Shiell was alive.[26]

There was no religious dispute involved. The heavily Irish white population on Montserrat had Catholic roots, if sometimes hidden ones, for the Anglican Church was the only officially recognized faith on the islands. There was not even an official recognition of the Catholic Church until 1826. The Sempers were Catholic, as Queely Shiell has been identified at times, but the burial of his infant daughter Maria is recognized with a monumental inscription in the St. George Church of Bloomsbury, a Church of the Establishment.

In 1824, Fr. O'Hanan, a Catholic priest who was on the island from 1824 to 1828, baptized all slaves of the Kirwan, Cannonier, Semper and Hamilton families. The omission of the Shiell slaves is significant since Queely was the major slave owner. This is another indication that the Shiell family was not Catholic. Also, in 1840 "Shield, His Honour the President, Montserrat" contributed 10/8/8d to the Wesleyan Mission Fund.[27] So William Shiell endorsed Methodism, if not all its moral tenets. It appears that it took only one generation for many of the white residents of the Lesser Antilles to change their religious affiliation from Anglican or Catholic to Methodist, but many never changed the ill way they treated slaves or free men of color. Meanwhile, both slaves and freemen were flocking into Wesleyan churches, and it became the religious haven for the olive-blooded descendents of the original Irish settlers.

Dudley Semper most likely never forgot the fact that he was relieved in 1816 of the choice offices that he held on Montserrat, that of island treasurer and a seat on the Bench of Justices. And neither William Shiell nor several other members of the island Legislative Council supported him in his financial loss and embarrassment. The Colonial Office soon restored the offices to him, but the most odious offense that William offered Dudley was

not political, economic or a difference over religion, but his marriage to Dudley's daughter, Mary, in June 1824, with the birth of a son two months later![28] This combination of circumstances clearly represents the backdrop to Dudley Semper's will that excluded William or any of his children from Dudley's estate.

Both versions of the story of the Dowdy slaves' escape and capture, and of related events, complement each other pretty nicely. Michael Semper claimed that his brother Dudley had purchased Priscilla from Mrs. Dowdy in September 1822. Riva Berleant-Schiller suggests that this was a fiction to establish prior ownership of Priscilla by Dudley so that he could claim her following her capture. Matthew Dowdy Shiell's birth date (September 18, 1824) follows by almost nine months the date of the slaves' capture and their return to Montserrat in January 1824. That appears to validate the possibility that Matthew could have been the son, whether by ravishment or concubinage consent, of James Phipps Shiell and Priscilla of the Dowdy household as speculated by Anderson-Shiell. Even if Matthew were aware of these facts, he might not have wanted to describe such sordid details to his children, but suggest instead a grander picture of their grandfather as an alleged distinguished descendent of old Irish kings. It is also quite possible that Sarah or another member of the Dowdy household was either mistress to or concubine of James Phipps Shiell and the mother of Matthew. His middle name, Dowdy, did not come to him by accident. It was frequently the name of the mother's family that was bestowed on sons.

In any event, William Shiell (born 1823), the illegitimate son of William Shiell and Mary McNamara, and Matthew Dowdy Shiell (born 1824), the illegitimate son of James Phipps Shiell would have been cousins.[29]

As a young man, M. D. Shiell apparently trained as an apprentice tailor. He then became involved in the shipping trade, partnering with Peter Irish to carry goods between St. Kitts, Antigua,

Nevis, Montserrat and Barbados. Based on research undertaken in Montserrat's Shipping Registers in the Public Record Office by Shiell-Anderson relating to the Shiell family, the 24-ton schooner "Jane" was constructed on Montserrat in 1850 by Anthony Meade, was owned by Matthew Dowdy Shiell, "a tailor of the Parish of St. Anthony (Town of Plymouth)," and registered in Barbados in 1851.[30] The only ship registered on Montserrat in 1852 was the 59-ton schooner "Agnes," previously registered on Barbados 11 May 1852, but transferred to the ownership of Peter Irish and Matthew Dowdy Shiell, "merchants of Plymouth."[31]

The establishment of a shipping partnership with Peter Irish would have helped Matthew develop his own trading and merchandise store business. The cost of acquiring interests in such a vessel is unknown, but since James Phipps Shiell died in 1834, when Matthew was ten, he had no opportunity to help even if he had wished. Grandfather Queely and Uncle John had both died in 1847, and would have had no interest in this possible dropping of a slave girl. His uncle, former Council President William Shiell's finances were in ruins, and he was more concerned with finding an appropriate position for his legitimate eldest son, a teenager, and re-establishing a means for his own livelihood.

If Matthew Dowdy Shiell were the illegitimate child of James Phipps Shiell and a slave or concubine, he would probably have been left in the care of his mother and her family, even though James Phipps Shiell might have contributed in some way to his support. If Matthew's mother had ties to Mrs. Sarah Dowdy or her family, it might well be that he spent his childhood and youth with them, possibly apprenticing as a tailor until that contract was done and an opportunity for betterment appeared.

The leap from making a livelihood as a "tailor" to that of shipowner and merchant appears to be a formidable one. It only seems possible with financial assistance from some relative who had an interest in young Matthew Dowdy Shiell, the product of an

illegitimate line. There is no known candidate unless it was the Dowdy family or the family of his wife, Priscilla Blake. Since it appears that Matthew and Priscilla were married about 1846, the latter is a possibility. There is no information available about this particular Blake family, except that there was a link to slavery through it as indicated on Priscilla's birth record. The white Blake family had a long and major role in the history of the Leeward Islands. However, there is nothing in the contemporary records to indicate that William Blake owned either property or slaves. An intriguing possible answer as to how these events and relationships developed, consistent with the known facts, is suggested by Dr. Richard Shiell, the Australian descendent of William Shiell, the young cousin of Matthew Dowdy Shiell.

Dr. Shiell speculates that William Blake may have been a tailor to whom the young Matthew Dowdy Shiell was apprenticed. Since William Blake is not listed as having owned property or slaves, and as a likely man of color, the role of tailor would have been appropriate for him. If Matthew were apprenticed to Blake at the usual age of 14, the completion of a seven-year contract at age 21 would have allowed him to accept an apprentice of his own and would have permitted marriage. This would have occurred in 1846, consistent with my own speculation regarding the possible date of his marriage to Priscilla Blake. Their relationship might have been fostered through Matthew's closeness to her family during his apprenticeship.

Perhaps there was some resource that came to Matthew through the Blake family, igniting the financial spark that allowed him to partner with Peter Irish in the purchase of a boat and a move into shipping and other commercial enterprises. The lack of facts simply does not allow for more than imagining such intriguing possibilities.

These suggestions of fatherhood and kinship are probably as close as we can come at the present in determining the family origins of Matthew Phipps Shiel.

Chapter Two

"'a flushed brown' harmony'"

Phipps says that he was told (with perhaps more than a faint intimation of divine portent) that his birth was a day of earthquake and storm. "The sheet lightning, like a sheeted ghost, came peering into the chamber, winking a million to the second. And with lullaby rough enough, this mixture of Heaven and Earth and Hell which I call 'I,' and sometime 'We,' came out and began to cry."[32] This was his fate, that all events betokened (to him) the tap of Favor's finger on his shoulder. His family bears the blame for spoiling him as they did.

Phipps described his father as a strong, turbulent man who roared about like a Methodist prophet, ruling his house in Old Testament manner. Harriet Shiell's memory certainly confirmed this description. My own impression is that it must have been of men like him that the Psalmist sang: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these are the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." Let his son describe him further:

> Never can be effaced from my memory that red, heroic figure, as of Prometheus, those outcries of his, those mutterings, and, I should like to add, cursings; but, to tell the truth, my poor father would not curse, though could not but have wanted to, having the extraordinary taste to be a Methodist preacher, not by profession, be it said, but of that kind they call "local preachers," his trade being that of ship-owner, and many ships he had on the sea ...[33]

To the boy, it appeared that his father was willing to engage the very elements, and take pride in challenging the worst of West Indian storms. He must have assumed mythological dimensions to the boy, while he also must have appeared in his Methodist guise to commune with God himself:

> When there was a storm and all men cowered awe-struck, and the bounds of Heaven and Earth were lost, ah, then was my father's heyday! *His* heart alone was strong: for the storm was his brother, and own father's son with him. I, though then very young, can remember him stalking in a loose robe up and down the travailing house, in the very mood of that bellowing throat without, like Lear himself, with "That's right! How grand! Crack your cheeks, then—rage! blow!" while we others, and my poor mother, had our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust.[34]

Famed anthropologist Margaret Mead, writing field notes on Montserrat in 1966, wonders about the singular effects that living on this island might have on those who dwelled there:

> I have had a chance also to experience some of the extraordinary physical aspects of this island which, no matter how well they are explained, you still don't quite believe. I've had three weeks to get used to a world in which the temperature shifts from five minutes to five minutes, in which you may have your own private rainstorm beating down and half a mile away in three directions you see the bluest sky and the calmest sea and sunlight resting on the hilltops. The formation of the mountains changes all the time, as the shifting clouds bring out the different patterns, and no one knows whether it will rain here or there or nowhere at all in the next ten minutes as the sea suddenly turns winedark and threatening from your viewpoint, floating on its surface. On no island I have ever lived has there been such simultaneity of microclimates, all visible at once.

> We sit and speculate about how the character of the island may have affected the people who came to live here and how differently they fragment memory from the way most people do ... It is a world in which at any moment you may not be able to tell what time it is, what day it is, what season it is ...[35]

Did such conditions help construct a distraction from reality? Shiel himself said, "No one born in such a place can be quite sane."[36] He mentioned another characteristic of his father that would take on a special significance in the development of a legend that would cloak Phipps's life some fifty years in the future: "He had also the Irish foible of thinking highly of people descended from kings, and *had*, in truth, about him some species of Kingship, aloofness, was called by all "the Governor."[37]

This conceit of "kingship" could have been applied to the family from the late 18th century through the early years of Phipps's boyhood, when there would still have been a legacy of family importance throughout the Lesser Antilles. The idea of an inherited "kingship" could have furthered the desire for a son as heir (and possibly a claim to royalty). In any event, his father kept Shiel's mother Priscilla bound to a birth-locked bed for many years.

Shiel was clearly very fond of his mother, who must have been an attractive woman. He freely admitted that several of the women he later loved resembled her.[38]

Priscilla apparently accepted her role as mother with the expected habit of women in those days, when death was a threat at every birth, although she eventually took a more aggressive role with Matthew after he became virtually helpless following a series of strokes in 1887.[39] If she had borne twenty girls in a row she could only have hoped the twenty-first would be a boy. Shiel seems to have been uncertain whether eight or nine girls preceded him. It probably made little difference to his father.

> His children, too, he knew by name, though it was something of a feat, for there were nine girls, and then, lastly, I. At each birth of a girl, a prayer-meeting gathered in the house, attended by everybody ... the meeting being intended to thank God for the child, but with a mental reservation, a 'but' of disaffection, and a hint to Heaven that it would be graceful to make the next a boy. For many years no boy would come, for I was ever stubborn; but my father, a true Irishman, kept plodding on, like the present Czar of Russia, and by a last effort I was evolved, taken to the lamp-light, and discovered to be male. Then, while the earth shivered, the storm raved, and Heaven's lightning blinked to see me, there was an added grand racket of prayer and thanksgiving: though why they should have been so very thankful, I, "in the light of maturer experience," cannot tell, cannot tell. But God knows best.[40]

Indications are that Phipps and his sisters were extremely close, but we know the names of only four of them: Alberta Augusta ("Gussie," January 11, 1852?–1927), Ada Catherine (1855–October 10, 1886), Harriet Garry ("Harrie," January 7, 1862–August/September 1946), and Sarah Ann ("Sallie," 1864?–February 1913).[41] If there were others they might have died either in childbirth or at a very early age. More likely, Phipps exaggerated to make his story more dramatic, although there appears to be enough spacing between the births of the known daughters to have allowed for the birth of others. And, in fact, during that period of time, it would have been rather unusual for every baby born to survive. Mortality rates at birth reached as high as 50 percent.

Matthew and Priscilla would probably have married about 1846, since it seems unlikely that Priscilla would have been any older than 18 before marrying, while Matthew would then have been 22. Birth and death dates for the known daughters, as listed above, are uncertain, as few formal records have survived. Evidence of their West Indian racial heritage is also ambivalent.

Photos of Augusta and Sallie, in the possession of M. P. Shiel at the time of his death, reveal both women with light complexions—Sallie, brown-haired, and Gussie, the prettier one, dark-haired. Gussie might be no older than 30 in her portrait (made in Tiverton, Devon), while Sallie appears to be younger, but their photos are undated.[42] Gussie was most likely married in the summer of 1872, to Samuel Lamartine Horsford of Nevis, their first son, Reginald, born May 1, 1873. Giving an estimated birth date for Augusta of 1852, this would have made her about 20 at the time of her marriage. (Her husband was born in 1849.)[43]

Harriet Shiel told her niece Olive Horsford that Matthew Dowdy Shiell "thought no end of his two eldest daughters in particular who were not allowed to even look at a man. When your father asked for Gus, he was accepted as you know, but was told that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and under a lucky star. The impertinence of it and your father one of the best men under the sun!!"

Ada was probably born in 1855 since she was 31 at the time of her death in October 1886.[44] If John Gawsworth's note that says Sallie died at age 48 in February 1913 is accurate, she would have been born in 1864 and was 23 when she married in 1887.[45]

The 1901 Census of England notes that Harriet was 39 at the time the census was taken, suggesting a birth date of 1862, since her birthday was in January. She died in late August or early September 1946. Although no photograph of Harriet has survived, she bears the brunt of being described as the most racially marked of the children. The distinguished British author, Sir Arthur Ransome, who visited Shiel several times as a young man starting a career in journalism, recounted a dinner party given by Shiel at which Harriet was present—a "smiling negress," Ransome described her, who entertained him with stories of her childhood with Phipps on Montserrat.[46]

Harriet has already acknowledged in this work the darkness of features that she and her mother shared. As an elderly woman, she

wrote Olive, "I think my traveling days are over. I would hate to go about with white hair, with my dark complexion. It would be so ugly. I remember your Ma saying she had not met any one quite as vain as Harriet—is this another proof of it—?" Harriet seems to have had no embarrassment revealing her dark features in London.

The same Census that lists Harriet's age as 39 lists Phipps as being only 34, when he should have been listed as 35 at census taking the night of 31 March 1901, when he, his sister Harriet, his first wife Carolina (Lina) and daughter Dolores (Lola) were all living at 11 Keppel Street. A specific date for Augusta's death has not been determined, although it is certain that it was in summer 1927, and quite apparently in London.[47] Shiel had written her in 1924 in a manner that suggests he could visit her and the girls.[48] The Horsford family interests in the S. L. Horsford Company were sold in early 1929, with Gussie listed as deceased. Harriet's thanks to Olive in July 1927 for describing her Ma's death seems to confirm June or early July of that year for Gussie's death.

Presuming Matthew and Priscilla married as early as 1847, and that Augusta was not born until 1852, it is probable that another child preceded her. Similarly, if Ada was born in 1854 and Harriet in 1862, there is another lengthy period within which there might have been other births. These possibilities suggest that Phipps might not have been exaggerating when he says there were eight or nine daughters that preceded him, with only four of them having survived to adulthood. Of course, Phipps's parents could have married several years later than 1847, but that seems unlikely. There will probably never be a documented answer to these issues.

Augusta ("Gussie") affectionately called Phipps "brother-uncle" and "uncle," as her children grew to know him. Phipps was always ready to give advice to his sisters, advice that veered from the elevated philosophical to the lowest practical level (the best coital position, for instance, to conceive the finest children). While Phipps seems to have always treated his sisters with rather

straightforward respect, his personal relations with other women seem to have been, with few exceptions, purely (and voraciously) physical. Women and their functions were taken for granted. He afterwards generalized: "Women are all beast below the navel; above, all peri: and thus you get a very decent blend."[49]

It is doubtful whether Phipps ever really loved anything (or wrote anything) in which he could not see a reflection of himself. He was too self-centered. However, he recognized the importance of parents and grandparents ("even unto the third generation") and loved and respected his family in his own way. Some hint of this is cast in a letter he wrote his sister Augusta ten years after he left home, when the question of his ancestry began to be an issue: "By the way, I want to know the name of my father's mother, and also the maiden name of our old Granny. Will you write and let me know, and if you yourself don't know, try and find out for me. It is from the old folk, darling, that we get all we are; they fiz in our blood, and beat in our brain; it is they who stand at my shoulder and dictate to me the very words I am now writing."[50]

It is interesting that Shiel would ask for the names of "my father's mother, and also the maiden name of our old Granny." This suggests that he knew at least the surname of his father's father (if not his forename), but not the maiden name of his paternal grandmother; and that he knew who his maternal grandfather was, but not the maiden name of his maternal grandmother, "our old Granny," Sarah Harman Blake.

If his father's mother were a slave, he probably would not have heard her mentioned in his boyhood. His grandfather, James Phipps Shiell, would have been dead for fifty years and apparently romanticized in family memory. On the other hand, references to the Blake name occur frequently in Shiell activities. This suggests an ongoing closeness of his family to the Blakes. Phipps's maternal grandparents might both of them been a major presence in his boyhood, certainly at least the striking "Granny." It is unlikely that

Gussie knew any more than Harriet about their ancestors, and Harriet knew little more than what it appears that Phipps knew.

Over the years, there have been a number of questions raised about what Phipps actually knew of his racial heritage. Several "critics" have accused him of vicious racial slurs against Jews and other minorities in his fiction and of efforts to hide any self-knowledge of his own likely black forebears. As already noted, there were early references on Montserrat to "negroes" (slaves, plantation blacks, freed-men), "men of color," and white men. It is likely that the "men of color" only designated themselves with this appellation after being several generations removed from African slaves, and it is just as likely that those white men, or men of color, who engaged in concubinage accepted such relationships with those women most attractive to them, or those closest to them in color and in personal and moral values, as the Rev. Horsford described.

But the vast majority of the Montserratian population were African slaves in the early part of the 19th century or freed-men after manumission in 1834. After the white population started deserting the West Indies as economic conditions worsened through the middle of the century, the men of color, through intermarriage, including marriage with the remaining "white" populace, and with the freed-men population, saw a rapid darkening of their children and grandchildren, so that by the late 19th century the population of the West Indies was exactly that, West Indian.

Thus, the intermixing of races probably meant very little to Phipps as a boy. He apparently saw himself as "white," with a sharp distinction between his lighter family and the generally black mass of those in the West Indies removed just a few years from slavery. He also probably paid little attention to casual differences in color. By the time he spent a few years in England, however, and started to achieve attention as an author, questions developed regarding his "race" (meaning, perhaps, nationality as much as race).

Perhaps for the first time in his life, Phipps began to recognize that there were major distinctions as to how such issues were treated in the West Indies and how they were treated among social, cynical, literary circles in England. He freely acknowledged his West Indian birth. The fact that his father was a local "Methodist minister" was in itself an obvious indication of his father's closeness to people of color. There was the fact that his mother's dark attractiveness was a feature that quickly drew him to women, and his sister, Harriet, as he made her welcome to friends and dinner guests, was quite "dark." He never made much of the issue; he seems to have simply shuffled the matter aside.

When asked directly by the bookseller Walter Goldstone in the 1930s about his race, after his books were shelved with "Negro" authors, Shiel answered: "Dear Mr. Goldwater: Yours to hand. I'm afraid I am an Irish Paddy—very mixed blood—Andalusian, Moorish—but perhaps no 'Negro' except in so far as Roosevelt, the Mikado, that so 'Aryan' Hitler, are Negro, each of them having had four grandparents, each of those four by which geometric progression one soon gets to the population of the globe. Andalusian girls have brown skin, light-brown hair, pretty green eyes—deucedly pretty. One of my sisters has jet-black hair, brown eyes—a throw-back perhaps to some dim Negro, while I, after a gold-haired youth, have nearly-black hair (but Irish-gray eyes). Thanks so much for your interest."

His West Indian heritage became extremely important to him years later, since he developed very outspoken ideas regarding the future of the races, just as he did issues of land ownership, and the concept of the "overman." He saw evolution leading all races towards a human physiological blend just as he had observed in the West Indies—"a flushed brown" harmony, as he wrote in his novel *The Yellow Wave*. He saw the "overman" as a development of the entire human race accomplished through better educational systems and a more scientific bend of mind, not for a single "overman" race against other races, but for all humankind.

But these ideas lay years ahead in his career. Far more important to his early development than his color were two personal characteristics that he demonstrated early on, a gift for language and a genius for imagination.

There apparently were few boys as light skinned as he for companions on Montserrat, so that racially darker youths were his closest friends. They too treated him with affection and curiosity. No wonder he was spoiled and egoistic, the long-awaited son and heir, the youngest and brightest, a handsome sturdy lad with crisp dark curls crowning his head. Possibly, the main connecting personal thread throughout his life, that he fully recognized, was the development, expression, and occasionally attempted suppression of a vast megalomania; it is obvious how it began.

Little god or no, the darker youths on the island were drawn to this boy who loved to scale the ridges of La Soufrière, to climb about the cragged and forested sides of Silver and Centre Hills, to display his agility at acrobatics and dancing. Shiel frequently had black friends who followed him agape at his antics, who sat in astonishment to hear Phipps expound on some subject of interest to him, but alien to his "mulatto" companions—"as credulous as priests are, for whom fancies have the same weight as ascertained facts."[51]

It would be foolish to think that it was only male companions that engaged the attention of the young Phipps. An inscription by Shiel in a copy of *The Purple Cloud* acknowledges the early presence of females among his interests: "The 'heroine' in this is a representation of the personality of my first sweetheart Xena, a girl of Montserrat in the West Indies, who, when I was five years old, taught me how to love, she being eight. Two of her sons have quite easily nonchalantly and as a matter of course surpassed by far all competition in the race of intellect. So that she was a fit mother of a race, as (before I knew of these sons) I made her in the book. 'Our mothers make us most.' 1924, M. P. Shiel."[52]

There was comparatively little on the tiny island to engage his interest besides exploring its undefiled wildness and capturing the rapt attention of descendents of slaves. He described Montserrat as a "mountain-mass, loveliest of the lovely, but touchy! uncertain! dashing into tantrums—hurricanes, earthquakes, brooks bubbling hot, 'Soufrieres' (sulphur-swamps), floods—'fit nurse to a poetic child.'"[53] And again:

> I have an idea that at the moment of my death it will sink: I do not know if it is true. I have passed on the calm sea some vast, blazing day, like an Eternity of light (whether in the body I know not), close under its piled augustness of crags, and my eyes have filled with tears of love and pity for it, and all its turbulent epilepsies, and its despondent manias, and wayward Orestian frenzies, and coming doom. It has souffraires (hot sulphur springs), and sometimes, after one of its tantrums, passing invisible ships many a mile out at sea can smell that fume of Hell it sends.[54]

When Rev. John Horsford visited the Wesleyan outposts throughout the Caribbean just ten years before Phipps was born, it was not only concubinage that concerned him. Although he detested the use of lashing to punish the practices of Obeahism, he also granted that this "evil in all its obstinacy continues."[55] With hardly a generation between the dark superstitions that crept out of the slave plantations and the folk practices of Methodism, it is understandable how as a boy Phipps could observe superstitious reaction to the religious practices of one belief as well as another, and feel no contradiction between them:

> I was born in a small island, so, as a boy, had to go to funerals, and press the dead hand in farewell—one old lady who had prominent teeth I still see.

There was a belief that if the funeral moved along the seashore the sea, at some point, would smell the dead, would be drawn, would sweep up once and wet everyone's feet—which thing I once saw and, ah! The awe of it, that haunted all the heart's hollows.

Awesome, too, to a boy's heart was when the funeral-pace quickened a little (as is natural), and one mourner would murmur to another, "Ah, poor thing, ain't she eager to get home?"

"True, true," would be the answer; "she's hurrying home, she's hurrying home."[56]

This theme of African superstitions, of "obeah" or "obiah," is most visible in a story that Shiel probably wrote about 1899 but that first appeared in *The Pictorial Magazine* of 24 October 1903. Although Shiel wrote the story as though the events occurred in the American South, it reeks of the West Indies, of stories that he might have heard from his dark companions or from family members sitting in the gloom remembering events from the days of slavery, not too far past, and superstitions still present among them. "A Shot at the Sun" is worth including for the smell it carries of the worst practices on the plantations, some still undoubtedly very close to Phipps as a boy.

A SHOT AT THE SUN

A Weird Story by M.P. Shiel

I tell you something which I have seen with my own eyes; you believe it or not, as you like.

I am an old fellow now at this date of writing, and what I tell of happened forty years ago, in the old slavery days, down South.

Charles K. Brownrigg at that time was the owner of two hundred and forty-five niggers, not to mention fifteen hundred

acres of cotton plantation. And I take it upon me to state that he was the worst-feared man in the Southern States of America.

He was a big, red man, with hard, hairless jaws and a goat-beard, and continually went about with a gun on his shoulder. His estate-house, a rambling place, lay a little outside of Cliftonville (in South Carolina), and looked directly upon his plantations. That gun which he carried had shot, at one time or another, five separate niggers—nobody had the least doubt of it in Cliftonville—yet by some strange power which was in him, or about him, Brownrigg had escaped justice.

One day—it was in "the hot" of the year '59—a maroon rushed into the shed where Brownrigg was overseeing the reaping, with the words:

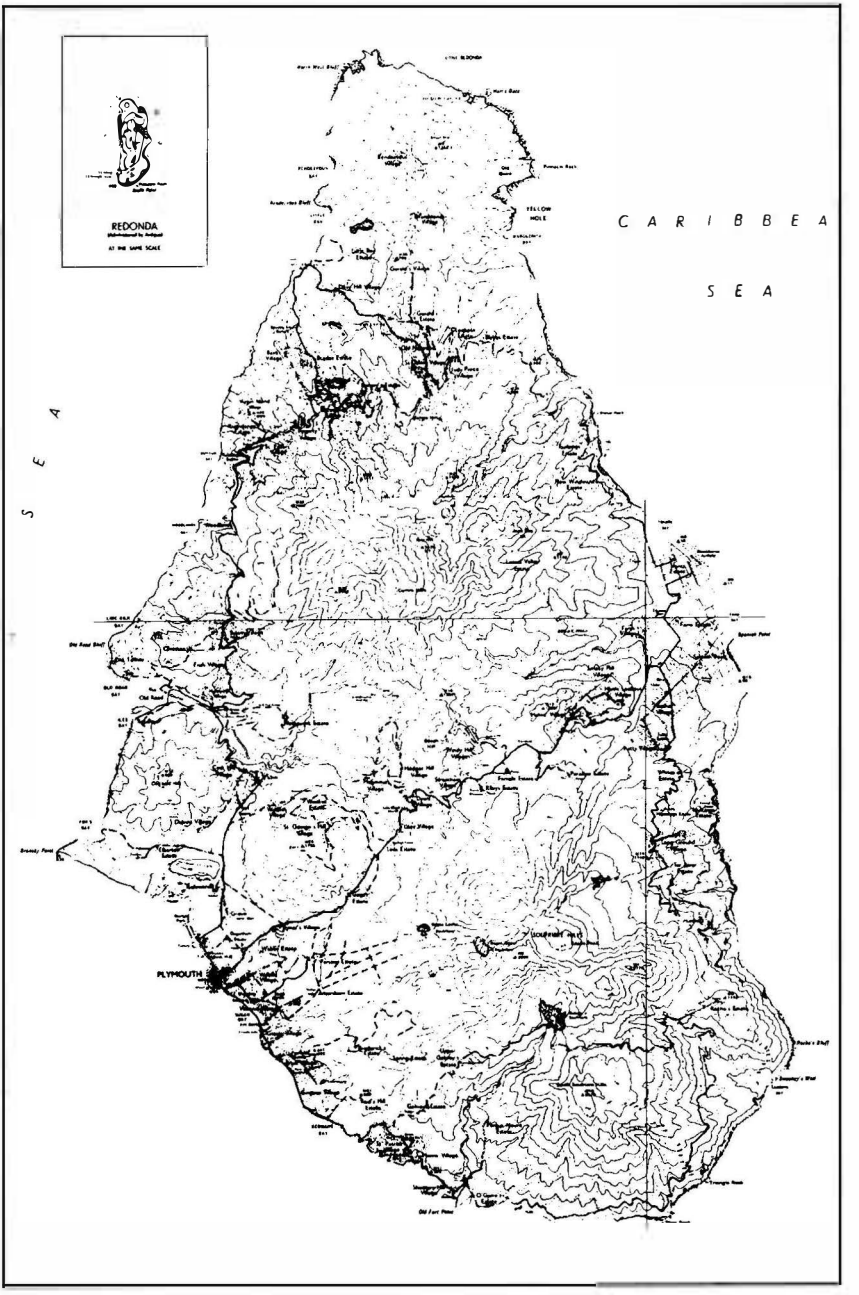
"Massa, massa, Brams and Jess done gone run 'way!"

Brams was a negro youth of twenty, and Jess a mulatto girl, shapely as Venus, both slaves of Brownrigg. Brams and Jess, from the first mutual glance some months before had loved; and now, by concert, had taken to the woods and wilds in some mad hope of finding free happiness.

Brownrigg's Panama hat was low on his forehead that morning, and his face even before this announcement had worn a scowl, for he was in money difficulties; and he had two bad years with the cotton, and as the news of the flight passed the lips of the maroon Brownrigg sent the long lash of a short-handed cowhide coiling about the man's legs with the crack of a Maxim gun, while the slave skipped in a dance of pain.

There was something very queer about Brownrigg—he was no ordinary slave-owner. Now, for instance, when he threw down the whip, and the slave lay writhing in the "long-grass," it was natural to expect that he would have rushed instantly away, hurried together dogs and horses, and set out after the fugitives. But he did nothing of the sort.

What he did do was to put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, draw out three little black stones, deposit them in his

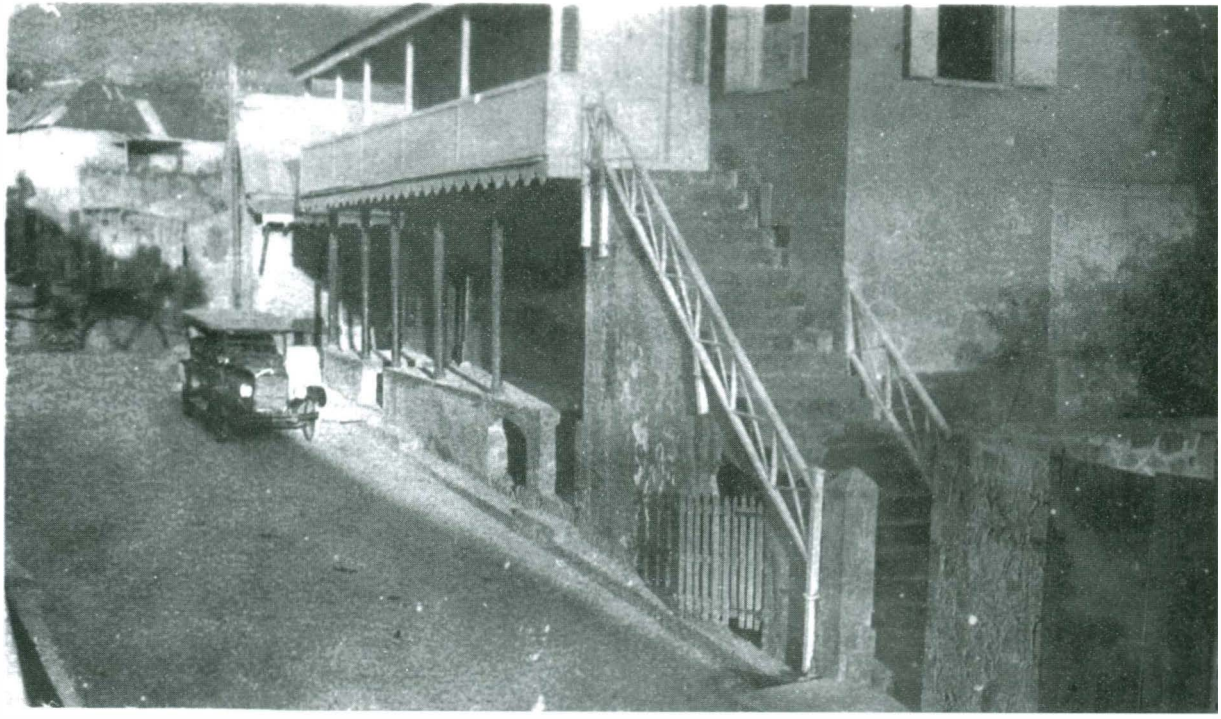


Topographical Map of Montserrat

Plymouth, Montserrat as Seen from the Sea

Phipps about 14, Montserrat 1880

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin



Shiell Home, Montserrat ca. 1929

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center,
The University of Texas at Austin

left palm and stare at them for some three minutes. They were obiah-stones.

Brownrigg, standing with his knickered bowlegs apart, put a finger-tip to his lips, touched each of the stones with spittle, and rattled them in his left hand. Then he opened the hand, put the middle stone back into his pocket, and with two fingers of the right hand struck down smartly upon the two remaining stones. They started away from his palm in divergent directions; Brownrigg noted the directions and picked them up.

Only then did he set out. He hurried to the estate house, blowing a whistle. In ten minutes two pursuing parties had started in the directions which the stones had indicated, and in less than an hour Brams and Jess were safely lodged in the estate ward-house. It may have been only chance, or it may have been Brownrigg's obiah-stones, that caught them; of course, I do not know—I merely state facts.

Brams and Jess were to be pitied that day, if ever two poor mortals were to be pitied. I say that day, meaning that day above all other days whatsoever; for on that day Brownrigg had in him the humour of ten demons. I am going to tell you why. Perhaps you are aware that there are three specials days (sometimes it is four, or even five, but usually it is three) when, during the cotton-reap, it is of the greatest importance that the sun shine strongly and steadily without rain or even cloud. Clouds means loss, rain disaster, the reason being that the new-plucked fruit needs just at that time the swelter of the sun for what is called its "fibring." Now this particular day when Brams and Jess ran away and were captured was the second of the three critical days in that year, and the sun was not shining too well, and Brownrigg was angry with it.

You may imagine perhaps that the sun did not care so very much about Brownrigg's anger, but this was the very point which was in doubt all through Cliftonville that day; and it is no exaggeration to say that positively hundreds of bets were being made in the saloons, in the Exchange, at the store doors,

as to whether the sun would shine, and, if not, as to whether Brownrigg would command it to shine, and, in that case, as to whether or not it would obey Brownrigg.

The fact is that during the previous year's reap, one afternoon, when the sun had gone behind a cloud. Brownrigg had been clearly seen to do an extraordinary thing. Standing in midfield he had hurriedly loaded his gun; he had then cocked the hammer ready for shooting; then he had taken his massive silver watch in his left hand, and three niggers near had heard him say, with a nod at the sun, these strange words:

"I give you five minutes!"

And one minute, two, three minutes passed, and the sun had remained hidden; and four minutes had passed, and it had remained hidden; and as the five minutes ended it had walked out into open sky with clear, blistering face.

Now Cliftonville was not a bit more superstitious than anywhere else, and in another man such conduct would have seemed to it simply silly. But in Brownrigg it somehow did not seem silly. He was felt to be a genuinely diabolical and dreadful man. It was known for a certainty that with blackened face he had attended the rites and midnight orgies of the negro obiah-men in the depths of the forest. All Cliftonville knew it. And at the top of his estate house was some sort of cupola in which at night his light was seen to shine, no one knowing in the least what Brownrigg was doing there—whether he was star-gazing, or whether he was holding intercourse with who can say what or whom.

And therefore, I say, the bets in Cliftonville were many that day, and a thrill of excitement filled the town; and when, about two in the afternoon, the sun went definitely behind a spread of cloud, looking as if it meant to stay there and casting a shade over the land, all the lanes leading to Brownrigg's plantation were covered with groups of twos and threes, of fives and tens, slouching out innocently that way to see what there was to see.

At that hour, Brownrigg was with the two runaways in a foul hole of the estate ward-house—he and they were alone. He had tied them together with many whorls of rope which entered the flesh, and he had laid them so upon the mud floor, with outstretched arms. At his feet were two pails of boiling water, whose surface still bubbled, and in his hand his gun.

"Now, you two young niggers!" was all he said.

Upon the two forms he tossed in three spurts the contents of one pail, the tied mass on the floor filling the cell with yells and flinging itself about in wriggling spasms. Then he put down the pail, took from his waistcoat-pocket one of the little obiah-stones, spat on it, dropped it into the other pail, and said three words aloud:

"I give the lives of these two young niggers for a good reap. The moment that water cools, let 'em die, Bam, let 'em die, O Bam."

Then Brownrigg put his gun to his shoulder and took aim. He had not the least intention of killing, for slave justice, though crude, was not an existent fact, and he had been too often suspected of murder already. But he took aim; he was a good shot, and though the den was dark he could see. He sighted the fleshy parts of the now quietly-groaning mass.

He pierced the shoulder of Brams; a minute, then ping!—he pierced the thigh of Jess; another minute, then ping!—he pierced he knew not what, for at this third shot the gun gave such a jarring to kick at this shoulder that he staggered backward. The shock was very unexpected. He frowned.

"Why, what's matter with the old gun?" he muttered.

He cast a glance at the pail containing the stone, shouldered his gun, and ascended. As he mounted the light shone on a hideous face distorted with passions.

The first thing he saw now was that the sun was not shining as it should.

He at once went down the back lane toward the plantation, around he cast his lurid eyes, and must have observed that every path and niche of foliage was thronged with people from Cliftonville. But they took no interest in him. All along the cotton overseer and nigger were at work—but in shadow—the sun was behind a cloud.

Every minute Brownrigg was losing seventy-five dollars.

All eyes were fixed upon Brownrigg. All about him was a murmur of tongues. Bets ran high. Brownrigg seemed unconscious of it all.

Suddenly with a jerk, he moved. He put his left hand to his waistcoat pocket.

This was a signal for a general crowding round him; through field and path, they came, every-one, however, keeping a respectable distance.

There was a rock near to Brownrigg, and on the top of this he put his watch, together with the leather strap which attached it to his waist-coat. Face upward he settled it, just under his eye; and he put his gun to his shoulder, and with a face of diabolical wickedness he pointed it at the sun.

As he did so he said these words:

"Three minutes—I give you three."

The words were heard by an overseer who at that moment had happened to approach Brownrigg. And the overseer, holding down his little finger with his thumb, lifted on high three fingers behind Brownrigg's back to show the crowd how the matter stood.

At once hundreds of watches were snatched from hundreds of pockets, and held in hundreds of palms. A minute passed. Not a sound now but the soft rush of the breeze in the cotton leafage, every man feeling his heart beat thickly in his bosom.

The second minute is gone. The sun remains clouded, and steadily points Brownrigg's muzzle at it. Every five or six seconds he gives a downward glance at his watch. In all that

crowd of onlookers there is hardly now a single face not pallid with excitement.

Suddenly there is a stirring—there is the widest sensation! The sun is re-adjusting itself—there is a working, a movement yonder on high—the clouds are giving way, as when a crowd opens for the passage of Royalty! He has won his way—he shines triumphantly—the world is sweltering in his blaze.

From the fields and lanes there went up a shout. Brownrigg was seen to nod, as if to say, "Ah, so much the better for you!" There were still fifteen seconds lacking to the completion of his three minutes.

During the next five minutes there ensued an agitated scene among the crowd; bets were being settled, comments made; on the outskirts there was a tendency toward departure for Cliftonville. It seems probable that the saloons would do a brisk trade that day, for considerable sums had changed hands.

Brownrigg had again put on his watch. He was talking to the overseer who had approached him. In the midst of his talk he was seen to snatch up his cow-skin "cart-whip," and crack it around the bare legs of a negro who had happened to pass too near.

All at once those who had sauntered from the outskirts of the crowd to return to the town stopped, and ran back with cries to their former stations. With a strange suddenness the sun had buried itself into cloud involving the land in shadow.

Expectation now stood more wildly on tiptoe than ever. The betting instinct at this fresh impetus was on the point of manifesting itself with tenfold vigour; but, as a matter of fact, not a single bet was made, for Brownrigg left them no time. With a gesture of horrible rage he snatched away his watch, placed it on the stone, snatched up his gun, and pointed it upward.

The overseer, still near him, drew away, and holding down his third and fourth fingers with his thumb, lifted on high his

first two behind Brownrigg's back for the information of the crowd. Brownrigg had said:

"Two minutes—I give you two."

And once more the hundreds of watches lay flat in the hundreds of palms. And in silence a minute passed.

It must have been about this time, as the Cliftonville folk said afterwards, that the negro Brams drew himself along the mud floor of his cell, wounded as he was, dragging with him his companion in misery. He had heard the curse pronounced against him and seen the obiah-stone dropped into the hot water. With a push he upset the pail, and took out the stone. That is what he afterwards asserted.

But whatever truth is to be credited to the statement of the black, the fact remains that Brownrigg stood with his gun pointed at the sun; and a minute passed and the sun remained hidden.

Obstinately this time. A minute and a-half—and no one dared to breathe; a sense of the awful oppressed the heart; the waiting air seemed crowded with something momentous. The breeze died away, as if holding its breath to watch that blasphemy.

Then—at last—with a shock of fear everyone knew that the two minutes were over, and the sun remained a mere blotch.

Bang! Brownrigg fired.

He vanished. He perished. Never could one have conceived such a thing. To say that this gun burst and sent him into eternity is to put it very feebly; he disappeared. Gun and Brownrigg and watch were wiped out. The folk at Cliftonville used to tell that not a single trace was left of him—that he was clean eaten up and swallowed by the wrath of heaven. That is an exaggeration—but not much of one; some traces were found—but wonderfully few. I state facts.

THE END

Those superstitions remained with Shiel throughout his life, while the sight of the sea and surging surf, its relentless crest and roar, the feel of the Caribbean sun and wind, the black magnetic sand of Montserrat's beaches, burned themselves into Phipps's character and left a pantheistic impression on his later writing.

> ... this worship of wind—which to me is the worthiest of the works of God, as fog the ugliest, which I worship as the Persian the sun—I having learned when a nipper of ten in the West Indies; where, as you know, it is hot; yes, but anon there blow hurricanes that raise a body's hair like a ghost with their gloomy mood, and about Christmas, too, gales of a delicious chill come to blow and mouth about one's brow—bleak! bleak!—of a morning, when one walked to bathe in the sea. Was I aware that those gales came to me from England and the Glacial Sea? I forget. I know that they spoke to me of the moon, of moons that no telescope ever explored; and if I possessed a thousand pens, and then ten thousand mouths to tell, still, heaven knows, I'd be far enough from uttering half of all their holy psalmodies told to me.[57]

A boy's character is malleable in its reaction to the pressure of nature or event. But, unlike clay, it cannot easily be reshaped: any or all impressions may someday appear in some fashion. So it was that years later Shiel remembered and revealed the presence of panic in boyhood activities:

> I once felt that real presence when a boy of fourteen, sitting small on a massive stallion that was stepping down a ledge, precipice above, precipice below—sedately stepping, when those same devils that entered the Gadarene hogs got into him, and began to gallop him—down and round the curves; then there was prayer without words.

> Nothing, in fact, can be quicker than a boy's panics, more delicate than his mental poise. I remember being terror-struck by some sudden text of Scripture: "he goeth after her, and knoweth not that the dead are there ..." and, on jumping into mid-ocean from a schooner becalmed—just to bathe—no danger—panic suddenly took me at my loneliness, at a malignancy and ghostliness in the sea.[58]

The last two events were used in stories he wrote some thirty years later. And that long-distant terror of the author was powerfully re-created in the reader.

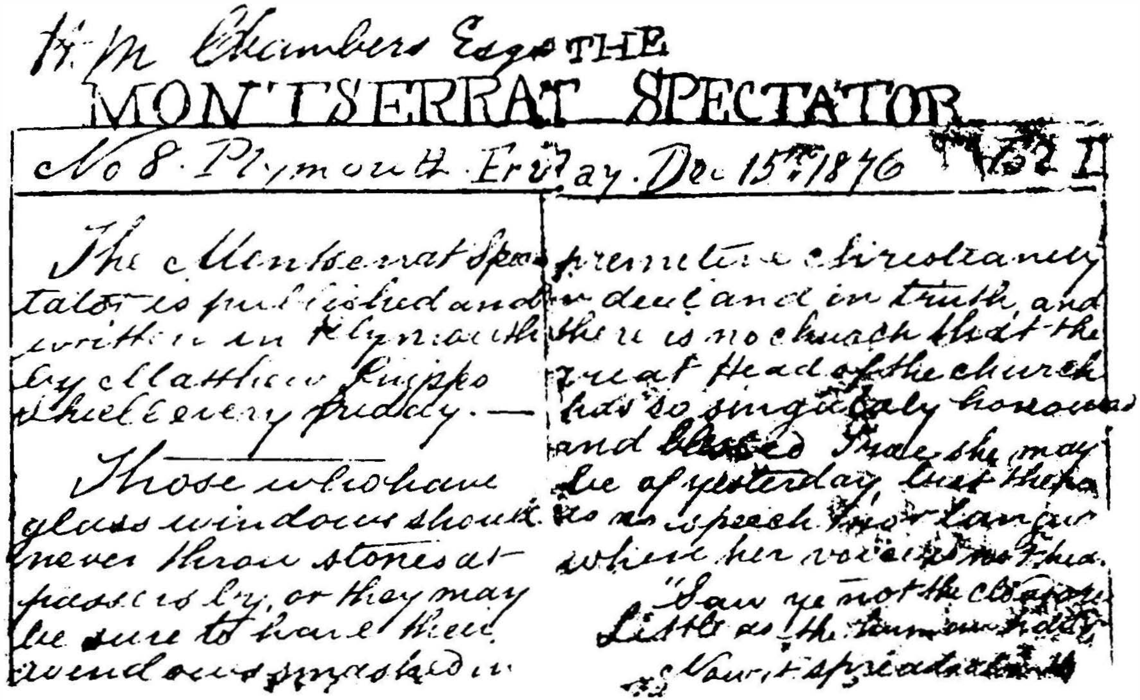
Many events of those early years turned up in later books. Shiel was particularly impressed by the escapades of his young black friends. A fight between one of those acquaintances and the police, and the subsequent hunt-and-chase, were used as scenes in several stories. And the attributes of various novel-characters were based on these figures he knew in his youth.[59] He was so fond of several (especially of Paddy Burke, who virtually adopted him, Phipps said) that he saved photographs of several of them through the miles and events of over sixty years, and based fictional characters on them: Henry Dyett, on whose image Shiel based his character Baron Kolar in *The Last Miracle*; Harry Dyett, the nephew of Henry and son of a local preacher, who impressed Phipps with the fact that he had once gotten a girl to give him a dozen kisses; Percy Trott, basis for the character "Shan," the gamekeeper in *The White Wedding*; and Paddy Burke.[60]

Paddy was the son of a local grocer, and once took Phipps to the shop where Phipps deformed a toe on a wheel located there. This story, told to John Gawsworth by Shiel and recorded on the back of an old photograph by Gawsworth, says that Paddy's mother promptly smashed his head with a soapbox as punishment.[61]

Several of Shiel's stories written long afterwards concern a fear of being buried alive; perhaps this had its genesis in the habit of an

Parliament St. (Looking South) Plymouth, Montserrat

New Schooner Launching, Montserrat



W. M. Chambers Esq

THE MONTSERRAT SPECTATOR

No 8 · Plymouth · Friday · Dec 15th 1876 · Vol I

The Montserrat Spectator is published and written in Plymouth by [illegible] every friday.—

Those who have glass windows should never throw stones at passers by, or they may be sure to have their windows smashed in.

[illegible] indeed and in truth, and there is no church that the great Head of the church has so singularly honoured and blessed. Pride she may be of yesterday, but [illegible] speech [illegible] where her voice is not heard.

"Saw ye not the cloud [illegible] Little as the [illegible] Now it spread [illegible]

The Montserrat Spectator Dec. 15. 1876

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin

Henry Dyett, Percy Trott, Paddy Burke, Harry Dyett
Montserrat Friends of Phipps ca. 1885

Courtesy of he Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin

old family servant to shut him in a dark cupboard when one of his sisters became ill.[62] It may also account for his lifelong habit of staying up at night and sleeping by day.

Young Phipps was left chiefly to his own devices, to find his own pastimes, make his own pleasures with local companions as told above. His feel for the natural life of Montserrat must have entered into the heart of much of what he later wrote. One of his most memorable characters, "Skin-the Goat," an albino youth attached to gypsies and the woods of England, was a favorite of Shiel's, used and abused as he was, but redolent of possible youthful adventures on Phipps's part. One can see him with one of Montserrat's unusual large frogs, offering it bread and tapping its head: "Eat, frog. Eat!" Those of a psychological bent can make what they want of this albino character.

He could occasionally accompany his father on trips to Cuba, Barbados, Martinique, at least so he said. And it was a special day for Phipps and his friends when a traveling troupe of acrobats, or clowns, or a conjuror came to entertain the island.

> Once when a troupe came, I saw a conjuror break eggs into a hat, put on the hat, take it off, and now round his brow was a row of roses. So the next day I, entranced—I was eleven—said to Paddy—lad of twenty, wedded to me—"I can do it!" Now he was a mulatto—a sort of people as credulous as priests are, for whom fancies have the same weight as ascertained facts—and, shaken in his faith in Nature by my faith in myself, he said, "Well, we'll see." So he gets eggs, breaks them into a hat; and I can see again his keen stoop, his stare of interest, as I raised the hat toward my head, and can again hear his glad out-cry of laughter, as the universe rallied to re-establish his old view of her, while I stood foolish, with fluids raining down my face ... But how ill-educated for eleven! How foreign to the cosmos. I had been reading Caesar, you see, the prick of my intellect "let down" (as we say when we soften steel) forever.[63]

This reading of the classics was a normal thing for a well-educated boy of the period. "... by the time I was eleven and at school in Devonshire I had devoured I should think, most of what is written in Greek." How his earliest education was conducted is not known. Much of that learning came in Biblical form. Every day for years Phipps and his father sat on a little couch and read together from the Bible. For years, too, the boy took these readings completely to heart, imagined himself a preacher like his father and stood "preaching in a night-dress over my clothes, of Jonah-in-the-whale's belly, shouting 'Lazarus, come forth!' and Lazarus came; but no sooner was I fourteen than I began to name the Methodists 'the Methodies,' making sad a man." Several of his books include a firebrand evangelist among their characters.

Probably the most prominent of these is the wild-stalking, thundering pastor Mackay, in *The Purple Cloud*, who warned of disaster to the human race if foot were set on the North Pole.

Job and the Jehovist were Phipps's Biblical favorites, and always afterwards he thought the finest passage of literature ever created was that mouthed by Jacob (as Shiel rephrased it): "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained to the days of the years of the lives of my fathers in the days of their marches."[64]

Actual details of his father's business activities are generally lacking, although we know of references to his trading ships and store. A description of a brief stop-off at Montserrat by a traveling New York journalist just a few months after Phipps left Montserrat for the final time in 1885 provides colorful anecdotes of the towns-people and descriptions of a shop that might well be that of the elder Shiell. None of the several shopkeepers in Plymouth was prepared for visits by tourists.

William Drysdale wrote of this brief visit in the New York *Times*, December 29, 1885.[65] In sailing for Montserrat south from St. Kitts, the boat passed Redonda, "an immense rock rising up

almost perpendicularly out of the water to a height of perhaps 200 feet ... The rock is almost 25 miles from St. Kitts and the same distance from Montserrat. And it is a sight worth seeing, this great rock standing out by itself, with nothing else near it, and the water breaking up against the sides into white foam." He goes on:

> It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon when we dropped anchor in front of Plymouth, Montserrat's capital city. We were not more than a quarter of a mile away, and close enough to see that it was a small town, with no buildings of much size and with streets that were short and narrow and crooked. Of course such an out-of-the-way place as Montserrat must be visited when occasion offered, and Capt. Fraser told me the ship would be there till dark at the least. So, accompanied by two New York ladies, I took advantage again of the permission to use the ship's boat, and "Sunny" and his companion rowed us ashore. There were no vessels in the harbor—only two or three little fishing smacks—and the arrival of a steamer seemed to be an event of great importance. There was a wooden pier a dozen feet wide and perhaps 200 feet long extending out over the water, and we landed at a stairway at the outer end of this and climbed up. The greater part of the population in the town seemed to be gathered there to welcome us. And they welcomed us in a manner more novel than pleasant, by crowding up just as close to us as the two or three black policemen on the wharf would let them, and making remarks to each other about us. The arrival of white strangers on that hospitable shore was evidently something very uncommon. We squeezed through the narrow lane the natives left for us between two rows of darkies and made our way to solid land—none too solid, either, for the stones composing the sea wall had rolled out in places and the wall seemed in danger of caving in. We made our way up to the street that runs down to the water and adjoins the pier and set foot on the rocky soil of the island of Montserrat; made more

rocky still in Plymouth by being paved, with great round stones, something like the abominations called cobblestones still to be found in some of the old streets of New-York, only much larger, much rounder, slippier, and every way harder to walk upon.

The colored ladies and gentlemen who formed the solid walls between which we walked down the pier, talked to us as if we had been old acquaintances of theirs. They made audible guesses as to whether we came from New-York or from London. They asked us how we did, begged from us, got in front of us whenever they had a chance, asked us to buy things, looked us thoroughly over from head to foot, and then, finding our appearance irresistibly comic from their standpoint of dress, (or undress), laughed in our faces, and hunted about in the crowd for their friends, for fear anybody should lose the great sight.

Some of these darkies were very nearly dressed, not more than two or three garments being wanting; and some were nearly undressed, not more than one or two garments being present. There were dandies in the crowd—wealthy young colored gentlemen, who owned black clothes and high hats of a date not to be named, and who carried canes. That some of these gentlemen were without shoes no doubt was not any fault of theirs. Indeed, shoes were the exception. A checked shirt and a pair of trousers and a straw hat for a man was the regulation dress. And for the women, how should I know, beyond seeing that they were all barefooted, and all seemed outwardly to be clad in a single calico garment, and that in bad repair and very short about the ankles.

It was no particular sight in a West Indian town such a crowd as this. They acted a little as if they might be cannibals, waiting to get a bite of us, and, indeed, their appearance indicated that a square meal of any sort, even of human flesh, would be more than acceptable to them. But I knew these West Indian colored gentlemen too well to have any hesitation

about mingling with them. They are harmless as doves, if not quite as handsome. It was a new sensation to the two ladies with me to be surrounded and stared at by such a crowd, and I got them into the town as quickly as I could, expecting to find some little shops where we could buy some trinkets, and thus escape from the curiosity of the inhabitants. But escape was out of the question. We were a greater curiosity than Barnum's show going into a country town, and the crowd followed us up the street. We found ourselves in a street about as long from one end to the other as one of our shortest blocks in New-York and as wide as the driveway in Nassau-street, without any sidewalks, and running up a hill, and with low dark-colored stone houses with small windows on the side of it, and a high stone wall on the other side.

There were no shops in this first block in Plymouth, (or none visible to the naked eye), but one of the buildings was a small hotel, which did not look inviting enough for us to go in. We went to the end of that block, followed by at least 50 of the inhabitants of Plymouth, men, women, and children. Then, finding ourselves at one side of a very small stone-paved square, not more than 50 feet each way, we turned to the left and went into the only store we saw. This was no easy matter, for the doorsill was a little too high to step to from the ground, and a rough stone had been put in front of it, and it was necessary to scramble over this to get in. The crowd of natives following us waited admiringly outside while we went in to look at the goods. Of course, we pretended all the time to be as unconcerned as possible; and, of course, we felt, with sssthis procession of half-clad darkies following through the town, very much as one of the "curiosities" in a museum might feel to find itself suddenly walking down the Bowery.

When we looked out through the store door and saw the crowd waiting for us outside we knew that we were "in for it" as long as we remained in the beautiful, attractive, lively town of Plymouth. But fortunately both the ladies were New-York

Ladies, quite used to the constant stare of Sixth-avenue and Fourteenth-street, and as for me, I leave you to imagine an old New-York reporter being stared out of countenance by a crowd of Caribbean Island darkies. So we resigned ourselves to our fate, and I inquired of the clerk whether they kept cigars.

"We have some very nice cigars, Sir," said he; "just from New-York in the last steamer."

This, I thought, was rather like kicking a man after knocking him down with a brick. I could stand the crowd of darkies; I could stand, for a very brief time, the wretchedly uneven streets and the hills; but to travel down into the Lesser Antilles, the very home and hearthstone of tobacco, and be offered cigars "just from New-York in the last steamer," was too much. The clerk brought them out, and I saw at once that they were old friends. Every New-Yorker is acquainted with the kind, neatly pressed in round molds, made somewhere about Avenue B, in tenement houses, of which to smoke one would be worse than rashness, to smoke two would be suicide. Had they any native cigars? No, they had no native cigars; no native cigarettes; no native tobacco. Had they pipes? Yes, they had pipes. And the clerk led me to a case and showed me a small stock of brier root pipes that evidently came from New-York in the same steamer with the cigars. He had some pretty novelties, he said, that he would like to show us. I thought that if he had anything pretty it would be a novelty, but did not say so. He showed us some fancy boxes, covered on the outside with small shells. Were they made on the island? Oh, no! They came from Paris. He brought out several cheap and showy little things, such as one sometimes buys from a sidewalk vender in Fourteenth-street. Were any of them made on the island? Oh, no, indeed! (disdainfully) they were all imported. Had he anything for sale that was made on the island? At first he did not think he had; but another clerk came to the rescue, and reminded him of some books of pressed ferns. So he brought out two large scrap books, with

ferns and sea grasses and leaves and flowers pasted to the leaves. They were very nicely put in, but the books had been handled and thumbed till they were in bad order. They were made, the clerk told us, by a lady on the island, who was compelled to do something for a living, and making these books enabled her to earn a livelihood without letting her friends know that she did anything! So even here in Montserrat, where a steamer touches once a month if it has any cargo to leave, where the people are half clad and a trifle more than semi-civilized, it is a disgrace to work! I wonder whether Robinson Crusoe didn't consider it a disgrace to have to make his own goatskin coats?

After leaving the shop we went one block further up the hill, and this brought us suddenly to the end of navigation, for the town ends abruptly at the foot of a steep hill. We were still followed by our crowd of admirers, and when we turned down to the right they turned down to the right. This cross street was evidently one of the second-rate streets of the city, for the buildings in it were smaller than the first we had seen and more out of repair. There were very few people in any of the streets, except those who were following us. But in this street there were several who had little smoldering fires built, as if they were about to cook their suppers. We went down here one block, and then turned to the right again, so as to go completely around one block. It was the same story of cobblestones, dark stone houses, and darker people. We had then been over, I think, every street of any importance in the town and had seen nothing to cause us to change our first impression—that we would hardly care to buy a residence in Plymouth and settle down there. In a minute or two we brought up in the street we had just left—the one leading down to the wooden pier. The stone wall on one side of it, we found, enclosed in an open market place. And as it was Saturday the market was in operation, and we went in, through a gate, followed by all our crowd of admirers; and

when "our crowd" got in, the market would have been pretty well filled up if it had not been a large one. But it was very large, covering, I should think, about an acre, with two small wooden sheds at one end half filled up with old lumber. We saw, when we got inside, that what we had mistaken for a row of cannon balls on top of the wall facing the sea were the heads of colored inhabitants watching the steamer. When they saw us they immediately abandoned the steamer and joined our followers. And our party made a very respectable showing (in point of numbers) as they surrounded us in the market place. There could not have been less than 100 of them grinning at us, crowding up around us, and talking to us. Somehow they got it into their heads that we went into the market to buy chickens.

"Boss, does you want to buy any nice fowls?" one man came up and asked us. Then somebody else, fearing to lose a customer, told us that he had some fine fat ones. Women pushed up through the crowd and assured us, in a language very difficult to understand, that their fowls were better than anybody else's fowls in the market, and that we would be cheated if we bought anybody else's fowls. Two or three half-grown boys made their way up to us and begged us not to buy any fowls till they could run and fetch theirs, which they would present in just a minute—and then off they ran, paying no heed to our solemn assertions that we had no idea of buying any fowls.

One old woman, with a curious eye, (she turned out afterwards to be a crazy or imbecile woman), pushed up and gave us some valuable information about Montserrat fowls in general. Trays of fowls, with their legs tied together, and carried on the heads of talkative colored women, were brought up for us to look at. And the fowl subject hardly quieted down before the market people developed a mania to sell us eggs. Did we want nice fresh eggs? Nice fowl eggs? "Very nice biled, boss; or you kin fry 'em in de pan wid di fat meat!" Evidently these favored people imagined that barbarians from foreign lands

were not acquainted with the uses of eggs! We had taken our stand in the market in the shade of a big tree, and no opportunity to move about, on account of the crowd that surrounded us. As they gradually satisfied their curiosity and dropped back a little we looked at the trays of fruits and vegetables offered for sale—all either carried on women's heads, or laid down on the rocky ground at their feet. There was the usual assortment of tropical fruits and vegetables—oranges, bananas, plantains, sweet potatoes, pawpaws, mangoes, okras, cassava; but all in very small quantities. We were on the lookout for some alligator pears, they being then just in season, but we did not see any. I incautiously asked one of the women whether they did not have any.

"Peers! Alligator peers? Yes, boss, right away. Here, you George, run right off boy, an' fetch dem peers! You hear wat I tell you, boy? Don' you see de gemman wants to buy some peers? Git along, now, boy!"

George quickly appearing in the person of a very black boy with no hat and few other clothes to speak of, I stopped him in his rush for the gate, and made some inquiries. He was going, I found, to pick the "peers" which were still on the tree. And he would bring me—oh, any number I wanted; as many as 20, boss, if I wanted them. So I told him to bring me a sixpence worth, and left the number entirely to his honesty of purpose. Then I had to make a bulwark of myself to stand the encroachments of a sea of offers of 'nice ripe peers." There were none in the market, but everybody had trees loaded with them at home, and everybody would have them picked for me "in jes' no time, boss." But I stood by my contract with George, and waited for him.

The crazy woman, meanwhile, kept herself posted resolutely in front of the ladies, and eyed them intently from head to foot with such a queer look in her face that they were half afraid of her. George was gone a long time—so long that I concluded at last he must have tumbled out of the "peer" tree

and broken his neck. Meanwhile two young darkies in the crowd got up a sham fight, and sprang at each other as if they intended to pound one another to jelly—(to blackberry jam, perhaps.) They kept it up for some minutes, with many expressions of anger and defiance, evidently to "show off" before the strangers, till one of the market women stopped them, with:

"You stop yo' foolin' there, yo' boys. Didn' yo' never see no white folks before?"

The hour had almost arrived when we were to return to the ship, and none of us felt inclined to run any risk of letting the Trinidad sail off and leave us on Montserrat. I should very much dislike to experience the sensation of standing on the wooden pier at Plymouth and seeing the steamer go off. So we gave up any further notion of seeing George and his "peers" and started for the landing. We were about half way down the pier when he arrived, breathless and still hatless, bringing a basket containing about a dozen very nice pears. They were the first we had had any chance to buy, and they lasted us for many days; longer, perhaps, because when we got back to the ship we found the table well stocked with them, for the steward had been on shore, and had been a better customer in the market than we had.

I do not think we saw three white people in the town. But that evening (the ship having been delayed) a number of young white men came on board, and we heard of parties of a dozen or fifteen ladies and gentlemen sometimes coming out to see her. Here, as in many of the other West Indian islands, most of the white people live on their own plantations and do not often visit the town. And therein, I think, they show their taste. But, although Plymouth is not a place where one would want to spend much time, it is an interesting place to visit, and I should not want to lose my recollection of spending an afternoon at the head of a procession. I could not make out any Irish brogue in the talk of the natives. But I could understand

so little they said that they might have had brogues in five or six different languages.[66]

Lafcadio Hearn made a similar trip down through the West Indies two years later, in 1887, on commission for *Harper's* magazine. In reading his account it is easy to see why he is remembered as a major literary stylist of the 19th century while Drysdale's eye and pen belong more obviously to that of a newsman. Hearn had sailed and steamed south from St. Kitts and Nevis towards Redonda and Montserrat. He wrote in beautiful prose, if some of his descriptions may trouble readers of a later century:

> Then a high white shape like a cloud appears before us,—on the purplish dark edge of the sea. The cloud-shape enlarges, heightens, without changing contour. It is not a cloud, but an island! Its outlines begin to sharpen,—with faintest pencillings of color. Shadow valleys appear, spectral hollows, phantom slopes of pallid blue or green. The apparition is so like a mirage that it is difficult to persuade one's self one is looking at real land, — that it is not a dream. It seems to have shaped itself all suddenly out of the glowing haze. We pass many miles beyond it, and it vanishes into mist again.
>
> Another and a larger ghost; but we steam straight upon it, until it materializes into an unmistakable reality—Montserrat. It bears a family likeness to the islands we have already passed—one dominant height, with massing of bright crater shapes about it, and ranges of green hills linked together by low valleys. About its highest summit also hovers a flock of clouds. At the foot of the vast hill spreads out the little white and red town of Plymouth. The single salute of our gun is answered by a stupendous broadside of echoes.
>
> Plymouth is more than half hidden in the rich foliage that fringes the wonderfully wrinkled green of the hills at their base;—it has a curtain of palms before it. Approaching, you

discern only one or two facades above the sea-wall, and the long wharf projecting through an opening in the masonry, over which young palms stand thick as canes on a sugar plantation. But on reaching the street that descends towards the heavily bowldered shore you find yourself in a delightfully drowsy little burgh,—a miniature tropical town,—with very narrow paved ways,—steep, irregular, full of odd curves and angles,—and likewise of tiny courts everywhere sending up jets of palm-plumes, or displaying above their stone enclosures great candelabra-shapes of cacti. All is old-fashioned and quiet and queer and small. Even the palms are diminutive,—slim and delicate; there is something in their pose a slenderness like the charm of young girls who have not yet ceased to be children, though soon to become women ...

There is a glorious sunset,—a fervid orange splendor, shading starward into delicate roses and greens. Then black boatmen come astern and quarrel furiously for the privilege of carrying one passenger ashore; and as they scream and gesticulate, half naked, their silhouettes against the sunset seem forms of great black apes.

Under steam and sail we are making south again, with a warm wind blowing south-east—a wind very moist, very powerful, and soporific. Facing it, one feels almost cool, but the moment one is sheltered from it, profuse perspiration burst outs. The ship rocks over immense swells; night falls very blackly; and there are surprising displays of phosphorescence.[67]

The Shiell home, washed in these winds and sunsets, was apparently called "English House." It was described on a photograph of it by John Gawsworth as "Shiel's house of childhood haunts" and appears to be on a street steeply sloping into a mountain. On a trip by Reynolds Morse to Montserrat in *1979* he was told the Shiell store had been located at the southwest corner of Parliament at

George Street, right in the central business district, where The Royal Bank of Canada building had replaced it. That description and the early photograph available of the home suggest that the viewpoint was east up George Street towards the rapidly rising St. George's Mountain. The recent volcanic destruction of Plymouth left only photographs and business records to prove that anything ever existed on the site.[68]

Priscilla Shiell reminded Phipps twenty years after he left Montserrat that his father had "bought over" the home in the names of him and his sisters Ada, Sall and Harrie (Augusta had apparently already married at the time this was done.) She wrote Phipps on June 25, 1905 (from Gingerland, Nevis), asking if he would sign over his claim as security so that Sallie could make business arrangements to re-open the store on Montserrat. Her husband, the Rev. Killikelly, had been "superannuated," and he would no longer have the salary on which Sall and she depended. Sall might pay Phipps a nominal sum for giving up his claim, his mother wrote him, in what appears to be Sallie's handwriting.[69] A response does not exist, but he obviously did not do as she requested. It is not known how Sallie's family survived her husband's retirement.

A lease between the Royal Bank of Canada and the Shiell family—(managed by Harriet Shiell on behalf of herself, Spinster, Phipps [of 'The Forge,' Church Hill, Midhurst, Sussex, England], Carlton Killikelly, Toronto, "Printer," and Ada Catherine Manchester, Sandy Point, St. Christopher, "married woman with separate estate") dated 10th June 1922, for a term of 25 years at an annual rental of £82—describes the property as it was at the time:

> ... that portion of the lower storey or shop (being part of the messuage hereditments and premises situate at the corner of George Street and Parliament Street in the town of Plymouth in the said island of Montserrat) the floor space measuring 29 feet along the side facing Parliament Street and

> 28 feet along the side facing George Street together with a piece of land on the South side of the said ground floor measuring 28 feet along the South side and being 6 feet wide the whole of the said premises hereby demised being bound and measured as follows that is to say: On the north by George Street 30 feet on the South by other lands of the Lessors 30 feet on the East by Parliament Street 43 feet On the West by a portion of the said messuage being the property of the Lessors 43 feet, TOGETHER with all rights, members, easements ...

When Harriet was unable to pay for repairs accruing from hurricanes ("tempests" in the lease) to the property in 1936 that made the property "unfit" for its purpose, the bank suspended the lease.

An interesting point is almost hidden away in the lengthy letter that Phipps wrote to the Horsfords shortly after his final move to London. In his reference to Grace Wheatland's placing him in a dark closet whenever his sisters were ill, he says this was at "Corkhill." Whether he might have been sent to stay with this woman when the sisters were ill, or whether his family lived for a time at this location just north of Plymouth is not known.

Harriet moved into the old family home when she returned from London about 1903, had it renovated after damage from several hurricanes, but her insurance was eventually over-run by damage after damage. She remained there, living on the upper storey, until her health required that she move to St. Kitts in the late 1930s. She rented the property in Plymouth, after the bank's termination of its lease, to John Eid, a merchant, for $40 per month, reduced to $30 in early 1944. Phipps received a share of the rent as he had during the term of the bank's lease. The house was sold to Eid in November 1944.[70] The bank eventually acquired ownership and constructed a new building on the property.

There seems to have been more culture in the Shiell home than what one might have expected on a tiny island like Montserrat, and especially given the description of its population by William Drysdale. Phipps's sisters played the piano ("I have known more cosmic blisses during ten minutes in meditating upon the melancholy melody of a piano being tuned above me on a tempestuous day than many men in many months").[71] They evidently read current fiction, though Shiel later confessed to laughing at the grave way his sister—"a Methodist saint"—read Pickwick.[72] Though he too read Dickens for a time, in later years he claimed Dickens was a clown who "hopped jog-trotting through paragraphs in bad iambics."

To young Phipps the only true literature was Greek and Hebrew tragedy, but at seventeen he discovered Poe, "just when I had begun to smoke, and the two smokes transported me to Nephelocougia, where I sojourned many days ..." But Poe, too, he later devalued, "finding a lack of significance, his kite not 'hitched to any star.'"[73]

He recounted how at thirteen he once warned a tutor who was bent on flogging him not to touch him or he would jump from a first floor window, "higher than ours." When the tutor brashly dared to accept Phipps's challenge, the boy jumped!—to the teacher's "everlasting heartshock."[74] Shiel also said in a newspaper interview in 1937 that he returned to Montserrat in 1880 after having been sent to England for an education. "Then, after my window-jump, to Harrison College in Barbados."[75] (One can wonder whether Phipps's sisters also were sent away for an education. Their reading and musical tastes suggest they received a better education than was probably available on Montserrat.)

It was during this boyhood period that Phipps began to fancy himself a writer. Excerpts from several sources indicate this:

> ... at twelve I had written a novel, the MS. of which was long preserved in my family (never published); at thirteen I

> was issuing a penny-periodical, seven copies a week for seven "subscribers," written by hand—a labour of Hercules; and at fifteen I had a serial in a newspaper. But then I was hypnotized into being interested in writing Latin asclepiads, Greek Sapphic—grotesque thing: irrelevant thing!—changing into a Chinese mind a European stripling.[76]

He was more specific about this early novel in the original version of "About Myself" (1901):

> Some such impulse drove me, about the age of twelve, to my first book; but, instead of writing English, I soon found myself caring for nothing on the earth but the imbroglio of phantasms in which my fancy involved me. Ah, that book! I remember it was all about a queen in Central Africa, wonderfully like Mr. Rider Haggard's "She," only of course, more restrained. They go out hunting, and come to a chasm, over which the horses can leap, but not the dogs. I might very well have made the chasm passable to everybody, but no, my fancy must forge obstacles in its own way. And how do you think the dogs go over? They jumped upon the horses' hindquarters, and then the horses leapt with them.[77]

The "penny-periodical" actually was issued when Shiel was only eleven as an incomplete surviving copy in the Ransom Center of The University of Texas at Austin proves. Titled "The Montserrat Spectator" it was issued "every Friday." The surviving four-page fragment—"No.8. Plymouth. Friday. Dec 15th 1876"—is addressed to "H. M. Chambers Esq." It includes an obituary: "A most lamentable occurrence took place in this town. Samuel Dyett died suddenly who seem to bid fair for a long life." A discussion of Methodist theology is in itself an interesting commentary on boyhood influences. He states for example: "Some ministers only have the outward qualifications to take charge of

a congregation and know nothing about conversion therefore can't teach it."[78]

The date of this "publication" pretty much sets one end of the boundary within which he was on Montserrat and when he attended boarding school in Devonshire. The year of his return to Montserrat sets the other limit, a likely enrollment at school in England in the fall term of 1877, and departure after the spring term in 1880.

An important event in Shiel's life occurred during this boyhood period: January 25, 1876. On this date a nephew was born on St. Kitts. Cyril Horsford was the second son of Samuel L. Horsford (a merchant and sugar agent who was later important in the political affairs of the West Indies) and Shiel's sister, Augusta ("Gussie"). Cyril was very close to Phipps during his youth, and Phipps "coached" Cyril during his school years in England.[79]

Cyril became a distinguished throat specialist, specializing in the treatment of professional singers and speakers. In 1901, age 25, he was boarding at 39 Dorset Square, W. Marylebone and identified his occupation for the 1901 Census as "Medical Practitioner surg." Interestingly, Alberta Horsford, age 64, b. abt. 1837 in the West Indies, was boarding at the same address, "on her own means." It is possible that she was either an aunt or older sister of Samuel Horsford, possibly just visiting Cyril. *Might* she have been Sammie's mother? He was born in 1849. Just a couple of years difference in the accuracy of the Census record, on either the taker's part or her acknowledgement of age, could have placed her within the period of West Indian child-bearing ... especially if Sammie were illegitimate, as it appears. Given the presumed illegitimacy, it also seems unusual that there would be a family unit that included Sammie and an older sister or aunt. That argument would help promote the notion that Alberta was actually Cyril's grandmother. It is interesting that her name was the first of the full surname, Alberta Augusta, that Gussie never used.

In his late years, Cyril's practice fared poorly, and he ultimately begged Phipps in his own old age to leave his small estate to Cyril's wife and son. Cyril claimed that his recent ill health, depression, too much medical competition, and major expenses in maintaining a home and office had broken him financially. (Of course, it was also costly, he granted, even with three poor doctors as tenants, to retain the five servants required to maintain the quarters.)[80] Phipps grumped that Cyril's son should long ago have gone through Oxford and be providing help.

Augusta married Samuel L. Horsford in 1872. Samuel ("Sammie") appears to have been a natural son of one of the wealthy Horsford family members of Antigua, where he was born. (He is not included in the extensive "Pedigree of Horsford" listed in Oliver's *The History of Antigua*. Sir Robert Marsh Horsford was Chief Justice of Antigua at the time of Samuel Horsford's birth, having taken this office following the death of John Shiell, son of Queely Shiell, in 1847. (Whether he had any relationship to Sammie is not known.)[81] The children of Gussie and Sammie were Reginald Shiell Horsford (b. May 1, 1873), Cyril Arthur Bennett (1876–1953), Samuel Leonard ("Leo," b. 1877), Olive (b. 1879?), and Muriel ("Nonnie"? b. 1881?).[82] Matthew Dowdy Shiell referred to the fancy wedding of Gus and Sammie on Nevis when he wrote Phipps about Sallie's more modest wedding ceremony when she married the Rev. C. Killikelly in 1887.[83]

All three sons of Augusta and Sammie attended Bedford Modern School according to school records, residing at "Matson House." Information about the two elder sons is also included in the 1891 Census of England, where both brothers are listed as boarders at 2 Clapham Road, St. Paul, Bedford, Bedfordshire. Each was also identified as a "scholar," as are seven other boys listed at this address, obviously also attendees at Bedford Modern School. The head of the household is identified as Leonard Matson, single, 38, "Teacher 'English' & Clerk in [*illegible*]

Order." Lightly penciled above the word "Teacher" is written "Clergy." Leonard Matson's sister, Lucy, follows his entry, also single, 29, and "Teacher Music." Two servants are also listed.[84]

Reginald, age 17, was born on Antigua, according to the Census. Cyril, age 15, was born on St. Kitts. (Cyril's obituary in *The Lancet* in 1953 noted that he had attended Bedford Modern School and the University of Edinburgh.)

The Archives of Bedford Modern School provides enrollment information and birthdates for all three of Augusta's sons: Reginald Shiell Horsford attended BMS from 1889 (autumn term) to 1891 (spring term). He was born May 1, 1873. Cyril attended from 1889 (autumn term) to 1893 (autumn term). He was born, as we know, January 25, 1876. (His address in 1900 was 11 Mayfield Road, Edinburgh, when he would have been enrolled at the University of Edinburgh.) Samuel Leonard Horsford attended from 1892 (spring term) to 1893 (autumn term). He was born November 28, 1877. During Leonard's attendance at the school, Augusta lived at 9 Keppel Street, Russell Square, London, according to school records.[85] By 1900, both Reginald and Leo had returned to St. Kitts, according to school records, and it is likely that Augusta had also returned home by then. (When Phipps died in 1947, neither Reginald nor Leo was mentioned in his obituary, as were Cyril, Olive, and Muriel, so it is likely that they were deceased by that time. One of the two had died by the time their family firm was sold in early 1929.)[86]

When Samuel Horsford died in 1913, the *Times* (December 20, p. 11c) provided a major obituary for him:

> **The Hon. Samuel L. Horsford, of St. Kitts, died in London recently, aged 64.**
>
> Mr. Horsford, who was born in Antigua in 1849, received his commercial training in that island and migrated to St. Kitts, where he succeeded to the mercantile business of the late

> Captain J. H. H. Berkeley, and became the agent of many of the principal sugar estates in the island. His ability and public spirit were recognized by his appointment to be a member of the Legislative Council of St. Kitts-Nevis and the Federal Council of the Leeward Islands in 1894, and in 1911 he was nominated a member of the Executive Council of the Federal Establishment, on which he sat until his death. He proved a keen debater, and a strong advocate of economy in public affairs and of representative government. A stanch Freemason, he had filled all the offices in the Mount Olive Lodge of St. Kitts, and he was for many years a member of the West India Committee and the West Indian Club in London. The Canadian Government appointed Mr. Horsford Commercial Agent for the Dominion of Canada, and he represented St. Kitts-Nevis at the conference at Ottawa in 1912, which resulted in the reciprocal trade agreement between the Dominion of Canada and a majority of the British West Indian Colonies. He was married to Miss Sheil [*sic*], of Montserrat, who, with five children, one of whom has attained distinction as a throat specialist, survive him. Mr. Horsford will be greatly missed not only in St. Kitts, where he was a general favourite, but also in this country.
>
> The funeral service will be held at College Chapel, Swiss Cottage, at 2 o'clock on Monday, and the interment will be at Kensal Green.[87]

The SL Horsford & Co LTD (the "Horsford's" companies) on St. Kitts has grown in the 21st century into one of the major corporations in the West Indies. While located on St. Kitts, it handles a major series of business enterprises throughout the West Indies, and supports soccer teams and various cultural and civic activities. The Shiell family interests in the firm were sold in 1929.[88]

Phipps's boarding school experience was probably much like that of his nephews, although the school he attended in Devonshire has never been identified. Shiel told a reporter in 1937, who had

gone to interview him regarding a strange story that had surfaced regarding Shiel's "kingship" of a small island in the West Indies, that he had been sent to London for an education and returned home in 1880.[89] The following event is then said to have occurred.

On Phipps's fifteenth birthday, July 21, 1880 a "coronation" event took place, he said, that was to color his entire life and writings. In "a day of carousal, of a meeting of ships ... and of people," Phipps says he was crowned "King of Rodundo." He first recounted this story in a revised version of "About Myself" prepared for a 1929 Victor Gollancz advertising brochure. It then surfaced in the popular press in 1937. He told another reporter in 1937 that the crown, made of wood and gold, was still laying around in his little Horsham home somewhere.[90]

Redonda (the more usually accepted spelling) was only a tiny rock-island north of Montserrat that reared slick and dripping from the sea like some prehistoric monster, uninhabited save for the wide-winged sea birds that nested on its cloud-pierced crest. But phosphate had been discovered there in the year of Shiel's birth, so it was not without value. The entrancing conceit to the elder Shiell, however (if we are to accept this story of his birthday gift to his son) was the idea that a member of the Shiell family, descendents of long-dead Irish rulers, would become one of the earth's nobility. (It is also possible that Matthew saw the guano mining underway on Redonda and made an effort to claim ownership of the island to gain that opportunity for himself.) When the "Rev. Dr. Semper, of Antigua," anointed Phipps's head as King of Redonda, the boy accepted it in all seriousness. But this event worked out as neither Shiell could then have foreseen. Years later, Shiel admitted that

> ...this notion that I am somehow the King, King of Kings, and the Kaiser of imperial Caesar, was so inveterately suggested to me, that I became incapable of expelling it. But

> to believe fantasies is what causes half our sorrows, as not believing realities causes half, and it would have been better for me if my people had been more reasonable here; nor can I forgive myself now for the solemnity and dignity with which I figured in that show. For what is a king without subjects? Certainly if I am a king, my kingdom is "not of this world": Redonda is a rock-island of scarcely nine square miles, and my subjects swoop with sudden steepness into the sea like streams of meteors streaming, together with eleven poor men who gathered the boobies' excrement to make "guano" (manure). And these were American people! Moreover, not long after my coronation the British Government, apprehensive that America might "annex" the rock, "annexed" it itself, i.e., stuck a little flagstaff on it; and though my parent irked heaven and earth with his claim of "priority," there the flagstaff remains, if it has not now gone to heaven on some gale's gallop; there it may ever remain. I have scaled to that rock's very top, and looked abroad at blue-eyed Beauty ...[91]

Questions have been raised regarding the identity of the individual who might have "crowned" him. In the original version of "About Myself" (1901) Shiel does not mention this event at all. In the last version (1948), he says "the Rev. Dr. Semper, of Antigua" anointed him. In a variant of the story, in *Twentieth Century Authors* (1932) he says the individual was Bishop Mitchinson. Both names would have been familiar to him when Phipps recalled them some forty-five years after 1880.

Sources on Montserrat in 1979 suggested to Reynolds Morse that Mr. Hugh Semper was a Methodist minister "of color" related to the famous Semper family of the area. Actual records on Antigua validate the ordination of Rev. Hugh Semper on January 8, 1873 and his death on August 9, 1918. Bishop Mitchinson of Barbados was acting headmaster of Harrison College from March 1880 until December 1880, and also served as chairman of the Building Committee. This

was just prior to Phipps's first year of attendance. Phipps told *The Star* reporter who interviewed him in 1937 that it was "Bishop Mitchinson of the Antilles" who officiated at the event.[92]

The most likely scenario for this "coronation" is that shortly after his return from England following the years of school in Devonshire, Phipps's family had a party for his 15th birthday in July 1880. This was most likely at Gussie's home on St. Kitts. His father's ship routinely passed Redonda on its brief trip to St. Kitts and back, providing the opportunity for this coronation gesture to have been made either on shipboard or at a party on St. Kitts. Several ships of friends from Montserrat and neighboring islands could have attended the party, including the Rev. Semper. He might even have sailed with the Shiells from Montserrat, or have been on St. Kitts, with other "tipsy" partygoers as Phipps described them. Since Phipps's own family members were fervent teetotalers, they would certainly not have been among the wild revelers that legend now holds about attendees at the alleged ceremony.

I simply place this whole episode among the same type of story that Shiel dreamed up from time to time to amuse him at their easy acceptance by the English press. He would do just the same with the biography he gave the press in 1895. The event is never mentioned in any family correspondence. Matthew Dowdy Shiell does not appear to have had the imagination to create this "kingdom." Phipps did. Nonetheless, the story has achieved legend and the literary Kingdom of Redonda exists.

In any event, six months later (January 1881) the young "king" was sent into exile—to Harrison College, Bridgetown, Barbados: "A good school, as schools go," Shiel described it, "but I do not seem to have had any more skepticism than my teachers—any more perception that the two hours a week of chemistry and the four of Greek was a crazy state of things."[93]

He was placed under the guardianship of J. H. Shannon, Swan Street, a merchant with whom the senior Shiell conducted

business. Shannon's son was a doctor who later prescribed medication for Matthew Dowdy Shiell. What the boy's activities were beyond school are unknown. We can assume from better documented times that the boy was never idle, and if the devil found a way to use those busy hands and feet and eyes, that would not be surprising either.

The school was recognized as one of the finest in the islands. Established in 1729, it opened on March 2, 1733 with the particular intent at that time to ensure that indigent boys might have an opportunity to achieve an education. It rapidly moved past that mission, and became an important facility for boys throughout the Lesser Antilles. Older buildings were renovated the year before Shiel entered; and a new wing for boarders was added to the Headmaster's House. A new two-storey Main Building with additional classrooms, a science laboratory and library was completed late in 1880. Possibly 150 boys were in attendance. Those who could not afford the tuition could apply for about forty scholarships available, including the ten "Foundation Scholars" funded from the original endowment established to ensure a good education for indigent youths. The regular "Oppidans or Commoners," paying full fees—£5 per session in advance—numbered about a hundred.[94]

It can be assumed that Phipps paid the full fee. Many of the "boys" sported manly moustaches and beards. The new building and additions were formally opened on the night of December 4, 1880 "in the presence of a large gathering." Bishop Mitchinson was surely involved in the ceremonies. It would not be surprising if the Shiell family attended the dedication, leaving Phipps behind as they made the three-day journey home.[95]

Chemical experimentation proved to be one of Shiel's main interests throughout his life, so the importance of those years spent in Harrison's new laboratory goes without saying. (Mr. J. B. Harrison, later Sir John, was Island Professor of Chemistry and Agricultural

Science.) Although Phipps later disparaged the time spent on Classics, this field too made a great impression on his thought and style. (Mr. Horace Deighton was Headmaster and Mathematics Master, and became one of the most important figures in the history of the school. Mr. G. F. Franks was Classical Master.) It was probably here that Phipps made his discovery of tobacco; and, in Harrison's new library, he found an appreciation for Edgar Alan Poe and (strangely) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.[96]

The general content of the school's curriculum was to follow the English Elementary Education Act of 1870 whose avowed object was to provide every child throughout the Kingdom a "sound education." Some credit the establishment of this act, providing that every British child should have a compulsory elementary education, with the rapid growth in reading that followed this generation of students. The Education Commission for Harrison College, under the chairmanship of Bishop Mitchinson, responded to this act in 1874 with the statement: "Opinion may fairly vary as to the quality, extent and nature of the education given, and as to whether mental culture or purely industrial training should preponderate." Also, the school would be annually tested by comparison with "English Schools of similar standing" through the Cambridge School Examiners.[97]

That Phipps did not agree with the balance of instruction in the Classics and that in the sciences has already been remarked. And fifty years later he was still arguing against education based on memorizing rather than on "scientific" reasoning.

Three times Phipps took the matriculation examination for the University of London.[98] Finally, in December 1883 he left Harrison College, the most concrete evidence of his studies the following document dated July 20, 1884.[99]

> I hereby certify that Matthew Phipps Shiell was a pupil of Harrison College, Barbados, from January 1881 till December

1883. He possesses industry and considerable ability. He could wish for no better certificate of the variety and exactness of his knowledge, than he has gained by obtaining Honours in the Matriculate Examination of the University of London.

(Signed) H. Deighton MA. - FRA
Late Scholar of Queens'
(M: Cambridge)
Ho. Master of Harrison
College, Barbados

Phipps had probably been gathering records for some time in preparation for enrollment at college in England. On 26 December 1883, Henry Dyett, Notary Public, Montserrat (and an old family friend) prepared a formal document certifying that the signature of Thomas Henry Bailey, who had certified the Registration of Baptism of Matthew Phipps Shiell [at some unspecified date], was authentic. (Reynolds Morse mistakenly believed that this document indicated that Phipps had been baptized in 1883, but that was not the case.)[100]

How Shiel spent the fifteen months following his tenure at Harrison is uncertain, but he must have been preparing for his matriculation exams while also considering a vocation in the islands. The date of the birth certificate and statement from Head Master Horace Deighton of Harrison College suggest that Phipps was not ready to attend London University until 1885. There were probably several unsuccessful attempts to find a "position" for him somewhere in the West Indies. But economic conditions had become rather miserable with the decline in the sugar business, loss of land value, and this already-frail economy failed rapidly in the years following the American Civil War. It may well be that Phipps spent time on St. Kitts as well as Montserrat during this period, pursuing a vocation. But his family's economic decline made the expense of much travel unlikely.

There was very little work for a young man of his inclinations in the West Indies. Precious little work for anyone in fact. He considered apprenticing to Montserrat's "chemist," but it was clear there was need for but one pharmacist on the island. He could not assist his father, for the declining finances of the family offered no useful opportunity.[101]

All of these factors no doubt contributed to indecision on the part of Phipps. Finally, the inevitable conclusion was reached. He would go to London and make an attempt to obtain a position with the Colonial Office. If that failed, he would find a teaching position and in his spare time read for the B.A. degree.

On April 25, 1885 Phipps and his father saw one another for the last time. Phipps either sailed for England from Montserrat's deep waters (a quarter of a mile out from its small wooden jetty) or perhaps from St. Kitts.[102] He was almost twenty years old, full of enthusiasm and optimism, but with little money or understanding of what was ahead. With thoughts of a new world to explore, he can perhaps be excused for the possibly negligible concern he gave to leaving his lovely islands, his placid, superstitious companions, his father and mother and sisters. Did he stop to wonder whether he would ever see any of them again? "Try not to be strange" his father would beg him again and again.[103]

Chapter Three

"I shall have to be content with becoming a teacher"

Phipps found an immediate world of excitement in London, that lodestone of all the Empire, whose gas-lit streets were flooded with emigrant colonials and continentals in those years of worldwide economic depression. Prophetic of the easy flow of words that was to come from his pen were the lengthy letters he wrote home. There is a remarkable account of these early days in London in one of the first letters he wrote his sister Augusta Horsford and her family on St. Kitts. (Like others of MPS's letters, John Gawsworth transcribed this from an original whose location is unknown, although I suspect these personal letters of Phipps to the Horsford family were in the possession of Olive Horsford, who remained close to her uncle throughout their lives, and who appears to have been the family member most likely to have preserved her mother's correspondence).[104]

> [*At head of first page of letter*] P. S. Can I manage to make you rich W. Indian people pay the postage on the letters I write. If so, how?
>
> My business affairs are in a tangle: when I get them clear I shall tell you all about them. Tell Mrs. T plenty of howdies for me. Don't forget.
>
> Wednesday Evening
> 18 Culford Road
> Southgate Road
> Kingsland N.

Ye very dear Horsfords:—Is tomorrow Mail-day? Everything is changed now, and one must post his letters on every "other" Thursday. Ah,—but *which* Thursday. For what magnetic will can call back yon Mail Steamer ploughing mercilessly over dingy seas, when one has posted on the wrong Thursday? She will ever plough on, unconscious of unpractical mistakes.

I planned to write you a long letter this time: two difficulties, however, meet me—the first is as to specially what I shall write; the next is as to how many words your relentless Postal Company, Governmental dignitaries, official and non-official busybodies in my affairs, and what, as to how many words these Nether-world men will consent to my writing for the sum of 4^{d}. You must know. Do write and tell me.

Then again, consider the temptations that your philosophical biped who walks the streets of busy London-town has of becoming Egotistical when he writes others who walk on tiniest West Indies, emphatically not philosophy engendering. Or, to put it shortly, one is tempted to write of one's self overmuch, I was even now thinking, whether I might not give you a sketch of any one day in my London-town-life—of this day, for instance.

Well, I live in such a sweet little castle, so thoroughly all-my-own that you could not possibly imagine it. A little bedroom with a little sitting-room with sloping-roof looking out on a back-garden; in which former is bed, & presses, washstand, fire-place, & utensil or pot, or as we say po or poe; in which latter is table, trunks, chair and easy-chair in which may I not sit perfectly secure all the evening smoking philosophical pipe? In this latter, too, I now write you: it is my palace, or as was said, my castle, home, "ain fireside," or whatever comfortable name you choose to give it. Had it some little, bright, good, loving creature of female persuasion in it to welcome me home, or still better, had it my dear old father in it, you might even name it "earthly paradise."

In this, then, I sat me last night till late, (I can read without light of lamp till about nine o'clock) and at last went to bed without hope of sleep, my light burning, on into the small hours of morning. (By the way, if any-body else that I know in the W. I. dies, any ordinary person I mean, you need not bother to mention it in your letters. A woman called Grace Wheatland used to lock me up in a dark room of Corkhill in Montserrat when I was a boy and my sisters were sick with sore-throat and I am suffering the consequences of that woman's idiotcy [*sic*] & cruelty today.) Consequently, I sleep late in the morning and am roused by a great knocking at my door: it is the old lady who has brought up my breakfast in a tea-tray, has placed it on a stand just outside my door and has knocked to give me warning of it. Stand quickly on terra firma, thou laziest one, heedless of half-opened eyes, cast around thy form thy blood-red gown, intrude thy feet into hose whose cleanness is doubtful, pray unto thy Father in secret whose hearing of thee is not doubtful—now mayest thou eat heartily frugal philosophic breakfast composed of limited bacon, & unlimited bread, coffee, Devonshire butter, and W. Indian jelly!

Whither now wilt thou tend? First, sit down all-radiant in thy blood-red and read Dickens, then Longfellow, then the Bible. Has thou done this? Then envelop thee in clothes—not of the dandy kind today in high silk hat, maroon gloves, & choking masher—but in humblest pepper-&-salt, ordinary felt & gloves too doubtful to be put on. But whither wilt thou tend? "Take us thoughts": a pleasant day is always to be spent in London if you know how. I walk for 5 mins, to the Haggerston Ry. Station, pay my 1 1/2, and fly thro' air to Broad Street; for I never feel that I have spent a day unless I go into the City. Broad St: is so called from its extreme narrowness and is about the same in breadth as the Broad St: in Bridgetown, B/dos, exemplifying an instinct in the English people to call things by their wrong names: what they call the

Opera Comique is a theatre—not an opera, what they call Covent Garden Theatre is an opera, not a theatre; what they call "pavement" is not a "pavement" but the very opposite—the only part that is a pavement (the middle of the street) they don't call so—and so on. Well, we come into "Broad St:" (not the one down Seven Dials: the one near Thread-needle) pouch & pipe in breast pocket, Longfellow in hand. What now? Why, stroll leisurely down towards thy street—the Strand, having, (before you have gone three paces) a man who leans against a wall looking into thy face & saying with all coolness—"You look well, you do." As thou passeth under it, Bennett's clock with endless hammering and fuss strikes 1. Bathe today. Stop before your New Law Courts (thy frequent place of resort by day) ascend a stair in which thou mayest behold thy form with several hats on, and take solacing warm-bath. Be honest, pay thy shilling, & depart. Now for dinner. By dint of observation and London-town-experience hast thou not discovered a retreat in the very heart of the City, even down Essex Street before New Law Courts, whither thou mayest go—and get roast beef, potatoes (all new & excellent) bread, half-bitter, apple-pie—all, all for one shilling. What though the spoon with which thou eatest thy pie be not silver! Thou philosophic Uncle!—is not the pie itself excellent—that which stands upon the torn cloth good? What carest thou for the outside of a thing, the appearance of it? Thou thyself art a reality—is it not then thy duty when thou meetest a reality to open thy arms and embrace it in very friendliness?

What now? Go and spend thy day at Aquarium, Invention Exhibition at South Kensington, Crystal Palace? Nay—thou hast done this often enough and art quite tired and sick of them. But canst thou tire of God's sky? Canst thou not stroll down to thy St. James Park, thy Green Park, and lie thee down flat upon the grass & extend thy arms like Him who was crucified for thee, looking upward into Heaven with philosophic pipe in mouth? There, peeping through the umbrageous trees

is a tower of St: Stephens, there too the Abbey, & St. Margaret's; down yonder thou canst just see the walls of Buckingham Palace & perhaps of Marlborough House, & at thy back is Carlton Terrace. Art thou not perfectly, perfectly happy? What more canst thou desire: does not thy God give thee meat & water, nay, even cause thee to gulp down tea, coffee, guk-guk (or beer), and envelop thee in clouds of tobacco smoke? Better still, does He not make thy conscience light, causing thee to feel like a free and brave man, making thee satisfied with his works—*thyself* inclusive? Consider, too, how thou in returning from this same park, passeth the very door (with the "To Let" printed on it) behind which that unaccountablest Jones sits with long struggling legs stuck crookedly beneath prosiest writing-desk all the day long beholding bare walls, gazing into the face of his fellow-prisoners (called "fellow-clerks"). While thou thyself art free and singing

"Oh Light and Love! Oh throng
Of thoughts whose only speech is song;
O Heart of Man! Canst thou not be
As light as air is & as free!"

And so walking back looking into girls' faces & smiling with them, stopping at a shop window to gaze at a particularly wicked picture of Mrs. Langtry that by this time I regard (?) as my own, buying 1/2 lb of Strawberries which I eat as I go along, I reach (by train) my "ain fireside," or house, or castle & sit to write you—utterly uncertain if tomorrow be Mail day or not.

There. I hope I have given you such a pill of a letter that you shall never be over-anxious to hear from me again. I am sure that one of the H's will never get thro' this stuff: I mean the busy one. Don't think, however, that I have got used to London without meeting some strange things: I remember the first morning I woke up at Wild's (by the way, tell Druett Wild

remembers him) Hotel. I had not become quite an Englishman yet, consequently I was not so dirty as I am now—so I wanted a bath. Call pretty little servant-maid.

Servant-maid (teeth chattering terribly) Yes sir, sir, sir, sir. Please sir, yes sir, sir, sir.

Half-green W. Indian: I want a bath—is there one on the premises.

Servant-maid (chattering): Oh yes, sir, sir—many.

Half-green Will you shew me to one, please?

S. M. Oh, sir—I will bring it in to you, sir, please, sir.

Half-green (nearly fainting with astonishment) Bring it to me! Oh-ho-oo—in the W. I. we usually go to ours, but here they seem to bring 'em to you. Very well, don't strain yourself.

S. M. Hot or Cold sir, sir, sir etc.

H. G. (in an evil moment) Cold!

What was my surprise instead of seeing her bring up a large stone bath like yours in your yard (not knowing what to expect, I half-expected that) to see her bring in a beastly little tin baisin with a tea-spoonful of ice-cold water in it, put it on the floor of my bedroom, close the door, and leave me in my horror! Shall I ever forget the miseries of that bath? Echo answers "Shall I," but I answer "No, never!" They charged me sixpence for it in the bill, tho'!

So too when my old lady first sent me in a plate of shrimps. "Now what on earth are these things!" thought I; "if they are cock-roaches (as they seem to be) I am not going to eat 'em." I was perplexed. I tried one. Liked it. It was not a cock-roach for it had a shell: but now the question arose in my mind—"do you eat the shell?" If you do, this stomach won't manage the digestion of 'em: if you don't it will take you some days to pick one out of the shell, & then you will get a piece of flesh approaching in size a pin's head. So I determined to leave them till I had acquired more experience on the subject of shrimps.

Why did neither of you write me last time? I shall write an individual letter to you yourself soon, Madame 'Gus. How are

you getting on? Behaving like a good-girl, I hope. Write me a long letter. I have been thinking of you lately: I would that even now I had a pen that could teach you the mystery and wonder of your life—teach you why thou art, and whence thou art, and, oh Heaven, whither thou tendest. Be earnest, woman!—be earnest. If thou be that, thou mayest see light yet & "learn to live." The unpardonable sin in such a life as we men live is even this,—we flit thro' it like [*incomplete*]

I, now and forever more, apply myself with what vigour, with what force, is in me. Wisdom, I tell thee, thou shalt learn—under penalties! I will try to teach thee by loving caress, sweetest midnight huggings, tenderest words-of-affection. I will try to teach thee by this, first. Or, that failing, by severe stern-browed frownings, peremptory comments or even utmost extreme "cat-o'-nine-tails!"

And thou, too, must do thy part, the chief part in fact. The heaven-given command to all men, my dear 'Gus, is even this: "Thou shalt think, thou shalt be earnest." There is work for you to do here, most certainly there is;—or why were you put here? And yet you waste away your precious life composed of only a very few minutes (or years: much the same to the philosophic earnest eye!) Doing what? Kicking against the bars which the Eternal God hath set for thee! Oh I am deeply terribly earnest when I tell thee that this must not be, at most, cannot be for very long! For hast thou not heard it said, 'Nature abhors a vacuum." It is verily true. Create a vacuum, and I can promise thee that, in time, there will be an explosion-—of some kind!

Now, I know that except you are really much worse than I think you, you will be nothing else than pleased with me for telling you what I think, for giving you what extremely poor advice lies in me. If you do [*are?*], I shall be sorry; but myself is nothing, is not to be considered as anything, only [*illegible*] of myself; what myself owe [*illegible*] ought to do.

Your prophecy with respect to my living in England will, I am afraid, be true. The C. O [*Colonial Office*] has given me a

practical refusal—"They regret etc. etc." So for the present I shall have to be content with becoming a teacher in some part of the country. I have employed a couple of teaching Agencies (one in Piccadilly, one in C. Garden) who send me to the names of people wanting teachers, & I have sent heaps of applications flying all over England. It will be easy to get a place for about £30 or £40 a year beside board & lodging. Of course, I wont settle down to that.

I have not seen your friend Mr. Jones since I first came nor Mrs. Leach (at all). They live up Willesden: the Regents' Park Way, you know.

I must stop now. When is that wondrous She-She [*nephew Cyril Horsford*] coming? Tell them all howdie.

You would like to hear about all the theatres etc. I suppose; but I really can't—not today. The best thing on now is "The Mikado" by Sullivan & Gilbert—better than Iolanthe. The bands play it at the Exhibition. But I don't go to the theatres now. First of all, I really can't afford it, and then I don't (from principle) like to give my money to the beastly class of English people who play on stages. Oh my dear England—the England I love so much! What art thou coming to? Or as Carlyle says, "Oh my bewildered brothers! What foul infernal Circe has come over you changing you from men once rather noble of their kind to asses, hogs, and beasts of the field or the slum! I declare I should rather die." ... You should [*illegible*] sentiments on the Opera! [*Illegible*] goodbye. God bless you. Love [*illegible*] yrs affectionately,

Phipps

[*Illegible*] teachership, Why not send She-She to [*illegible*] so that I can have him under my eye.

This remarkable letter[105] reflects Shiel as he may never be captured in any other record or account. Here is boyish excitement in the adventure that was London at possibly its most exciting

pinnacle of culture, science and power. Here is evidence of the ease with which Phipps was to dash off his future prose. Here is the young "preacher," instructing his sister towards some ill-formed religio-philosophical theory he was trying to grasp. Indeed, here are hints of the color, the skillful description, style and excitement with which he would imbue his fiction, including this urge to bring the Divine somehow into his work.

Here are also hints of looming financial crises, overly optimistic expectations about the ease of finding a job, and unrealistic notions regarding income and the expenses of living.

A teaching position was indeed found. On November 18, 1885, Phipps writes Gussie from Bideford Grammar School, on the far southwestern edge of Devon. This was just inland, east from the Atlantic, north of Plymouth on the southern coast. He has found employment, he tells her, but also acknowledges that he owes her "much besides letters"; and, unfortunately, he is just recovering from a case of measles, measles that threaten to leave him "puddingless." Mr. Brook, the head master, had just sat and discussed the situation at length with him, when he "was just able to crawl out of bed." The doctors thought it too "dangerous" for him to return to his pupils for the rest of the term. If Mr. Brook let him teach again and even one student came down with measles, it would be poor Mr. Brook! he told Phipps. If he let him back in the classroom, it "would have the whole town out him," since they "hate him already." He simply had to hire a new master, so Phipps must lose his recently acquired position.[106]

Shiel retained until his death a photograph of a fellow teacher, Max Fredericks and an unidentified woman at Bideford, so he must have held some degree of affection for his first teaching post at this school in Devon. (This might also have been in the vicinity of where he attended school as a boy, close to Plymouth and more accessible by ship to the Indies than other English ports, and

remindful of the location of Gussie's portrait, made at Tiverton in Devonshire. Why, and when, was she there?)

His mind is not just on the school situation, however. "Much as I would like to live among the stars, and talk of the stars and write for the stars—this indubitable fact remains: that I, M. P. Shiell, am an inhabitant of this (in some aspects) extremely commonplace Earth, and do daily eat commonplace beef and (with the assistance of certain 'mild aperient pills') even visit a laystall or 'W.C.' Strange enough! But a reduction to which every august philosopher and 'Man of Genius' is subject—this same (at least) weekly resort to said 'W.C!' Nay, even Christ himself—Christ! Christ the beautiful, the all-lovely, your supreme 'philosopher' & 'Man of Genius,' must not even he,—were it but with the assistance of 'mild (Jewish) aperient-pills!'"

This obsession of Phipps with the man Jesus would continue to dominate his thinking over the years. He continually frustrates readers by insisting that his characters seek some form of Christ-like immolation rather than a "happy" conclusion to his novels. He devoted the last ten years of his life to his study, "Jesus"—a "truer" translation of the Book of Luke with commentary.

One of the things that probably most appealed to Shiel about his second wife, Lydia Furley, was her own interest in Jesus the man. At an early point in their romance in 1909, Lydia told Phipps that she was reading E. Rénan's *Life of Jesus.* "I feel no artist—whose pictures of Him I have seen—has ever presented Him anything like He was ... fierce eyed—(at times a dark hairy type) ... I wish I could paint Him."[107]

Lydia, dark herself, tried to explain to Shiel her interest in the darkness of "Hungarian music—or see a swarthy neck & the shine of gold worn in ear. I do not know whether my mother gloated over gipsy doings or whether the cells have memories that sleep or wake in us."[108] Lydia inadvertently, perhaps, made her own contribution towards the issue of Shiel's possible ancestral roots: "I dreamed my mouth was pressed to your brown cheek."[109]

Phipps had been ready to go up from this little Devonshire town to London before now, he tells Gussie, but it is not just a matter of finances—"the old doctor won't let me go." He does not think Phipps healthy enough just yet. Whether Phipps went to London at this point is unclear, but he reported early the next year (that black 1886) that he was most happily and comfortably situated at Hunt Bridge House in Matlock, Derbyshire, in the Vale of Darwent, a region of woods and bathing spots, northwest of Nottingham.[110]

Phipps loved these small out-of-the-way country spots, but he loved London as well. Too, he intended (or so he said in the enthusiasm of the moment) to read for his B. A. degree. His responsibilities as a teacher were probably very similar to those of his instructors at Harrison College, specializing in mathematics, so he would have been familiar with the duties of an instructor. Several early photos reveal a handsome young Phipps at Hunt Bridge House. It appears that he was happy here, but something moved him on. For late in 1886, he left Mr. Leaf, his employer at Matlock, against the advice of his father (who later reminded him of this), to return to London. Exactly why, we don't know. To study medicine? Several months of his life are unaccounted for during this period.[111]

Then the winds of God thundered about him.

Of the first blow, there is only one historical remnant: a funeral card edged in black.[112] On October 10, 1886, his sister Ada died, at age 31. How he must have had a special affection for her, this sister whose name was bestowed on so many of his fictional heroines, whose name not so oddly turned up on a daughter, on a niece. There were only two of the multitudes of dead in *The Purple Cloud* that the future Adam of a new race buried: his mother and his sister, "black-haired Ada." The cause of Ada's death is unknown, but there was a constant, routine flurry of typhoid and other "fevers" and outbreaks of cholera throughout the West

Indies. Why Ada was still unmarried poses an interesting question. Was it because her father had been so insistent that the elder daughters not look at a man, as Harriet said?

Various other misfortunes arose to plague the Shiell family. Fire destroyed trading goods on Nevis as well as Matthew's ship, the "Dreadnaught."[113] Then the elder Shiell had a stroke. It was not overly serious initially, but was severe enough to affect his speech and limit his activity. He gave up all his business activities except for the operation of his small store in Plymouth. As though to further torment him, new shopkeepers offered additional competition on the impoverished island.[114]

Phipps, of course, was busily teaching school in Bideford and Matlock during this period, until he returned to London late in the fall of 1886.

Then, on the day following Christmas, 1886, Matthew Dowdy Shiell had a second stroke. He was left dumb and immobile. Not until February of 1887 was he able to write again, and even then his left side was almost completely paralyzed. Phipps had written him on the 11th of January, and his father was able to answer him on February 4, 1887.[115]

He is sorry Phipps is so despondent. (Might it have been because of his sister's death?) "I wish that you may soon be settled in another place, as one of the masters, and be as comfortable as with Mr. Leaf," he writes. He says that Gussie had been dispatched earlier to London to look into the situation of her brother, and her letters to Montserrat had led the old man to think his son had secured another position.

But on March 5, 1887, the father writes, "My own dear boy, your last letter dated 10th February has almost killed me. The fact of your being in London without money, and without employment ..."[116] (Gussie had not yet arrived.)

There is no money to send him. There is no good news at all. The father sits and writes, he describes, with "the wind blowing me

away, at the table in the hall where I am writing, although my sash and gealousy [*jalousie*] is closed ... I am suffering misery enough to kill any being, the last tooth I had is gone, put your finger into my mouth from one side to the other and you will not feel a bit of one. I have no teeth, no eyes, no feet and no hand." Everyone has left or is leaving him, he says. Sallie has been a help in the store, but she has become engaged to Mr. Killikelly, a Methodist minister from St. Vincent. At least, "both Sallie and Hagga are very sincere in their profession, and making progress toward Heaven."

"Have you given up your drawing, and Music, and how are you progressing with reference to your examn?" he asks his son. "I hope you may make out this. Take time and try."[117]

Matthew and Mr. Killikelly performed their formal dance around the engagement of the minister to Sallie two weeks later. Killikelly wrote from Chateau Bellair, St. Vincent, on March 19th, 1887, asking permission to marry Matthew's daughter "Sall" and thus become also his son.[118] "Please make my affectionate regards to Mrs. Shiell," he added, and concluded, "Yours in hope, C. Killekelly." Since both Mr. Killikelly's letter and the response from Matthew are (it appears) contemporary copies on the recto and verso of the same sheet of paper, the spelling of "Killekelly" was probably a transcription error. It may be that Matthew had these letters copied to send to Phipps.[119]

Matthew responded to Killikelly, probably with great relief and muted enthusiasm, on April 1st, 1887: "... therefore I willingly consent to your union with her in marriage." He notes that he has nothing to give but her, but she will be a good helpmeet. He also advises Killikelly to procure life insurance immediately, if he does not already have a policy. Barbados Mutual was as good as any. In between the asking and the giving of Sallie's hand in marriage, both men appear to try to outshine the other in affirming his beliefs in the principles of the West Indian Wesleyan Church.[120]

Perhaps energized by this exchange, there was slightly better news in the letter Matthew wrote Phipps on the same day (April 1, 1887). Gus had written him that she found Phipps teaching at the Anglo-French High School, Ferme Park Road, Hornsey N. Matthew is sending him a money order for £2 in care of Charles Allan, Esq., a friend of Phipps from whom he can always receive mail. One pound is from his father; the other from Harriet, the daughter Matthew called "Hagga"—a compounding of her forenames, Harriet Garry—although others in the family always called her "Harrie." "Hagga" had given piano lessons to earn the money. "I am glad to tell you that she is not going to become the concubind [*sic*] of Mr. Llewellyn, or any body else. You should not write in that style even in a joke."[121] Phipps enjoyed aggravating his parents.

As for his health, Matthew has nothing but noise of misery. There is still no circulation through his left side, he says, and he is troubled by cramps. He had been treating himself with rum and ginger and bird peppers without benefit, "and sometimes with kerosene oil." He had gone to bathe in the ocean, taking a boy to assist him, but these baths brought no relief either. "Poor me," he says. He has even lost his dog Nello, who had gone aboard ship and drowned trying to swim ashore.[122]

April 15, 1887, he writes Phipps: "I can't say that I am well pleased at your conduct towards me. I have often told you when the Mails come and I don't get a letter from you that it makes me miserable, but it appears to be of very little importance to you whether I suffer or not, as you allow so many Mails to come from time to time without a line."[123]

He didn't really intend to write this mail, he says, because Phipps had not written him recently, but Phipps's mother said, "You really love revenge." "I put my hand on my heart, and said: me, I love revenge out of Phipps, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to have such a thought." So, he had written.

"The 25th instant will be two years since I saw you last," he writes, marking the date that Phipps apparently had left Montserrat for England, on 25 April 1885.[124]

There was no relief from his suffering. Dr. Johnson had charged £15 for "dear Ada and myself" and the only benefit Matthew can see is that "may be he has helped to send her to heaven." As for himself, the doctor had prescribed a bottle of Bromide of Potassium and two small bottles of some substance with which to rub. In addition, he is taking "3 times a day Easton's Syrup, which I imported from St. Kitts, the medicine that Doctors Shannon & Rogers prescribed ... The store will be closed as soon as I can sell off." Why doesn't Gus think of her children and husband and come home, he asks.[125]

Phipps, with worries of his own, no doubt tired of this deluge of complaints. "Cher Père," he answered his father; he is sorry to hear of his sufferings, but why doesn't he read his Bible more and not complain so much. "I am afraid you don't read your Bible, man, and have forgotten about it ... Do you walk about the house complaining? ... It is most ignoble, childish, ungodly this constant talking. I am sure it is the root of most of your trouble ... Become a Silent man, and that means a true earnest man. How silent was Ada! How silent is God! His way is the sea ..." Phipps suggests that his father go one day without speaking and see how much better he will feel as a consequence.[126]

"Love to little Harrie, poor child," he says. "I hope the day will come when I shall be able to have her with me." (The 1901 British Census indicates that Harriet was four years or so older than Phipps.)

On the 24th of April, his father writes Phipps that Gus had arrived home, but had only a few minutes at the jetty to speak with him before her ship sailed on to St. Kitts, so she had little time to tell him about Phipps in detail. As a result, her father wrote her these questions that he sends on to his son:[127]

> How does he look, describe him to me? How does he seem to behave himself? Has he a good supply of clothes, and does he look decent at al times? Do you think he has improved, and is he happy? Do you think it is better for him to live in England, not because it is England, if it be so. That he could get anything to do this way? What do you think of his pretended religion, is it real? Does he attend the house of God, and Keep the Sabbath? Has he had any thing to pay for entrance fee at the University, and has it been paid? When is the examn to take place? What are his prospects for a place after the Easter vacation? How was he off for money when you left, and was he much in debt? How much money have you given him that I have to return?

Matthew apologizes for the tone of his last letter. "I hate life but dread death." Worst of all, "Even in my family I am not happy, for some who ought to please annoy and vex me, however, I won't say more on this subject, but I am the most miserable man living."

He gives Phipps details of Sallie's wedding, which is to take place the seventh of June. It will be rather quiet, with cakes, lemonade and such; no luncheon or "nine." What a difference between this wedding and Gussie's, he said. Did Phipps remember the earlier one, the large party and many carriages at Nevis?[128] "How is the mighty fallen."

Chapter Four

"I have begun writing, writing, writing"

The next eight months of Phipps's life are mirrored in the letters from his father, who probably did not let a mail go by without a letter for the son.

On May 13, 1887, Matthew writes Phipps that Gus has replied to his questions regarding him. "He looks well and has a good colour," she answered, "but has some brownish marks about his temple & forehead. He has a good many clothes but they are not all in good condition. I attended to them as well as I could when he was leaving London." (This must have been in late February 1887, as Gussie found Phipps leaving the City to teach at Hornsey, a northern suburb of London.) "He has some surge & tweed not made up. I don't think he is what you call happy, but he bears his position very well and is mostly cheerful. I think it better for him to live in England except very exceptional circumstances than out here—I mean unless something very extraordinary turned up for him [;] there he prefers doing a little than in the West Indies, and besides with a cultivated mind like his, he has there too a chance of something turning up in a place like England to his advantage. He also attends service but mostly church, and he has strong religious feelings. I can't tell how far they influence him; he also lives a very pure life and is proud of doing so." He only owed a small amount to Mr. Allan, she finished.[129]

Matthew pushes a suggestion at his son: why not go "into the Wesleyan Ministry—the best church under the sun"? He would continue to urge this.

As for Matthew's personal finances, he owes Durrant £300 that he does not see how he will ever be able to pay, particularly since he has so much competition. Mrs. Henry Dyett is keeping open the store where Mrs. William Chambers had kept hers; and Collins and Hannan are opening a store at O'Glaria House "where I was when you left here."[130] He notes that Sallie and Mr. Killikelly will honeymoon at Bethel (an estate on the eastern slopes of Centre Hills), then on to St. Vincent's, which was rather distant, south into the Windward Islands, just west of Barbados.[131]

Phipps had written his father on May 4, 1887, and on May 27 his father answered him.[132] He can't understand why Phipps does not know his own address and why he speaks of the former school where he had been located by saying "I have not definitely fixed on another but shall in a day or two." (The reason was that the term was coming to an end and Phipps did not know where he would be during the holidays. He had been teaching for room and board only.)

Soon, Matthew says, he will have to make a payment on his annual premium of £24 for life assurance, the only thing he will be able to leave his family when he dies, and he does not know how he will be able to pay it. He has no cash or credit, nothing to give Sallie as a dowry for her wedding except what little she can take from the store.

Earlier, Matthew had lamented his vexation with a member of the family. He writes Phipps unhappily on June 10, 1887:

> I am very sorry to know as I learnt from your letter of 18th ulto that I have been the cause of giving you any pain, or any unhappiness. You were right in supposing it was not Sall, or Hagga—your mother's tongue has been the cause of

> making me unhappy from time to time. She pharisees like prides herself on her religion, and if I say a word that may not be strictly right taunts and annoys me, that nothing escapes her lips but what is right. If I make a remark that no body else in the world would notice, she takes it up, till all the neighbours hear it, then when I know that every body know it, then I say what I have to say at the top of my voice, and every body know every thing that happens in my house. The paralysis has added to my bad temper and peevishness and Priscilla provokes me beyond what it is possible for Man to bear and I had to lay everything before Gus a week after her arrival, and she wrote her on the subject. My life is the most miserable life to be found in existence ... My dear boy, I must love your mother, not only for her own sake which I do, but I love her for all of your sakes for I love all of you.[133]

Sall is now married, he says. "All the respectable people in the island were there."[134] Who Matthew thought the "respectable people" on Montserrat were in 1887 is unknown, although they must have been a mixture of different shades of black and white, all of modest means since there was no other, perhaps the "professional class" of Montserrat, and, in the eyes of the Shiell family, good church-goers of the Wesleyan faith.

He is sending a piece of wedding cake, as good a cake as baked in England! On June 24 he writes that he has given the cake to Mr. Watt, "who you wanted to practice Chemistry" with, for he is going to England and can mail the cake in London.

He is also sending Phipps a pound he has borrowed from Lizzie Chambers and advises him to have his "Surge & Tweed" made up. Also sending a Montserrat *Watchman* in which Phipps can see something of the wedding. When Phipps writes he doesn't recognize a certain lady in the wedding picture, his father informs him it is Phipps's old sweetheart, Miss Florrie Wall.[135]

On July 6, 1887, Matthew writes that he is leaving that night on Mr. George Irish's vessel, the "Georgenianna," (a very fine ship with every imaginable convenience and piece of equipment), to spend two days on St. Kitts. On the 8th he writes (in a note included in his letter of July 6) that he will "call on Calle" (if that's the name) for the papers Phipps desires. Gus and family are all well. Sallie is on Barbados.[136]

Phipps's birthday arrived as usual on the 21st of July 1887, and his father wrote him that day with apologies for not having mentioned it in advance.[137] He sends a "P-O-D." for £2 as a gift and suggests yet again that Phipps have his "Surge & Tweed" made up. Has he given up his B.A. completely? He is very sorry to have received Phipps's letter dated June 29 in which Phipps had written "your poor son is in a very miserable condition ... ragged clothes ... some weeks before I came here I was almost dying of starvation and was forced to borrow money so I am in debt £5." His situation had been so bad, he went on, that his communion with God had been interrupted.

Matthew could not help but reminisce. "I remember that of all the young men in this island, from Mr. George Irish, your pecuniary prospects for ease and comforts were better than any body I know when you were born. Could I have believed that my son would have had to put some of his books into a hat box and walking in the street of a strange country to try to sell them ..."[138]

Further, he is outraged at what he learns of the "wages" that Phipps has received: "Fine thing for my boy to be working for what I can't get a negro here to do for me."

He'll pay the £5 for Phipps if it has not been paid in five months. "Have you given up the idea of the Colonial examination, and appointment? You must try." Or, better yet, why not go into the ministry? He can't advise him to come home, but if Phipps so wants he will do the best he can to arrange passage.

In the meantime, he is sending Phipps some clothing from the store: four white shirts, three under-shirts like he wears himself (not

the best "red" that he had sent before), brown socks, handkerchiefs with coloured borders, towels, two night-shirts of cotton, the pair of boots he had worn at the time of his stroke, a broad cloth vest and two white ones; but he has no marine drawers to send.[139]

August 19, 1887: Phipps had written he needed employment. Again, his father mentions coming home, "but I know how prejudice the people in the West Indies are."[140] Has the memory of that wild coronation on Redonda come back to haunt him? Or does this suggest a racial or social matter, perhaps discomfort that Phipps has such lighter skin than the majority of the islanders? Or would his return home simply have indicated failure?

Matthew's health remains the same: mustard plasters have done no good. "I bought 2 leeches, and Moro Shiell put them on one of my legs. I bled much, but there has been not the slightest improvement." (Moro Shiell's relationship to Matthew is unknown.)[141]

Augusta, knowing Phipps better than his father, has suggested a new tact: she has encouraged him to commence writing. Responding to her from Guildhall Library, 13 Southampton St., Pentonville N., on August 24, 1887, Phipps notes changes in his address.[142]

> You see from the top that I have changed my address again; so constantly am I shuffled hither and thither, seemingly without aim or purpose. Now it is at Kingsland—presently it is at Holborn—then it is at Pentonville—then it is at West Kensington. Ah, do you remember our West Kensington domicile, selected by G's own discrimination? And what the devil was the name of that woman I lived with who used to speak as if her windpipe was a mile up in the air?—Giles, Grimes, was it? I forgit (as Allan would say) the damned woman's name. [*"Allan" is probably the Charles Allan, to whom MDS directs his letters to Phipps.*]
>
> She was very good to me tho' I must say, and used to get me apricot jam in plenty. Ah, I was a gentleman in those days!
>
> Do you remember how I used to go over to Miss Bellot's,

on my way to the City to get my dinner (!!!) at a certain restaurant, with that damned (excuse all these 'damned's': I am in a peculiar mood, and it seems to relieve me) that damned silk hat stuck on the top of my head? "Uncle is quite a swell today," they would say, at which Uncle would smile blandly, feeling not displeased. Ah, it is a foolish little goose's life, this of ours. We are a lot of little pigs. I tell you truly, Gussie, sometimes I get beastly sick of you, and myself, and all the rest of us. We are such little pigs! Consider it well and tell me, are we not?

That cursed "Madame" has got launched. I copied it out, and they took it at the Family Herald office, but goodness knows what they are going to give me for it. [*It is not clear whether this was a new work, or the earlier story he had written in the West Indies.*] Now let me tell you something that you don't know: the way that all such things are done now, it is not selling direct to the people who want to buy: but by joining, becoming a member of some 'Literary Agency' of which there are several; or better still by employing some Private Literary Agent to sell it for you: but this requires in the former case a sov [*sovereign*], and in the latter some three sovs. It is in this way that all these great pots seem to sell their things. Later on, I, too—! Meanwhile, you have kindled a most strange fire in me; I have begun writing, writing, writing. Most strange! Writing ever—for its own sake, as if I couldn't stop. Most unaccountable, dangerous!"

As far as social London goes, Mary Anderson will arrive in a week or so; there is a new photo of Mrs. Langtry and the Princess of Wales; there was a great fire in Gray's Inn Road the evening before, at which he had been present "in a great crush and crowd"; and

Rider Haggard is the great pot as a novelist now, and you cannot live without hearing & seeing his name. "Two lovely black eyes, oh what a surprise!' is the song you will hear from

> all men, women and children in the streets at present. And, lastly,—I have no more room, and, bowing with my hand on my heart, must therefore retire for this time.

The song, "Two Lovely Black Eyes," was a favorite of the English music halls and an indication, too, of how seriously the Englishman took his politics.[143] Phipps's mention of the song is another indication of his frequent attendance at such venues, his attention to what was occurring in the popular cultural scene, and his willingness to share news of it all with his relatives on islands far away.

TWO LOVELY BLACK EYES
By Charles Coburn

Strolling so happy down Bethnal Green
This gay youth you might have seen,
Tompkins and I, with his girl between,
Oh! what a surprise!
I prais'd the Conservatives frank and free,
Tompkins got angry so speedilee,
All in a moment he handed to me,
Two lovely black eyes!

Next time, I argued I thought it best,
To give the conservative side a rest.
The merits of Gladstone I freely pressed, when
Oh! what a surprise!
The chap I had met was a Tory true,
Nothing the Liberals right could do,
This was my share of that argument too,
Two lovely black eyes!

The moral you've caught I can hardly doubt
Never on politics rave and shout,
Leave it to others to fight it out, if
You would be wise
Better, far better, it is to let,
Lib'rals and Tories alone, you bet,
Unless you're willing and anxious to get,
Two lovely black eyes!

CHORUS:
Two lovely black eyes!s
Oh! what a surprise!
Only for telling a man he was wrong,
Two lovely black eyes!

In September 1887, Phipps's father is still considering arrangements for the boy to come home.[144] He really can't afford it, he writes, even though Phipps evidently had expressed a half-wish to return to Montserrat. Matthew says he will write Sammie (Horsford) and see if passage can be arranged on one of the Hoult Steamers.

He chastises Phipps for using "profane and sinful" language; that must not be in his letters again. (Phipps had called someone named "Larsen" a "damned person.") He is having a "likeness" made for his son (10 September), but Priscilla will not consent to sit for a picture, on account of an eye problem. "She has her hand on it from morning till night," Matthew says, and she cannot give up rubbing it. His miserable health is the same; the doctor has suggested electricity, sea baths, and massage, but "I can't find what massage is."[145]

He is sending, besides the clothing mentioned above, the pair of "gold sleeves buttons that dear Ada left for you." And he suggests again that Phipps go to his own creditors, Durrant and Company, 30 Great St. Helens, for assistance if necessary.

Matthew will turn 63 years old on September 18, 1887, he reminds his son.[146] Later in the month he goes to Gingerland on Nevis, hoping the warm baths there will help his "circulation." On September 28, he writes Phipps that he had been glad to hear that his son again had employment.[147] Phipps's tenure at Anglo-French School evidently had come to an end, although on August 1, 1887 the head master had written out the following document for Shiel: [148]

The Anglo-French
High School
Ferme Park Rd.
Hornsey, N.
Aug 1st 1887

I, the undersigned Principal of the above hereby certify that Mr. M. P. Shiell has been Junior Assistant Master here since March last and is still with me having charge of the Holiday Class. He is conscientious in the dispatch of his duties and is well educated. His knowledge of English History and Language, of Mathematics & Classics is especially good.

(Signed) L. W. Lennard

Although Phipps again had employment, his father was "sorry to hear that you have degenerated so much, as you said in your last, as to board with that woman and to have such companions." Do better, he said; be economical; pinch each penny. Try to get books to read for his B.A., perhaps from a library. Try not to be stuck up and proud.[149]

On October 28, Matthew sends Phipps a pound in yet another attempt for him to have a suite of Blue surge and a suite of Tweed & Black pant made up; the money was for this purpose only, he specified. In addition, he is sending all the necessary material: broad cloth for pant, four yards of Tweed for a jacket; also, two used towels, handkerchiefs and under-shirts. (This preoccupation

with having a suit sewn and sending Phipps the necessary material may relate to what appears to have been the early apprenticeship of Matthew as a tailor.)

Nowadays, he opens the store in the morning and closes in the evening without taking in a penny, he writes. "I never expect to see you again." Strokes come in threes, he believes, and he awaits his third.[150]

November 11: nothing to write about except the old story of theology; he is very poor, without money for postage; he must pay £5. 14. 9 on his life assurance or lose it, but he has thirty days grace. He has been drinking rum with gin and half a tumbler of milk. A number of people have been poisoned from the fish they've eaten. "Have you ever fell in with any West Indians?" he asks Phipps. "Try to make friends." Above all, "Dread a bed of sickness."[151]

As though forewarned, the elder Shiell learns in Phipps's next letter that the boy had been ill with fever. He wasn't surprised, he tells Phipps, because an old woman had dreamed she had seen Phipps out in the cold London streets without a coat.[152]

On November 25, 1887, Matthew writes, "I was more than sorry to see the piece of paper that you enclosed from the Editor of the Family Herald. He said that the style and plot are not suited for the F. H. What does he mean? You would not write any thing that the most modest lady would blush to read."[153]

He is glad to hear that Phipps intends to read for his B.A., but he wishes that he would give more thought to becoming a Methodist "Parson." Also, he will pay the £3 to Mr. Irish that Phipps owes him. Sall is "in the way," he reports, good news that, but this will be the poorest Christmas since long before he owned the "Gold Hunter."[154]

Matthew's letter dated December 9, 1887, is the last that MPS had in his personal archives. It is quite dismal. He is afraid to ride his friend Blake's mare and is too poor to buy his own; he has been in the sea only once in three weeks and his business is a mockery.

There is a heavy Northerly blowing. He is sorry for Phipps's "unfortunate 'Madam' and 'Day.'" He has no money to send, but has sent his "likeness."[155]

The church record book for "Burials in the Parish of St. Anthony in the island of Montserrat" notes the burial of Matthew D. Shield [*sic*] on January 7th, 1888.[156]

Harriet Shiell wrote her niece Olive a stark picture of the final years and days of the life of her father. "Some of your questions re my ancestors are beyond me, and cannot be answered, but my Dad's illness and death are indelibly fixed in my memory. For several years before his death he suffered from partial paralysis. I was his nurse. For he used to think that no one massaged his arm like Hagga. His death was rather sudden in the end, not more than a few days serious illness. But what a death! It nearly killed me because I was the only one left with him and I would not leave him even for a minute. He had fits all the time, fit after fit for several days with only half an hour between each one till the end came on my birthday the 7th."

The identity of Sallie's child, born in 1888, following her father's death, is uncertain. What little evidence there is suggests that she had a son, Carlton, and a daughter, Ada Catherine. Carlton was probably the elder of the two.

Carlton's address in the 1922 lease of the Plymouth property was listed as Toronto and his occupation as "Printer." Harriet's 1944 Will lists him at 448 W. 40 St., NYC, but the codicils to Harriet's will of 1945 omit his name.

Ada Catherine Killikelly (later Manchester) sent a photo of herself and "Miss Blake" to her Uncle Phipps from Montserrat, but her note is undated and the photo has disappeared. In the lease of the Plymouth property to the Royal Bank of Canada in 1922, Ada Catherine Manchester of Sandy Point, St. Kitts is identified as a "married woman with a separate estate." The date that Ada married and when her daughter Kathleen was born is not known. In

1927, Harriet wrote Olive that Ada "is quite well," but she soon wrote Phipps that Ada was extremely ill and sent him a copy of a prescription to be filled for her. She told Olive that "Kathleen is a nice little girlie, only she does not speak prettily—I used to tell her of her three little cousins in England who spoke very nicely and she got very interested in those little cousins, Olive and Muriel and Nella."

In a long letter to Olive from Montserrat on February 2, 1932, Harriet said to her: "Now about Kathleen, remember will you, that it is about eighteen months since I last saw her, and that would make a world of difference in a growing child, but Alice Manchester (her new mother) passed here last week on her way to Barbados to get her passport to New York for an operation told me that Kathleen is growing, a sharp sensible little girl and is Ada re-produced—unfortunately the little thing is very delicate and by the doctor's order must not be rushed ... [*into school*] Her father is simply devoted to her—he is rather tall, very slim and fair with blue eyes—yet not good-looking, his hair is what you would call 'wicked,' but out here call it bad. He is a reading man and intellectual and speaks in public some times—(not such an orator though as his brother Jim, whose speech your Ma never forgot—) and though he is an Anglican he is sometimes honored by being asked to be chairman of our missionary meetings. I must have told you that he was here with me for over twelve months, sent by the Bishop to restore the Church destroyed by the hurricane and the Church now finished is considered a master-piece of work ..."

Ada Killikelly Manchester has apparently died, and her husband has remarried. Harriet told Phipps in 1941 that the Honorouble Tom Manchester was an executor of her estate, so he must have been Kathleen's father. His brother Jim appears to have been in the islands longer than Tom who came to work on restoring the church.

Kathleen sent a Christmas card (neither dated or franked) to her Uncle Phipps from Toronto, and her slender-faced features are

known from a photograph she sent him at some unknown date, although likely during the war. Her photo suggests a brown-skinned West Indian heritage; her greeting to her Uncle Phipps is written in French: "Toujours à toi! Kathleen."

Harriet wrote Phipps on 19 June 1942 (from Sandy Point, St. Kitts) that Kathleen was still in the Government service. (Probably in Toronto?) She says that Kathleen's "Dad is not yet better, he has been very ill indeed."[157]

Harriet added codicils to her Will in 1945 so as to leave parts of her estate to Kathleen and to Olive Josephine Horsford, as well as Phipps. Miss Winifred Manchester ("Spinster"), of St. Kitts (possibly Kathleen's aunt) and J. C. L. Wall of Plymouth were named Trustees on the 29th September 1945. (Wall was a relative of Phipps's "sweetheart" of years ago, Miss Florrie Wall.) Harriet also named Winifred as her attorney. Kathleen's father probably died during his illness of 1942 since he was no longer mentioned in Harriet's affairs.

This is all we know of Sallie Shiell Killikelly's family, her husband, son Carlton, daughter Ada and granddaughter Kathleen. They join Augusta's family in a faded past, sister Ada in an earlier tomb, and Harriet most certainly "a Methodist saint" as Phipps named her long ago.

Chapter Five

"... an island in the sea of London"

M. P. Shiel's own account of these years is typically brief, undoubtedly inaccurate in many respects, and varies a bit in his several short autobiographical retellings. "Then after my coronation I was translated to King's College, London: now matriculation and 'intermediate'; about the time of my degree my father dying; and during all that alumnus-period I seem to have quite abandoned writing English ... But when I had taught for a year what was called 'mathematics' in a Derbyshire school, I thought of following my namesake James Phipps Shiel, and becoming a doctor; this thought kept me at St. Bart's six months, whereupon, coming directly, every day, in contact with science, I was done with writing—or reading!—Greek poetry, except the old Homer, to whom one may so easily get addicted. But the very first operation which I saw was for strabismus—on the eyeball—and this so sickened and hypnotized me into a dislike for knifing, that I gave it up."[158]

Although Phipps had passed the matriculation examination with honors, after three tries, for the University of London in January 1884, there is no evidence that he ever paid an admission fee or attended classes on a formal basis. However, his presumed exaggeration concerning a degree and attendance at King's College might have more truth in it than has always been assumed. The following account is somewhat reinforced by a

signed contemporary portrait of Phipps in the Shiel Archives at Texas marked "King's College, Strand."

Mike Barrett wrote Reynolds Morse on July 4, 1979 that he had interviewed the Archivist at King's College (text revised by Morse):[159]

> I got to see Mr. H. A. Harvey, the Archivist at King's College today. He let me have a Photostat of Shiel's article, "'Long Tots' and Languages" from *The King's College Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1929 Centenary Issue, p. 18. (This was referred to by Charlesworth Ross who was chief editor of the magazine at the time, in his article "The First West Indian Novelist" (*Caribbean Quarterly*, University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica, December, 1968. p. 56) where he said: "The second shortest contribution—it was ruthlessly pruned by one of my co-editors—was on 'Long Tots' and Languages by M. P. Shiel. 'Long Tots' turned out to be columns of figures which one adds up in a mechanical way by force of habit.") The article is very short, but it does go a little way toward solving what is something of a mystery.
>
> Archivist Harvey could find no trace at all of Shiel ever having attended the College, let alone obtaining a degree there. However in 'Long Tots' mention is made of an examination for a 'Student Interpreter.' This set bells ringing in the noted archivist's mind. A bit of digging unearthed that at one time—for about ten years—a body called King's College Civil Service Department was attached to the college and located in the basement there. Originally this was an independent college situated at Waterloo. In order to gain credibility and respectability, they asked to be affiliated and to share their premises in a more prestigious part of London. At that time King's was imposing and collecting a levy of 5% of salaries paid, and so it was delighted at the idea of the extra revenue. Hence King's College Civil Service Department came into being.

This part of the College dealt with Student Interpreterships, normally for Government posts in China and the Far East. This ties in with what Shiel says in the article. We uncovered some frail calendars detailing some examination results, but alas there was no mention of Shiel. This department eventually became an independent college again in the 1900s. It is now defunct these many decades, and Mr. Harvey thought that any records which might have been kept are now destroyed.

In Shiel's time, an education at King's tended to be something of a status symbol. Thus archivist Harvey felt that the author might have claimed a King's College education, even though the Civil Service Department was only peripherally associated with the college proper, and for a short time. Thus the fact could be (as it was in other cases) that Shiel DID go to King's College, but that is only part of the story. Mr. Harvey also felt that the records just might be in error—unlikely, but possible. But the simple fact is that so far there is no record whatsoever of any matriculation or exams.

In substantiation of this marginal association with King's College, Mr. Harvey told me that some years ago in doing some research that Arnold Bennett had always been looked upon as one of the many distinguished ex-students of the college. Yet Mr. Harvey found that the venerable Mr. Bennett had in fact attended only one lecture a week (in French) and for less than two terms! This case may be indicative of what happened with our Mr. Shiel.

The text of this brief essay by Shiel, "'Long Tots' and Languages," written in 1929 for the Centenary Issue of *King's College Review*, provides in his own words the most forthright story that he was ever to tell about his college education:

My last experience of "that schoolboy spot we ne'er forget, though there we are forgot," ("the tenderest thing ever said,"

> Robert Louis Stevenson said to me one night at Roche's in Soho) was in connection with the examination for a government appointment as a "Student Interpreter" (in the East for which I seem to have considered myself the right kind of person. One had to "know"—was it seven languages? or five? And I suppose I must have "known" these languages, whose very names I have now forgotten, for my King's coach told me that I was certain of being appointed. But there is (or was) an elementary examination preliminary to the pièce de résistance: and some days beforehand my coach said to me: "I suppose you are all right in regard to long tots?" I asked him "What are long tots?" On which he looked reproachfully at me: "You don't know? Then it is no good—you won't pass the preliminary: no one can do them without practice." He explained that "long tots" are columns of figures which one adds up in a mechanical way by force of habit. So I did not go in for the exam: "long tots" had rescued me, and I can remember a feeling of relief that was mixed with my dismay.
>
> I do not consider that my education had then commenced—except the education of my memory. Five languages! perhaps seven: I had been made into a remembering machine, untrained to think a thought. It was afterward that I turned to study science; and I hear rumours of King's acquiring a fame in science. This is heartening, for the others will follow.[160]

Phipps had already alluded to his difficulty with "long tots" when he ventured the answers (in his voice as O'Malley Phipps) in the "Premier & Maker" conversation in *Shapes in the Fire*:

> 'What can you not do?'
>
> 'I cannot spin a top.'
>
> 'Proceed.'
>
> 'I cannot add up rows of figures, nor comprehend the money columns in newspapers.'

To this one can add a fictional episode that echoes life in *The Invisible Voices*, where Shiel describes how a character, Whip, "one evening had an impulse to step aside from the Strand into King's College, where he was guided down to an underground room, and there Ransom sat undergoing coaching [*reading for Student Interpreterships*]. Whip suggested dining ... but Ransom, no diner-out, smiled, answering 'Perhaps you don't know what long tots are? —rectangles of figures to be added up: one can't, if not in practice; they are in my preliminary exam.'"[161]

There is a question as to not only when but also where Phipps's participation in this program of the King's Civil Service Department occurred. In 1875 the government extended the range of entry examinations to the Civil Service, and an agreement was reached with King's College to use rooms for the programs. Among training for "boy clerkships" and "boy copyistships" a Civil Service Department was established to offer also preparation for excise and customs appointments among others. As more programs were added, additional room was needed for these "commercial" activities and premises were added at 4 Albion Place, Blackfriar's Bridge, and then 91A Waterloo Road. It was not until 1897 when King's College School moved to Wimbleton that the commercial school moved into the basement of King's College and became known as the Strand School. It seems apparent from Phipps's reference in "Premier and Maker" that his fortunes with long tots occurred sometime earlier than 1896—which one would expect from the other tracks of his career. Thus, he could have "attended" King's College at the original location of the Civil Service Department within the College, possibly at one of the subsequent expansion locations, but never at the basement level off the Strand.[162]

Charlesworth Ross, the "co-editor" of the Centenary issue of the *King's College Review* in which Shiel's essay on long tots appeared told later how his duties included soliciting contributions for it from alumni and others. Shiel, he said, seemed uncertain of

what was wanted and invited Ross to come visit him to explain. Ross says he found Shiel living on a civil list pension in an "almshouse" near Horsham, "old and feeble." After a lengthy visit, Ross was surprised, he said, to discover that one of Shiel's sisters had married his grandfather, and thus was his great-uncle. By 1968, when Ross wrote this essay on "The First West Indian Novelist," he had become a prominent political figure in the West Indies, having served in public office in Antigua and as commissioner of Montserrat. Most of his essay is about himself with what he briefly wrote about Shiel being chiefly an error-prone rehash of what had already been written about him.[163]

Either Ross or Shiel could have been mistaken, or correct, in Ross's understanding of a relationship to Shiel. Samuel Horsford would have had to be the grandfather who married Phipps's sister Augusta, and Muriel is the only Shiel niece whose age and unknown state of matrimony might have allowed for marriage to a Ross. But it seems impossible—as do so many things in Shiel's life!—that Ross (who was born in 1910) could have gone twenty years without his mother telling him that Shiel, with whom she had been close since childhood, was her uncle.

There is something fishy about Ross's account of his visit with Phipps, who was neither elderly nor feeble at the time, had just moved into L'Abri, a nice little cottage, not an almshouse, and did not receive a pension until 1935. There is no evidence of Muriel having married. She was still alive into the World War, when her building was twice bombed, so it seems impossible that she would have had a son in 1910 to whom she never revealed his relationship to her uncle, a rather prominent author. If Ross had any relationship to the family, it is more likely that it developed from his grandfather's marriage to some other Shiell family relative on St. Kitts or Antigua, not a sister of Phipps.

Phipps's "rescue" by long tots is probably as close to an examination at King's College as he ever got. But it appears to be the

most accurate representation of his college experience than has ever been documented elsewhere. Similarly, observing an operation at St. Bart's may have been as close as Phipps got to medical training, although he might have been able to spend time on an informal basis sitting in on lectures for the six-month period he claimed. (As noted earlier, the credibility of Shiel's dining with Stevenson seems highly questionable given that there simply seems no time when this could have happened before Stevenson left England for good in 1887.)

In following Phipps's calendar from late 1887 into the early years of his regular literary production, about 1891, only a few events are on record. In August 1887 he wrote Gussie that "Madame" had been submitted to the *Family Herald.*[164] In December his father wrote him that he was sorry about the fate of his "Madam" and "Day."[165] These undoubtedly allude to stories sent out and rejected. There are the additional specific references to "Madame" and its rejection by the *Family Herald.* However, "Day" must be added to other stories by Phipps whose fate is unknown.

He never explained why he began to use the briefer spelling of his name. The name of Richard Lalor Shiel, as author and supporter of Ireland's laboring class, was a familiar one to editors of the day and might have played a part in the choice of this spelling by Phipps. Suggestions that he changed the spelling because of some scandal or legal problem make little sense. The shortened spelling does little to hide the old.

His first published story, "The Doctor's Bee," was winner of a twenty-shilling prize, and appeared in *Rare Bits* on December 18, 1889.[166] It is a rather inane tale of an unusual doctor (with a West Indian background) who shoots at Negroes, builds a college to teach science, and accidentally poisons himself with a deadly gas. Phipps was living at 98, De Beauvoir Road, Southgate Road, Kingsland on the day this story was published. He must surely have had some source of income during the period, 1888–1890,

but there is virtually no documentation to suggest what it might have been. Probably, the Horsfords.

He possibly attended the interpreter program at King's College, and may have sat through lectures at St. Bart's, during this period to 1890. This could have helped ease him into his role as interpreter to the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography in 1891. This 7th such congress, August 10–17, was the first to be held in London.[167]

It is likely that he began to scratch away in several ways to find an entrée into the publishing world. The editorial position that he held with *The Messenger*, as described below, must have occurred during the period 1891–1892.

Shiel, himself, in that all too brief autobiographical sketch, "About Myself," describes how he gave up the study of medicine after watching that first operation and

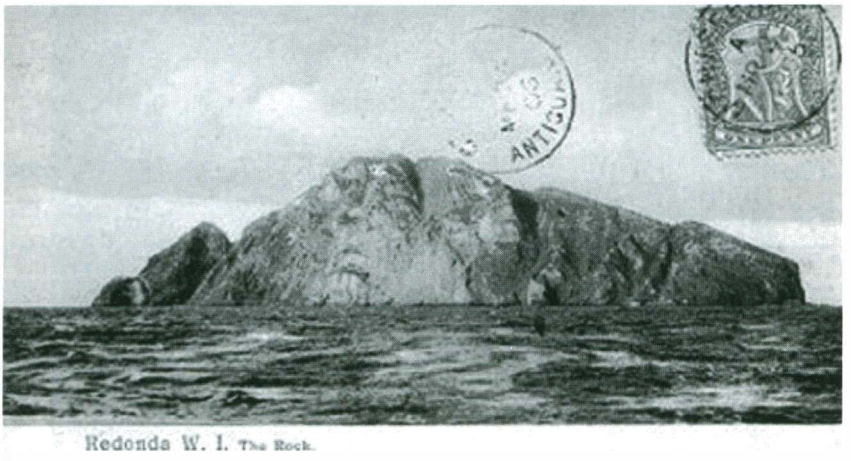
> ... lying idle one day, gazing at the sky was given the idea to write my 'Prince Zaleski" ... Then, on writing more, I decided that writing English—my first love—was what was given me to do. I soon had no lack of interests. Through Sir Ernest Clarke, of the Royal Agricultural Society, whom I had known, I was appointed interpreter to the Congress; through Sir William Robinson and my brother-in-law, the Hon. S.L Horsford, I was brought in contact with Earl Gray and with Sir Alexander Harris, of the Colonial Office (later Governor of Newfoundland), through whom again I came into relation with Mrs. Gladstone, a very gracious lady, connected with the West Indies, who at that time took no little interest in my writing, and profoundly influenced my goings and comings; through this again W. T. Stead got to know me, conceived that I "had an imagination," and would write to me invitingly when one of his rapturous ideas in journalism attacked and urged him—he and I even writing a wild little "book" in

Augusta Shiell Horsford, ca. 1880

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin

Cyril Horsford, London, ca. 1890

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin



Isle of Redonda

Harrison College ca. 1880

Sallie Shiell ca. 1887

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin

collaboration; at the same time I was coaching my nephew, Cyril Horsford.[168]

Shiel soon discovered that editors were not necessarily interested in the original work of a creative literary stylist. Instead, he found that if one wanted to be published it was easier to sell hackwork to the hungry penny papers than the most brilliant, sharp and scintillating results of one's imagination to more resplendent publications. So he soon put his knowledge of several languages to work. In February of 1891 *The Strand* published, without credit, his translation of Jules Claretie's now-famous little story "Slap Bang." In June, the same magazine published Phipps's translation, again without credit, of "A Torture of Hope" by a writer much more akin to his own nature—Villiers de l'Isle Adam, another follower of Poe, best known for his *Contes Cruels*, short stories almost heartless in their sardonic horror.

There is no indication whether Shiel proposed the translation of the story or whether an editor of *The Strand* suggested it. Although Villiers de Lisle Adam had been dead for two years, the notes about him that accompany the story indicate that he was still alive. So it is likely that Shiel translated the story before Villiers died in 1889. Unless there were copyright problems, more of his stories would seem to have been of interest to *Strand* readers and to Shiel for additional translation duties. It is likely that in addition to his known translations there are other unrecorded translations by Shiel scattered among the penny papers and literary magazines of the early 1890s.

The translation of this story may well have turned Phipps towards darker work than the more family-oriented stories that characterized much of his out-put, aimed at the available markets. Elements of the supernatural would begin to show up in his stories, beginning with "Huguenin's Wife."

Shiel's appointment as interpreter to the afore-mentioned congress in 1891 probably made it financially possible for him to continue his writing, for after another year his feet were fairly solidly planted down a professional path of literary pursuit. The only other significant thing, other than pay, that could be said for his experience as interpreter to the Congress was that it gave him an opportunity to associate with Florence Nightingale.[169]

Sometime during this period Phipps worked for a while assisting the editor of *The Messenger*, a weekly paper devoted to financial and racing news, with an office in the Hotel Victoria (constructed 1890). This episode is described briefly in fictional form in his novel, *The Weird 'o It*, the most autobiographical of his novels. Here the paper is called *The Gadfly* and the proprietor is K—. Almost half a century later, Shiel places this person in *The Invisible Voices* and gives him his correct name, Coward: "olive—dark-elfin face, hair black, with some silver in - horsey," much the same description as in *The Weird o'It*. He includes also the fictional description of the character Jack Hay's responsibilities that so closely matches some of the actual work that Shiel had done for *The Strand* in 1891. Jack Hay, in the novel, describes himself as "secretary" to K—, going to work in the hotel at ten every morning, returning home between five and ten p.m.[170]

From the novel: "Sometimes he could not but smile a sad smile penciling his articles. One feature of *The Gadfly* was a series called 'Jolly Good Fellows'—biographies with a portrait—and these he 'did,' having first to hunt for an old biography in little back-street rooms of Fleet Street. Dusty queer places piled with paper rags, and by hook or crook procure a portrait somewhere, evading copyrights. Then, in the tones of an old chum, he would write of names never before heard—lord mayors, lawyers, ship-owners: and once, when K— and Lady M— were spending the week at Monte Carlo, Jack in a memorable issue compared the owner of *Tit-Bits* [*Sir George Newnes*] with Napoleon."[171]

John Gawsworth added a brief note on the verso of the April 17, 1892 letter referenced below, about Coward and *The Messenger* in such a way that suggests that Phipps's contribution to the paper was "no stories / biography / Sir George Newnes." Whether this sketch of Newnes, like those he produced for *The Strand*, was the total of what Phipps actually wrote for the paper is not clear. He could have simply been an editorial assistant and not have written more than racing news (dictated by Coward) and faked-up financial advice on business investments, twenty little articles a week, he said, "all beginning with the same old phrase: 'This company was formed in order to ...'"[172]

It was apparent that he admired Newnes who had created a revolution, and accumulated a fortune, in the English popular press, introducing *Tit-Bits* in 1881, following it with *The Millions.* Aimed at the lower middle-class of the English reading public, the 500,000 weekly sales of the one-penny *Tit-Bits* lead to the rapid introduction of rivals such as *Answers* and *Pearson's Weekly.* Then Newnes moved competition up a major notch by creating *The Strand* in 1891 for a wealthier, higher class of reader.[173]

Phipps translated all the jokes for the March 26, 1892 issue of *The Million.* On April 17, 1892, he offered a short story (probably to Morris Colles who became his literary agent) entitled "Two Fogs." There were "5500 words—which I think should sell. For all my stories I will take 30 shillings per 1000 words—for the present at least." In the same letter, he inquired: "I suppose there is no news of 'Maddelena's Lover' yet?"[174] (The story never turned up.) In June 1892 *The Strand* published another brief sketch by Shiel, "Miss Lily Hanbury," in its series on people of interest in the news.

In September 1892 (the 21st) Shiel wrote Colles (from 41 Coldbath Chambers, Roseberry Avenue, E.C.): "I herewith send you another story called '3 Men & a Girl,' which I think will hit the mark. I notice that you did not acknowledge receipt of 'The

Eagle's Rock' according to your wont, but I suppose you got it all right. Is it likely to sell?"[175]

During much of 1892 Shiel lived at Coldbath Chambers and here (according to John Gawsworth) he wrote the Zaleski stories, and as noted above, "Eagle's Rock," "Three Men and a Girl," "Two Fogs" and possibly other short stories. He then moved to Rugby Chambers in Bedford Road late in the year where he lived until sometime in 1896.[176]

Just as Shiel recorded in fictional fashion his work at *The Messenger* in his novel, *The Weird o'It*, a number of readers and Ernest Dowson scholars have observed his reference to Dowson in the book. "This B— was a poet in a small, but very select, way, well known in certain so-called 'literary circles: a fellow who, with his like at the time, kept night-hours, awoke at 7 p.m., drank deep, died young, and associated as comrades with the commonest people." The character B— had been jilted by a 15-year old waitress, "and had written to the girl a poem, more exquisite, in our opinion, than anything done by Horace." The poem, of course, was "Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae," or more briefly, just "Cynara":

> I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
> Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
> Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind; But I was
> desolate and sick of an old passion,
> Yea, all the time, because the dance was long;
> I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

The two characters drink "bovee' (a strong coffee with the taste of bovril) in a green cabmen's shelter, and B— took Jack Hay to an upstairs room "in a mean house in Rosomon Street, Clerkenwell" where he can spend the night with friends of B— to avoid the police.[177]

This fictional episode occurred in the general vicinity of Gray's Inn Road. Too much, however, can be made of fiction. Dowson's famous poem, "Cynara," was written in 1891 when his object of virginal love was only eleven. Dowson scholars tend to agree that Shiel and Dowson shared quarters in a boarding house briefly, not in the early 90s, but in early 1898 at 1 Guilford Place. The editors of Dowson's collected letters say, "He made one new friend at this time, M. P. Shiel. Having been an interpreter at the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography, Shiel was beginning to make a name as a writer. He stayed with Dowson in his lodgings in Guilford Place ... and they used to dine together frequently at the Dîner Français."[178]

The occurrence of this sharing of quarters by Dowson and Shiel continues to puzzle. Shiel was in France almost constantly during the early part of that year, while Dowson was at Guilford Street. Perhaps this is another instance of presumed fact proceeding from fiction.

In reading further in the "London" chapter of *The Weird o'It*, the section that includes Dowson is so vivid with its description of the "mean house in Rosomon Street, Clerkenwell," where Dowson's character took Jack Hay for a place to sleep, that one can believe the rooms and characters were once real to Shiel: the Great Northern Goods-porter, "Fred," on his way to work in the early shift, and "in the bed a cat, and a girl of nineteen—Mary, Fred's wife, an Irish Cockney, black-haired, gray-eyed—who flippantly lifted her head, said 'Hello,' and went to sleep again."

Jack Hay is alerted that "a new acquaintance is the delight of Fred, for in such is the prospect of Beer. He who gives 2d. for beer may freely take Fred's ox, ass, wife, and everything that is Fred's ... Not that he has no affection for Mary: but Mary he hath alway with him, beer he hath not alway."

The characters and setting are so distinctive that one is reminded of the remark that Phipps's father made to him in

October 1887, hoping that he will not have to room again with "such companions." Since the letter that Phipps wrote his father describing these circumstances is lost, there is no way of knowing whether what he described to his father was ever included in his fiction or not. But I am sure that in some London somewhere, Fred still cleans the fire-irons dutifully every week, sighs ostentatiously, and curries Mary's favor so that she will tip him 2d. from his weekly salary so he can have his beer.

Shiel was still anxious about the fate of "The Eagle's Rock" after he moved from Coldbath. He wrote Colles on March 20, 1893 (from Rugby Chambers): "Among the stories you have one called 'The Eagle's Rock' which I think I can sell directly in a quarter in which I seem to be rather favored. If you have the story with you, will you be so kind as to send it to me? If not, it doesn't matter at all, but you might send it to me when it returns to you, if it does return."[179]

That the fate of "The Eagle's Rock" was still not settled several months later is evidenced by the fact that he wrote Colles again about this title on July 31, 1893: "If you have with you a little story of mine called 'The Eagle's Rock,' will you kindly return it to me. If not, when it comes back again to you will do."[180] Apparently, Colles had just sent the story out (again?) since his firm had written at the head of Shiel's letter of March 20 the following note: "This was sent to P.M. Mag on 7/2/93." Probably to *Pall Mall*, although that magazine did not publish the story. *The Strand* did, in September 1894.

In late 1893 W. T. Stead conceived the idea for his *Daily Paper*, which he planned as a more frequent version of his prestigious weekly *Review of Reviews*. He hoped to make a feature of the new paper an ongoing serial, "The Romance of the World." This would incorporate the leading historical events of the world into fictional form. Shiel made an aborted stab at providing a novella for it, "The Rajah's Sapphire," apparently at the invitation of Stead (who went

down with the *Titanic*). The story was not used in the paper, only one trial issue of which appeared. The novella remained unpublished until it appeared, extensively revised, as a book in early 1896. This followed *Prince Zaleski* and predated *Shapes in the Fire*, making it Phipps's second book publication. Shiel acknowledged on the title page of the book that the story derived from a plot provided him "*vivâ voce*" from Stead. This could have been a straightforward acknowledgment, or it could have been used as a means to benefit from Stead's name and stature. Since Stead mentioned the book in his *Review of Reviews*, with his name attached to it, but not Shiel's, it must not have embarrassed him. The novel is much more interesting when it is read within a knowledge of the events of the day and Shiel's relationship to the fictional details.

John Squires has written in detail about Phipps's collaboration with Stead, and the background of "The Rajah's Sapphire."[181] Although Shiel states that his relationship with Stead was considerably more than that with the "Sapphire" novella, there is no evidence of it other than ongoing favorable reviews of Shiel's books by Stead. Shiel used the appearance of a book review of *The Lord of the Sea* as an opportunity to write Stead, thanking him for the review, but also offering to work for the *Review of Reviews* if a position became available.

In October 1893, "Guy Harkaway's Substitute" was published by *The Strand*, and in November 1893, another brief, non-credited biographical sketch, "Rev. Augustus Stopford Brooke," appeared there.

Sometime in 1894, Phipps managed to interest a reader for John Lane in *Prince Zaleski*, possibly because of its bizarre protagonist, its "decadent" story plots and sensuous prose, but perhaps because Conan Doyle had killed Sherlock Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland in 1893. There developed a demand for detective stories to fill the public's taste, and a number of new sleuths appeared as writers responded. Shiel had already written the

Zaleski stories, so there was a case to be made for a collection of the three stories of detection in a book.

With whom Phipps developed this connection to John Lane's Bodley House publishing firm on Vigo Street is not known. Richard Le Gallienne was a major reader for Lane at the time, as were John Buchan, John Davidson, and Grant Richards. But Richards, who would become Shiel's publisher, and Shiel did not even meet until after Richards had established his own publishing firm in 1898. So this is another mystery that may never be solved.

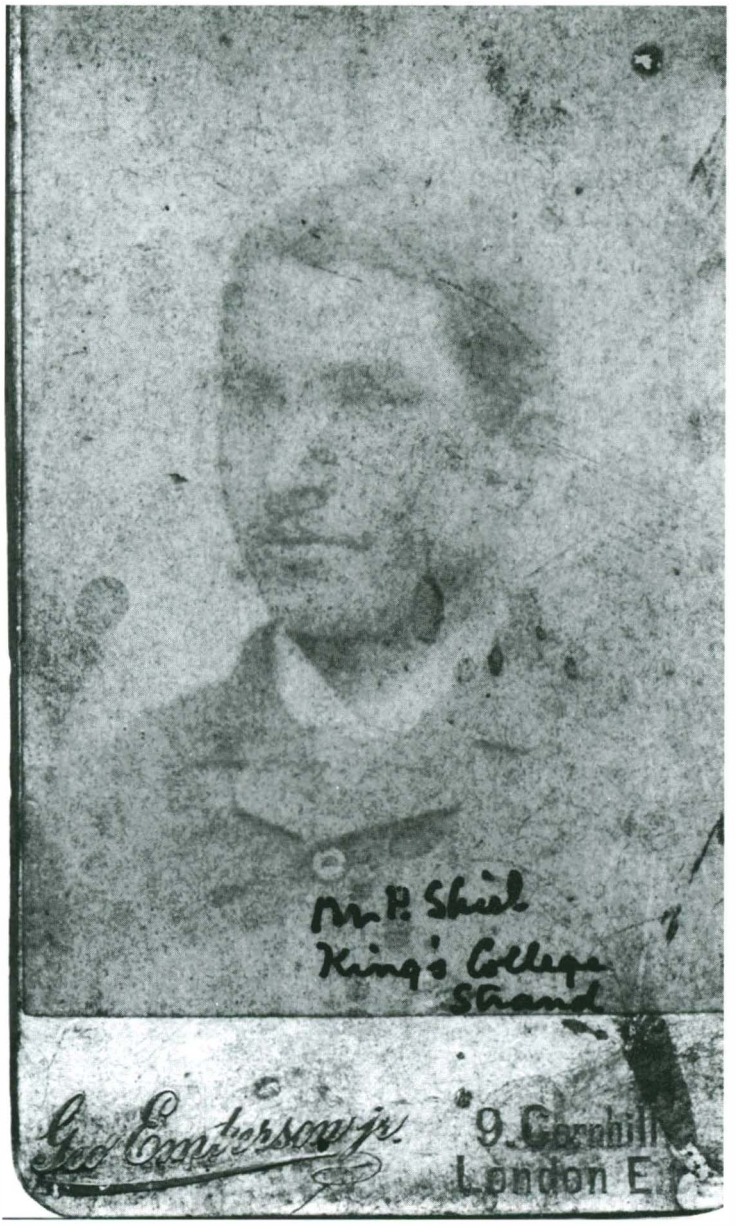
One wonders also whether there was any effort made by Shiel to interest the editors of the *Yellow Book* (Henry Harland, Aubrey Beardsley) in one of his stories. It seems rather strange why he, as a John Lane author, would not have had access to the pages of the new literary magazine—but, then, neither did Arthur Machen. Perhaps exclusion from the magazine might help explain the critical comments that he made about John Lane's "young men" to Gus in future months. Those "damned little scribblers" he called them, although there are indications that he had at least a small degree of social life with several of them. Truth be told, Phipps just did not have the level of social standing, or family connections, or social skills, that so many of the authors in the John Lane, Bodley Head circle held. Neither was he the dedicated *litterateur* who was willing to be gone so soon with the wind and wine.

Nevertheless, Shiel describes too many social forays and feminine liaisons in his letters to have ever stayed too cloistered in his lodgings. Later letters suggest that in his hiking about the countryside, along the River Wye, and in his mountain climbing, he developed a number of geographically convenient feminine contacts.[182]

None of the stories in *Prince Zaleski* was first published separately, but Phipps wrote later of one of them, the "The S. S.," that "A slightly variant draft was accepted by 'Grand Mag,' but never appeared."[183] (If this was indeed the "Grand" magazine, as Shiel stated, this variant would have had to have been prepared after

Phipps as Junior Master, Matlock 1886

Courtesy of the Harry Ransome Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas Austin



Shiel at King's College, Strand ca. 1891

Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
The University of Texas at Austin

PRINCE ZALESKI

BY M. P. SHIEL

Come now, and let us reason together.
ISAIAH

Of the strange things that befell the valiant Knight in the Sable Mountain; and how he imitated the penance of Beltenebros. CERVANTES

Ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἐκείνῳ πάντα λεκτὰ, πάντα
δὲ τολμητά; SOPHOCLES

LONDON: JOHN LANE, VIGO ST
BOSTON: ROBERTS BROS., 1895

Prince Zaleski title page 1895

Ella D'Arcy ca. 1895

publication of the book, since that magazine did not commence publication until 1905.)

In September 1894, *The Strand* published Shiel's long-mislaid "The Eagle's Crag," a story placed in Italy but full of the feel of Redondan precipices. It is obvious why Phipps had such a personal interest in the fate of the manuscript. It was also a fine story.

Prince Zaleski had been scheduled for November 1894 publication, then announced in the papers for "early January," but Shiel was still waiting for it in mid-January.

"There is no book to send," Phipps disgustedly wrote Gussie on January 14, 1895, from Rugby Chambers, Bedford Row, W.C.[184] He had been offered a lump sum for it, he told her, but refused, insisting instead on royalties to be paid him quarterly—"preferring to have an interest in the sale, as I know that publishers are crafty, and when they volunteer to pay down in that way, it is clear that they have faith in the future of the book, and in their out-look they depend, of course, on the judgment of highly skilled readers."[185]

He can't see why Lane keeps postponing publication. As for him, he thinks the book will be published right when the public is intent on the gathering of Parliament and the book will lose much of its impact. Since royalties are paid quarterly, the next payments will be on Ladyday next (late March), and "unless it has a very extraordinary sale, I shall get now very little on Ladyday, and no more for 3 months, so that, as I was looking for funds to bring Harrie over, it cannot be done now—not at least till Autumn, especially as I have stopped writing short stories for the present."[186]

"I am not very busy at the moment," he tells her. He has just finished a good long story "and feel like an empty bag." It may well be that this was a story for *Shapes in the Fire*, none of which, like those in *Zaleski*, was published prior to the book.[187]

The very announcement of the publication of *Prince Zaleski* in John Lane's "Keynote Series" (with Aubrey Beardsley decorations) has brought him a certain amount of attention, he tells Gussie. "I am beginning to be—well, notorious." Journalists have been after "autobiographical information" and he has provided it. "I have said that I was born in the West Indies, in the very room where the Empress Josephine first 'saw the light,' or as I put it in one case, 'first felt the heat,' (Leonard tenderly calls it 'the warmth'). If I can find one of the letters I will enclose it to shew you how fatuous a thing an English newspaper is." It is my opinion that it was out of this attitude that the legend of Redonda grew.

Gussie evidently prodded him about some matter that she thought required his attention: "I have read your last letter very carefully," he tells her, "and I think there is something in it. But it is unnecessary, on account of what I say above about the book. I shan't now have the money, even if I would."

Perhaps this has to do with a later comment in his letter: "What you say about the house I note: and as soon as I get some superfluous cash will see to it. At present I am rather hard up." One might presume that the old home in Plymouth required attention.

Recently, visiting a friend, he has seen on the wall a picture from the *Illustrated London News* of blacks loading cocoanuts on a ship in Jamaica. He had been overcome with homesickness for the islands seeing the picture. He missed the ever-happy natives there, who were laughing, always laughing, knowing that God would fill the rivers, move the clouds, and care for them. And he suddenly realizes that he is "no Englishman!" but a stranger in the land, who is lonesome for his West Indian home and the blacks that he loved. "The negro women had the figure of Venus," he tells Gussie. "I greatly love the simple negro race. It is only the half-breeds that I think hateful and despicable, yet Dumas was one."

In reading this, one is reminded of a comment made by Lafcadio Hearn after his trip to the West Indies in 1887: "Occasionally you

observe a fine half-breed type—some tall brown girl walking by with a swaying grace like that of a sloop at sea."

Phipps has developed a taste for the Englishwoman's figure, it also seems, for he tells Gussie matter-of-factly "Mary is in the family way. She says she feels the child jumping about in her belly. 'Jumping about' is good. She has got deliciously fat: you would hardly believe. I have told her that so long as she keeps fat like that she need have no fear of my throwing her over, because I have little desire for anybody else. And isn't she proud of it, too! Knowing that I like it. When she thinks I am in danger of forgetting how fat she is, she will catch hold of a great gross lump on her legs and say: 'But just look at that! Oh I don't like to be getting so fat!' Woman is all beast below the navel: above, all peri: and thus you get a very decent blend: but Man is pure human throughout. (Study this last sentence: it is one of my Aphorisms with a big A, and will appear in print some day.)"

There is no indication who this Mary is, or what became of her and the baby that would have been born in mid-1895. She takes up little space in Phipps's lengthy letter, although the letter implies that Gussie knows her. He chides Gussie on another matter: "Yes, I have read Geo. Meredith, but hardly expect to hear his praises sung by my own family. Some people's family think there is nobody in the world like them, but with mine it is not so." As for London, Irving produced Saturday last a new play." King Arthur," and "Oh, the rage!" Also, he is learning Hebrew: "It is easy and pleasant," and he suggests that Gussie take up a similar hobby, to avoid dullness.

On February 12, 1895, he writes Gussie again with news of a more imminent appearance of the book. But it is a letter that reveals even more interestingly something of the deeper nature of his personality, a growing interest in social responsibility (if not at a personal level), a clear-cut statement of his attitude towards women and an interest in his roots![188]

Feb'y 12.95

Darling Gussie–

Them that write me, I will write, but them that despises me shall be lightly esteemed. Well, you write me pretty well, and so I you: but as to my sister Harriet, she may go to the devil, if the task of sending me news of my dear mother is too much trouble for her once in two weeks. I don't, let her understand, want to hear about her, if she doesn't want to write me; but I do care to have an occasional report about the womb that bare me, and lent my brain its sap, and taught songs to my tongue, and exaltations to my soul. Do you know what has been wrong with her dear old leg? I hope it was no disease of the skin. By the way, I want to know the name of my father's mother, and also the maiden name of our old Granny. Will you write and let me know, and if you yourself don't know, try and find out for me. It is from these old folk, darling, that we get all we are; they fiz in our blood, and beat in our brain; it is they who stand at my shoulder and dictate to me the very words I am now writing.

But oh! What weather. Thur-r-r! it is cold. There hasn't been such weather in England for the last hundred years they say. Oh, "the parching air burns frore" (isn't that a sweet collection of words: not my own). You remember last Winter when we had to clean our teeth with ginger-beer? Well, it's worse now. Everything freezes, freezes. It is Arctic. The sea, the open sea, freezes. People die of it. All you have to do is to lie down in it—and you die. The distress is very great; a million men are out of work; think of that! a million: and every one of them a soul, immortal, divine, a God-Man like Jesus, the very hairs of his head all numbered, and the lice among the hairs. Ah, the world is governed foolishly! till the very apes and asses must laugh at us; and what provokes me is my feeling that I, Phipps Shiel, could manage it better: more kindly, more wisely, more humanly: and am not allowed to try!

However, as I say, it is Arctic, the cold; and the poor pay the piper; and such queer, uncanny variations! Think of a thunder-storm in February! It is like the weather described by that inspired Yankee—

First it hailed, and then it blew, and then it friz and then it snew;
And then there was a shower of rain, and then it friz and snew again.

Well, my pet, I wanted to send you out my booklet this time, and wrote to John Lane to ask him if they had come from the binder's yet: but they haven't. It is positively to be published on Saturday morning next.

The companion book to it is by Grant Allen called "The Woman Who Did"; and it is making the devil of a sensation. It is to "Prince Zaleski" what a bone button is to a diamond, or, at any rate, a pearl: but for all that, it will, I think, make a great deal more noise than "Prince Zaleski": as it has to do with the relations of the sexes; and anything on that subject *now* is bought-up by the "New Woman" like hot loaves. Damn the "New Woman"! she is fast becoming a bore, and is, if possible, even More vulgar than the old. I always say, with Ruskin, that there are no ladies in England—no hlaf-loaf, hlaf-ords, "bread-givers" (that is the real meaning of the word)—and in this saying I know that there is a genuine truth. [*Letter incomplete, bottom half of page torn away*]

Phipps could only have wished that his "diamond" could have competed with Grant Allen's "bone button" in the marketplace. Allen's *The Woman Who Did* went through twenty editions during its first year of publication.[189]

Shiel was fortunate to have *Prince Zaleski* published in the extremely handsome Keynotes Series. Its royal purple binding, its title page borders designed by Aubrey Beardsley, the distinctive key

design interlaced with MPS's initials on the rear cover, all reflected the best of *art nouveau* book making. It is unfortunate that such a pretty book tends to have had its spine fade so badly over the years.

The letter to Gussie also confirms the terrible winter of 1894-95 that is described in John Squires' biographical information about Louis Tracy and his collaborations with Shiel. ("The parching air ..." quoted by Shiel is Milton's description of the landscape of Hell in Book II of *Paradise Lost*.) Tracy funded twenty-three soup kitchens that fed three and one-half million starving, jobless men during this time. According to contemporary accounts, Tracy spent some $45,000 on this effort.[190]

Phipps used almost literally his description to Gussie of this Arctic England in *The Rajah's Sapphire*: "'The parched air burned frore.' People were dying of it. All you had to do was to lie down in it, and you died." And, again from the novel: "And, oh, Stefan, just think, a million of them out of work! Workless workers, we call them ..." The closeness of the text of his letter and that of his fiction suggests that Shiel was probably at work on the novel at this time, expanding it with contemporary detail that he could not have included in the version he drafted in 1894 for Stead's paper. John Squires has pointed out that incidences from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 were also introduced in the revised novel.[191] The book was not published until the next spring, March 7, 1896 in Ward, Lock & Bowden's attractive small-format "Nautilus Series."

Meanwhile, he was staying busy in other ways, as he wrote Gussie.[192]

Rugby Chambers W. C.
Apr.30.95

My darling Gussie—

I am writing you, but I have not the remotest idea whether this is the right Tuesday or not. If I miss one mail, I am done

for. It is horribly absurd that they don't contrive some scheme by which one may know when the right day comes: the line should either run on a certain day every week, or else on a certain day or days every month. As it is, one can't possibly know. You should speak to Horsford about it.

This is partly why you have not heard from me. Also, I have had a little influenza.

How are you getting on? I heard from the girls. Oh, I say! Ain't they "new," ain't they stylish? ain't they got the graces, and the blandishments, and eccentricities altogether and entirely? Have you observed those "M's" of Nonnie's? Those M's, my dear! To what shall I liken them, and whereto shall they be compared? They are like three young roes that are thrins; or say, like the three Graces, fondly twined; or say again, like three juicy tendrils of the budding vine that droop from a garland on the brow of Dionysius. Nonnie's M's have twined around my heart with triple potency (is it not written that "a three-fold cord is not easily broken"?), and I wrote her a longish letter, but I said nothing of the m's, for if she finds that her small achievements do not hew an impression upon the world deep enough to cause remark, she will be led to hew harder until there is remark enough and to spare. I believe the girl has it in her, if she be properly trained and put to something. There is that little Cyril, too; I hear from Leonard he is doing wonders. Only why did you make them so ugly? I believe the truth is you don't lie on the right side. You should also put a pillow under you.

Of course, by this time you have heard all about the Big Thing—Oscar Wilde. He will be sentenced this afternoon. Poor chap! I am sorry for him. It is not his fault: he is not well made: he is a moral idiot: he was born so: his mother made him so. God will straighten him out. It is ordained that he shall yet be perfect—without spot or blemish—perfect as a sphere of the heavens. Ah, Gussie! Gussie! The thing is too sweet to think of! The world is WELL MADE!

But what do you think—I too have had an offer of marriage, my dear! Think of me in the capacity of a wife! I who am so intensely a husband. Not a regular offer, be it said; and perhaps, after all, it was only my fancy. This is how it happened. I became friends some time ago with one of the big wigs, a chap who dines with Lord Salisbury, and has hobnobbed with the Prince of Wales: a nephew of Sir John Wilson, M. P., the "great railway King.' His name is Hope Johnston. Well, a short time ago I was introduced to him by one of John Lane's "young men," and, on mutual liking, we became friends. He lives in chambers in St. James's St., and nearly every night I was there. Talk, talk; jabber, jabber, jabber. He never sleeps at night. He goes to bed at ten in the morning. And he is a great man for morphia. Very well, I used to stay with him till about six o'clock a.m. when I would come home through the quiet streets and toddle in to bed. But what I have to say is this: that his whole talk (sometimes) is about buggery; of course, he not only knows everybody, but the private life, the very thoughts of everybody. Long before this affair of Oscar Wilde became public, he foreshadowed it to me; and the names he mentioned, the picture he gave of the corruption of English society, was awful. Very well. Now, I was rather awkward in inserting the syringe into myself to inject the morphia, so he used to do it for me. And one night, when I had drawn up my shirt-sleeve, he stopped, and began to stroke my arm with his hand. "Ah, you have got a nice arm!" he said. I didn't like his tone. The stroking was too affectionate, the tone too effeminate. He saw me frown, and went on with the syringe. And so it passed. That, you say, wasn't much; but it was enough for me. If he had been opener, I should certainly have knocked him down. I like playing Adam, but I draw the line at Eve. My Gussie may go to sleep with the calm assurance that her brother will never get in the family way by any man.

Well, I have little news to give. Zaleski has been met with quite a crow of praise by the intelligent potion of the

press; but, so far, I don't think the public has responded in proportion. They will, when one or two more of my books come out. The first, by itself, hardly ever does very much. The Times was very complimentary, and said I write like Æschylus! Think of that, my dear! Æschylus! Thanks for your praise. But why do you insist on comparing me with Conan Doyle? Conan Doyle does not pretend to be a poet. I do.

Well, I get a lot of invitations to go out to evening parties, "smokes," and the rest of it. Sometimes I wish little Reg was here: I would make him go and pretend to be me. I never go. Sometimes I am hard put to find an excuse, but I do find it. They come mostly from John Lane, and his many young men, and their wives. These damned little scribblers think I am one of them, and I am not. "Dining-out" helps no man to write greatly—which is hard work, and not an easy, as they think.

By the way, would you like to see the pretty evolution of a correspondence? I enclose you it. They are written by the 'newest' of new women; and she really does write very sweet stories. The papers are always talking about her.

Are you coming over in the Summer? I shan't be surprised to see you, inveterate old turner-up that you are! Or is it turner-over? You know what the man said to his wife at midnight: "P. T. O."

Horsford promised to write me, but did not. Tell him I am afraid the Conservatives will get in next time: we are losing nearly all the bye-elections.

Will you send this note to my darlings in Montserrat. Love to Sal & Reg. By the way, Leo is getting on nicely with short-hand.

Yours,
Phipps

He adds a separate sheet to this letter, as a postscript, evidently written after midnight, which would date it, May 1, 1895:

> The rest I wrote y'day, a day before the time and now I want to add a P.S. It is late, & I can't get any more stamps, so please send rest of enclosed to my mother, as I have not written her lately, & she must be looking and to hear. Don't forget. Send it as quickly as you can: the old darling has had something wrong with her leg: but reticent Harrie does not say what. / M. P. S.

Richard Le Gallienne, again, may have been the John Lane "young man" who introduced Shiel to Hope Johnston. Or, it could have been Lane's business manager, Frederick Chapman, who introduced Shiel to members of the Lane circle from time to time. Shiel's literary acquaintances at this time seem generally to have been grounded on that tight little island within John Lane's boundaries—although John Gawsworth has indicated that Shiel dined once with Oscar Wilde at Roche's at Charing Cross Road and Old Compton Street in Soho, and once with Robert Louis Stevenson at the same location.[193]

Despite this assertion, it is difficult to identify a time when Shiel could have had an opportunity to dine with Stevenson, since Stevenson went to America in August of 1887 and from there to the South Seas where he died in 1894. Why would Stevenson have dined with a struggling, young schoolmaster at Roche's in the last few months of 1886 or early 1887?

And Wilde, who was said to despise Bohemia? Dining with Phipps at Roche's? It hardly seems likely. Wilde was pretty well ensconced at the up-town Royal, where he held regular luncheon court with a routine coterie of those amused or amusing.

Regarding the crow of praise he told Gussie that he was receiving for Zaleski, it would have taken a very loose reading for Phipps to find in the *Times* review a true comparison with Æschylus, but the review was lengthy, and he could have found satisfaction in its comment: "To Mr. Shiel, indeed, one might apply in part his description of Prince Zaleski:—

> He was nothing if not superlative; his diatribes, now culminating in a very extravaganza of hyperbole—now sailing with loose wing through the downy, witched, Dutch cloud-heaps of some quaintest tramontane Nephelococcugia of thought ...

It seems likely that the "pretty evolution of a correspondence" that Phipps mentions to Gussie was with Ella D'Arcy (1857–1937) who was becoming a highly respected short story writer among the so-called "New Women" group. D'Arcy also was an important assistant to John Lane and Henry Harland in editing the *Yellow Book*. While Phipps may have had no great affection for John Lane's "young men," he seemed always to find a place in his heart for Lane's or anyone else's women.

Ella was born in 1857, the daughter of an Irish grain merchant. Raised in the Channel Islands, she spoke French fluently and had hoped to be a painter. But after initial study and plans to attend art school in Paris, she developed eye problems and began to write instead. She became the most frequent contributor to the *Yellow Book*, and soon an employee. She complained about a John Lane author, Frederick Rolfe ("Baron Corvo") who, she said, left lice on the office chairs after every visit. The chairs were routinely sprayed. Corvo retaliated by calling her a "mouse-mannered piece of sex." Penelope Fitzgerald, in her biography of Charlotte Mew, however, described Ella as a "dark, handsome, untidy-looking, witty woman." Fitzgerald notes that D'Arcy was constantly hard up, flitting from one boarding house to another. Charlotte Mew developed a passionate crush on her, only to be rejected. Ella had a pity for men, Fitzgerald says, and "took lovers as she chose."[194]

In an introduction to a small collection of letters from D'Arcy to John Lane (1990), Alan Anderson writes in his introduction: "Ella D'Arcy very soon became an indispensable assistant to Harland, and although she disclaimed the title in late years, she was in fact

the *Yellow Book's* sub-editor, and was paid as such by Harland out of his own pocket ..."[195]

Anderson adds: "She now had accommodations close to the Harlands' flat at 144 Cromwell Road, and acted to some extent as Harland's secretary, bringing a degree of order to his rather chaotic life-style and organizing his Saturday afternoon soirées and the more imposing evening receptions."

"She never married," Anderson added, "apparently harbouring a strong prejudice against that institution. She had no particular dislike of men, however, and in the mid 1880's [*sic*] she had an affair with the writer M. P. Shiel." Anderson gives Ian Fletcher as his source for this statement, based on information given Fletcher by John Gawsworth.[196]

There apparently exists a letter from D'Arcy to Phipps that is even more convincing of a liaison between the two, although Anderson does not cite the source or location of the document. Anderson says that D'Arcy died September 5, 1937 in the St. Pancras Institution, "... thereby fulfilling the prophecy she had made in a letter to M. P. Shiel some forty years earlier." Her family had moved her to St. Pancras from Paris because of advancing dementia. Does one presume she forecast madness?[197]

"George Egerton" (Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright) also worked as an editor for Lane, and was achieving a reputation like Ella D'Arcy as one of the best of the "New Women" group of writers. It was her short story collection, *Keynotes*, for which the series had been named. George Egerton also had a major interest in genealogy, and it may have been her enthusiasm for this interest, perhaps expressed at Lane socials, that in early 1895 pushed Phipps towards a pursuit of his own family roots, as he subsequently inquired of them from Gussie.[198]

Ella D'Arcy described the Harland socials: "Never were there such evenings as those long-ago evenings in Cromwell Road! ... The large drawing room, lighted by lamps and candles only—in

those days electricity had not yet become general—would begin to fill up about nine o'clock. Two or three would have dined there. Others dropped in to coffee and cigarettes ..."[199]

Shiel's lack of interest in literary society, except for the women, may well have been due to the fact that he was in the midst of writing and simply preferred to write rather than spend time at the Harland "Saturdays," or at the Sunday at-homes or the regular social "smokes." "Huguenin's Wife," (his first truly supernatural story) was published in *Pall Mall Magazine*, April 1895: "The Case of Euphemia Raphash" in *Chapman's Magazine of Fiction, Christmas* 1895; "Wayward Love," was published in *Cassell's Family Magazine* in its April 1896 issue; "The Spectre-Ship," in *Cassell's Family Magazine*, September 1896; and "The Secret Panel," in *The Strand*, December 1896, among others.

The stories, poem, essay that would appear in *Shapes in the Fire*—"Xélucha," "Maria in the Rose Bush," "Vaila," "Premier and Maker," "Tulsah," "The Serpent Ship," and "Phorfor"—must have been written in this general period, apparently all prepared for the book. It is unusual that none was published in a periodical first, although Shiel himself so confirmed at a later time.[200] Whether on purpose, he did not say. In any case, Phipps must have been very busy writing these short stories during the past several years.

It also appears that he was developing a group of personal acquaintances with which to spend time, although the morphia adventure he described to Gussie (which would have occurred in early 1895) apparently was an anomaly. There are no indications elsewhere that this became a practice that he pursued beyond the episodes described here.

The "Sal" referenced in this letter is obviously Phipps's sister Sallie; "Reg" is the elder nephew, and "Leo" is Leonard, the youngest nephew. Sallie may have been on Nevis at the time; Reg on St. Kitts; and Leo studying in London. Phipps's mother and Harriet were on Montserrat.

Existing correspondence with his family does not pick up again until a year later. He had clearly been busy writing, but had not overlooked the music halls or feminine company. (He had moved from Rugby Chambers sometime during the year.)[201]

24 Percy Circus,
W. C.
Nov. 3. 96

Darling Gussie:

What has become of you? I wrote you some time ago and I hope you got it. I have just received a most sweet letter from Cici, which has brought you vividly to my mind, though you must not think that you are ever really out of it. Yes, a most sweet letter: I think he is one of the nicest boys in the world: a perfectly free, and manly, and simple letter, without a trace of "St. Kitts" in it. I do hope that his face will get better of its ugly marks, because that, of course, makes him quite impossible. But that will come, when he is old enough to know the importance of it, and is prepared to take some trouble to get rid of it.

As for the other children, I know simply nothing of them. I have often thought of taking train to go to see them—but have forgotten the name of the school! However, I am writing to ask Cici.

Of myself, sweetheart, I have little to tell. I have gone into Society (of all things) and every Sunday afternoon, go to an "at-home" where I meet crowds of literary people, all Bohemianly-inclined: ladies and gentlemen: the place full of cigarette-smoke, and an odour of mixed chartreuse and noyau, the ladies all smoking. The hostess and I are great chums, and write to each other every week. She is very charming. But you must not suppose I go there for the sake of the Society! Oh, no! But because the prettiest woman in all London goes there—a young filly, just married to a young

doctor—said to be very rich. I just lie back and gaze at them, mortally bitten and green. Meantime, I am engaged to be married to another one, one of the singers at the Sunday evenings you know so well at Queen's Hall. She knows your friend Sibley well, and calls him a cross brute.

Well, I was thinking of you the other night, thinking how happy you are and have been—everything found you—and your work in the world, that of bearing children, successfully accomplished. Would, ah would, that I could say the same! I and poor Harrie are the unlucky ones of the family: nobody to sleep with at night. The luckiest was Ada!

Poor little Reg! I have been thinking of him. Some nights ago I went to Oxford, and heard his friend Stratton of Love a Lovely Girl fame sing a nice song. He must be quite a man, with a beard, and I remember when he was born. Alas! Alas!

My love to Sammy.

But oh! What has become of little Leonard?

Yours, my darling,
Phipps

The book isn't out yet!

Cici wrote to tell me of poor Henry. How very sad. And yet I know that it is well.

Given Phipps's concern about "Henry," it is likely that this remark concerned the death of Henry Dyett, the long-time family friend who had served as notary public and held other offices on Montserrat, and whose kin "of color" had been close friends of the young Phipps. Henry's wife had maintained a store, replacing Mrs. William Chambers in that role, as a friendly competitor of Phipps's father in 1887.[202]

Phipps is out in society again, he tells Gussie, after his stated lack of enthusiasm for that activity the year before. *With Shapes in the Fire,* the second book of his that John Lane would publish in the Keynote Series, due at any time, it is likely that Phipps was now

more interested in seeking social company since there would be the new book and his writing to discuss. There was probably also the need to help promote the book, and accommodate those involved in its production and sales. It is also clear that he had a specific interest in these social literary gatherings because of the women who were attending. Apparently, his affair, whatever it was, with Ella D'Arcy was over, although she would have been very involved and visible in helping manage the Saturday socials at Cromwell Street. But Phipps appears to be interested in yet another series of literary socials, apart from the Lane and Harland events, as suggested in the letter above.[203]

The hostess may have been Mrs. Shakespear (Olivia Shakespear, 1863–1938)) who was prominent for hosting regular literary gatherings, these Sunday "smokes," and who, it was said, relieved W.B. Yeats of his virginity at "the advanced age of twenty-nine." Her daughter Dorothy (1886–1973) married Ezra Pound. Recognized for her beauty, one might be inclined to think that Olivia is the lovely young woman admired by Phipps at these events. But Olivia had been married to a solicitor (Hope Shakespear) for many years and was two years older than Phipps, as well as mother of a ten-year old daughter. This does not fit the "young filly" recently married to a rich young doctor that Shiel describes. Phipps mentions Mrs. Shakespear's attendance at later social events, at Arthur Machen's apartment in 1897, perhaps tending to confirm her presence as hostess in this series of socials that he describes to Gussie.[204] Or, the hostess could have been Ella D'Arcy and the "young filly" either Mrs. Shakespear or simply another pretty target in Phipps's eye.

The identity of the singer, mentioned in this letter, who Phipps says he was "engaged" to, is unknown, although Gussie knew others from the music hall circles. There may be a clue in *Shapes in the Fire*. He dedicates the book to "Mistress Beatrice Laws." There seems no reason to dedicate a book to a woman unless there is a very special reason for doing so.[205]

Phipps describes the content of *Shapes in the Fire* to Beatrice in his lengthy dedicatory letter, and suggests that she treat the stories as a concert, taking a break at the intermission, since "Premier and Maker" is better suited for men. He advises her to take the intermission in highly romantic, very personalized and extravagant prose, almost incomprehensible in its extreme Decadent aesthetic: "Go out on the verandah, pig's-eye, and there heave, the open secret of that torse my soul remembers to the chaste down-look of Dian's astonished eye glass, and the *schwärmerei* of the winking stars."

This lifting of a wreath in moonlight and a swarm of stars might have had a special meaning for Phipps and Mistress Law. The simile that Phipps offers in his dedication to her, to consider the stories as parts of a concert, suggests strongly that the young woman was a likely singer at Queen's Hall, probably in the chorus. There is no way to establish today the name of this yet another passing fancy, of which Phipps seems never bereft.

Shiel composed virtually all of the stories, the poem, and the intermezzo statement on art and letters, "Premier and Maker," in the farthest artistic reach that he would make towards an overly rich, Decadent style. There are several fascinating biographical points within "Premier and Maker" that have never quite caught the attention of Shiel scholars. There are comments included that he had shared with Gussie in his 12 February 1895 letter to her. These were women as loaf-givers, for one, in this essay, and wording he was building into the short novel. It may be that the letter writing and composing the essay and novel were going on at the same time.

An even richer piece in "Premier and Maker" becomes a Nordic song for his father. "My father was a ship-owner. We dwelt on the summit of an island. He went often down from us. Nothing restrained him to the land. When he rarely returned, we said: He is come! One meeting another a-crag or a-field, said: How droll! He is here and you did not know it. Simple he was, sensuous, too, passionate enough. Ocean heaved and bellowed in his brain. If it

lightened, he was sublime. If thunder cracked brittling through the heaven of heavens, battle-joy it was to drink the rich brool of his challenging cry. God was his turbulent friend. The full hurricane made him Prometheus."[206]

This passage presaged by five years the description of his father that would become a central feature in Shiel's "About Myself."

The Wilde scandal literally sent the London literary scene into disarray. British writers of a serious literary bent turned towards a more naturalistic, softer direction in their writing. Critics began replacing the word "decadent" with "symbolist." Aubrey Beardsley, of the gracefully curved erotic figure, was dismissed as art editor of the *Yellow Book* when a number of its major contributors threatened to boycott the magazine otherwise. The word "yellow," which had virtually painted the publishing and marketing environment after the first volume of the magazine appeared in 1894, became almost a dirty word. The *Yellow Book* itself ceased publication in 1897 after only thirteen issues. After all, Victoria was still Queen.[207]

Actually, Beardsley's dismissal may have had an effect on the physical design of Shiel's *Shapes in the Fire.* A replacement for Beardsley was important for the Bodley Head and the *Yellow Book*. Ella D'Arcy, Henry Harland and John Lane all thought they were qualified to pass on the illustrations for the *Yellow Book,* but they realized they needed someone with stronger technical expertise than they for the overall art program. So Patten Wilson, who had worked for a wallpaper firm and had contributed in a minor way to several of Lane's publications, was hired to assist with artwork. Thus, the "P. W." who designed the title page and key motif for *Shapes in the Fire*.[208]

Phipps became involved in yet another social group soon after the book was published, when he moved to 3 Gray's Inn Place. This was just "a passage leading north out of Gray's Inn Square to the north gate of the inn."[209] Gray's Inn Place was quite close to Machen's

residence at No. 4 Veralum Buildings. Shiel wrote a remembrance of Arthur Machen for John Gawsworth on June 22, 1933.

> He was near the gate on the ground floor; very noisy there. He who I think was his best friend then, Paul England, a musician, who sometimes slept there, said one morning that one day, if he slept there, he would be found "feebly but persistently beating on a drum," which was what someone came to in my "House of Sounds." But the drawing-room was remote from the street (Gray's Inn Road), and looked out charmingly on "Gray's Inn Gardens." I too looked on them from my windows high up in 3 Gray's Inn Place some way off the adjacent side of the gardens-square. There Machen and Mrs. often came to visit me—she taller than he, thin, pale, amiable, fond of me. To me, beginning housekeeping, she gave council: "don't let her (my old housekeeper) sweep the carpet with a hard broom, make her (secretly) pick up the bits," etc. The Inn then was quite a haunt of artists, Lionel Johnson (just before), James Welch (if it was the name—the actor who starred in "When Knights were Bold," brother-in-law of Richard Le Gallienne, who would come to see a friend of mine and Machen's named Egan Mew, whose "oak" faced mine; and on Sunday afternoons quite a crowd of more or less literary people would fill Machen's large drawing-room, filling it with smoke and sipping Benedictine which Machen presented with a certain unction and ceremony; "George Egerton" for one was often among them, Mrs. Shakespear (pretty! dark), who wrote novels and was in with me, and a family of reviewers who still review—Sergeant—one of whom Mrs. Machen meant me to marry, though I did not quite see eye-to-eye with her on that. Sometimes she'd take me about from guest to guest to exhibit the extra-ordinary length of my fingers—artistic, she said—I shrinking at the consciousness that the nails weren't clean. And through the smoke Machen before the fireplace, standing in his brown-velvet jacket, preaching

> something to someone, quite a learned person, full of memories of impressions, quite a talker, his opinions fixed as nickel, anything in his favour wholly good, anything in his bad books wholly bad, and if there were constellations of which he approved, and constellations of which he disapproved, that would not be astonishing to me ... He had a nice wine like champagne from a vineyard in Touraine which he let out on the metayer system, getting half the produce, and whenever I dined with him I got some. That was fairly often, for he seemed to have a fancy for me and my things; when my "Shapes in the Fire" appeared he wrote me that I had "done what he always aspired to do." He liked anything touched with mysticism, was fond of talking about secret societies, of hinting that he belonged to one or more—talk which resulted in what I say about them in my little "Primate of the Rose": and some of his friends were markedly mystic like Waite who wrote learned mysticism, "The Targum on the Babylonish Talmud," and so on. We lived in an island in the sea of London, rather touched with enchantment, and the tender grace of that day that is dead will never come back to me ... but, then, other days with other graces have come and come, and there's as good a fish in the sea as ever was fished!![210]

The "Sergeant" urged at him was probably a daughter of Lewis Sergeant, an early mentor of Machen and long-time friend of Amy Hogg Machen. She patently bore none of the known feminine qualities that would have drawn Shiel to her. Shiel would complete his life with references to "the Good Machen," while Machen would finish his days referring to Shiel as an "inveterate liar."

Phipps would turn from this circle of the bizarre and the literary sophisticates, of which he had never been a major figure, towards new personal interests, a somewhat tamer writing style and a new literary market, as he would soon write his mother.

Comments to the effect that Phipps appeared to ignore his mother in print are just not accurate. He dedicated *Prince Zaleski* to her. His letters to her, and to Gussie about her over the years, attest to his concern for her. The "Spanish" influence of her complexion, as we know, was repeated often in Phipps's public admission of his attraction, throughout his life, to women who resembled her. One of his most significant literary credos—"our mothers make us most"—was embodied in much of his writing. The loaf-giver, the life-giver. It was the dominating influence of the lisping young mother figure in *The Purple Cloud* that led to the prospect of a new beginning for the human race. Despite Phipps's many importunities to his mother, she was never to send him the "likeness" he requested.[211]

Nov. 3rd '97
3, Grays Inn Place. W.C.

My darling Mumsie:

I haven't been writing to you lately, chiefly on account of the fact that Gussie is here, and, I presume, writes to you fairly regularly, as she has a mania for writing, and nothing to do.

She told me the other day that you had written to her, which made me feel rather jealous, as nobody writes to <u>me.</u> I understand, by the way, that Harriet for some queer and secret reason of her own does not write to Gussie now. This is very absurd. Harrie, surely, is quite old enough to know better. I want her to write and tell Sal that I have received her message, and will write her soon, and should also be glad, meanwhile, to hear from her.

Well, darling mama, I often think of you with the old love in all its freshness. I have been thinking seriously of going out to you this winter, but I'm afraid it isn't quite convenient yet, though that I hope, will come, too. Would you be glad to see me, your own, your very own, once more? Do you love me still, I wonder? Can a mother forget.... She <u>may!</u> Yet will not I forget thee!

> Of myself, I haven't really very much news to write. I took over little Cyril to Paris in the Autumn to shew him about, and since I have come back I have been writing a novel. Novel-writing, and smoking, and riding the bicycle, and paying and receiving visits—that is my life, more or less.
>
> I am sending you £5 to buy yourself a little wine and snuff, and you must try & write to say whether you have received it. I haven't got that photograph of yours yet. I wish you would take it & send it. Don't forget that a little wine will be good for you.
>
> Yours till I die,
> Phipps.

The novel that he was writing was possibly "The Man-Stealers" or "The Last Miracle." He would soon be persuaded to start "The Empress of the Earth" (*The Yellow Danger*) begun, as John Squires has noted, "in the closing days of 1897," as trouble broke out between Germany and China.[212] The success of this serial would set his feet firmly in this new format. Novel writing, for serial publication, would soon consume Phipps's time, and the short story writing that had been his staple for so long would generally be laid aside for the next few years. The serials, written by formula to meet publication deadlines and requested word counts, and then revising them for book publication, would command his time. As income makers, however, the serials would far exceed the earning capacity of short stories.

The following year, 1898, would prove to be the most productive in Phipps's career and mark a personal turning point. He would achieve a level of book-selling success that he could only have dreamed of a few years earlier. He was already planning and beginning to write the major novels that would survive him—*The Last Miracle*, the towering and madly, magnificently written "The Second Adam" (*The Purple Cloud*), that great adventure *The Lord*

of the Sea. He would marry Carolina García-Gomez, the lovely Parisian-Spaniard he met while ice-skating in Paris, on November 3, 1898—in the presence of Arthur Machen, with the wedding breakfast planned by Amy Machen.

Within weeks, his love child, Ada Phipps Seward Shiel, would be born in London to Nellie Seward, of Cheltenham, the model for the heroine of *The Yellow Danger.* Lina would bear him a daughter, Dolores Katherine, in July 1900, prior to their separation and Lina's death, apparently in 1903. Contrary to historical tradition regarding the fate of Lola, Shiel was still visiting a little "seven-year old" in Paris at Christmas in 1908. Nellie Seward moved to South Africa and left Ada in the care of her mother. In the late spring of 1908, Phipps began a love affair with Lydia Furley, a brilliant intellectual, an activist in the "woman's movement" who shared his enthusiasm for educational reform, Jesus, the wind. They would marry in January 1919, five years after the death of her common-law husband, William Arthur Jewson. A love of women and writing would sustain Shiel until his death on February 14, 1947.

The fuller story of those additional successes and tragedies that lay ahead of Shiel, on his island in the sea of London, before he became just another shape in the fire, is still to tell.

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"The Tale of Gaston and Mathilde" illus by G. Henry Evison *The Red Magazine* (12, No 68, Nov 1, 1912): 220–228.

"Dark Lot of One Saul" *The Grand Magazine* George Newnes Ltd, London & NY (14, No 84, Feb 1912): 843-859.

To Arms! Illus by Christopher Clark, R. I. (serialized in *The Red Magazine,* Vol. XV, No 90, Jan 1, 1913–Vol. XVI, No 95, March 15, 1913).

"The Torture of Fear" *Weekly Tale Teller* (No. 210, May 10, 1913): 1–7.

"The Whirligig" *Weekly Tale Teller* (No 258, April 11, 1914) 1-11."The Place of Pain" illus by Arthur Twidle *The Red Magazine* (21, No 122, May 1, 1914): 181–187.

"The Waif" ills by Louis Smythe *The Red Magazine* (21, No 125, June 15, 1914): 576–581.

"16, Brook Street" illus by Fred Holmes *The Red Magazine* (22, No 128, Aug 1, 1914): 272+. (This issue also contains at p. 220 Shiel's contribution to "The Red Round Table" regarding "The Ideal Wife.")

"One Man in a Thousand" *The Red Magazine* (No 138, June 1, 1915): 774–780.

"Three Men and a Girl" *The Yellow Magazine* (Feb 6, 1922, No 50).

"Many a Tear" (serialized in *The Daily Herald,* London, Feb 9, 10, 11, 1927).

"In 2073 A.D." (Serialized in *The Daily Herald,* London, March 12, 13, 14, 15, 1928).

"Things that Frighten Me" *The Daily Chronicle* (April 18, 1929).

"How to be Happy" *The Plain Dealer* (I, No 1, Sept 1933): 28–29.

"Many a Tear" *The Argosy Magazine* (UK) (16, No 101, Oct 1934): 95–100.

"Time-Travelling" *Tomorrow* (2, No 3, Autumn, 1938): 12.

"Travelling While You Dream" *The English Digest* (2, No 2, Dec 1939): 41–43.

"The S. S." *Encore Magazine,* part one (9, No 47, Jan 1946): 1–11; part two (9, No 48, Feb 1946): 224–238.

"Cummings Monk" [a lightly edited version of "He Wakes an Echo"] *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* NY (7, No 27, Feb 1946): 66–78.

"Writing and Myself" *The Literary Digest* (2, No 3, Autumn 1947): 14–16.

"A Case For Deduction" by M. P. Shiel and John Gawsworth *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, NY (12, No 60, Nov 1948): 84–107.

The Purple Cloud by M. P. Shiel, ills by Lawrence, [abridged by the editor from the 1930 Vanguard text] in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries,* NY, Vol. 10, No 5, June 1949, pp 10–112.

"The Persistence of Personality After Death" *Enquiry* (2, No 2, August 1949).

"The Place of Pain" *Avon Fantasy Reader,* NY (No 16, 1951): 76-84.

"The Return of Prince Zaleski" by M. P Shiel [and John Gawsworth] *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* NY (25, No 1, Jan 1955): 82-88.

"The Secret Panel" *The Saint Mystery Magazine* (UK) (10, No 1, March 1964) 64–74.

"Of Myself" & "An Address to the Horsham Rotary Club" *The Aylesford Review* (7, No 3, Autumn 1965): 139–145.

"Tulsah" *Incredible Adventures* (No 1, Robert Weinberg, Chicago, 1977): 88–95.

"The Pale Ape" translated into Japanese by Takukomeya (*New Series of Horror and the Supernatural,* Tokyo, June, 1977, Vol. 5).

End Notes

Since my initial effort at preparing a biography of M. P. Shiel was pre-empted by career, family, and other personal interests about 1961, the huge archive of books, manuscripts, correspondence, photographs and other material relating to Shiel that I had urged into the collections of the University of Texas starting in 1956 lay fallow. But the ongoing interest of A. Reynolds Morse in Shiel remained, and was fanned into new life in the late 1970s by the indefatigable young scholar John Squires, whose biographical, bibliographical and critical research regarding Shiel was joined by other fresh hands soon after. This has been enhanced by the significant genealogical research into the Shiell family by Richard Shiell and Dorothy Anderson of Australia, whose family origins derive also from the island of Montserrat and a likely common ancestor in a great-grandfather of M. P. Shiel.

Were it not that Shiel's original literary executor, John Gawsworth, gathered copies of family letters, and jotted notes relating to family lore on anything within his reach as Shiel shared memories with him, much of what we know of M. P. Shiel would have been forever lost. Alan Gullette, a Shiel enthusiast in his own right, is making much of this effort available on a worldwide basis through Internet presentation.

In digging afresh in the vaults of the Ransom Center and in exchanging facts with a new generation of admirers of M. P. Shiel's writing, it has been possible to add new information about the li

and works of Shiel, to make corrections to an older piece of this book, and to publish it greatly enlarged and anew where its wider availability may lead to the unearthing of further facts about this fascinating writer and the worlds from which he grew.

1. There has been some uncertainty as to whether Matthew Phipps Shiell was born on July 20, 1865 or July 21, 1865. A copy of Phipps's birth certificate that A. Reynolds Morse located on Plymouth, Montserrat on his first trip "in quest of Redonda" in 1978 indicated that MPS was born on July 20, 1865, as listed by Christopher Skerrett, District Registrar. However, MPS consistently listed his birthday as July 21 throughout his life. His enrollment record at Harrison College bears the July 21 date. And on July 21, 1887, his father wrote him that his birthday had again arrived and apologized for not mentioning it in advance. A transcription of the birth certificate is pictured in A. Reynolds Morse, *The Quest for M. P. Shiel's Realm of Redonda* (Cleveland, Ohio: Reynolds Morse Foundation, 1979), p. [23]) and reprinted in his *Works*, chapter 9, vol. III, 606.

2. Matthew Dowdy Shiell wrote his son on September 10, 1887 that he would be 63 years old on September 18. There is no other record extant that confirms or contradicts this information. "Burials in the Parish of St. Anthony in the Island of Montserrat 1888," where Matthew D. Shield [*sic*] is recorded as buried January 7th, 1888, abode Plymouth, 63 years, ceremony performed by A. Jamison. Original holograph letter from Matthew to his son 10 Sept. 1887 (the Ransom Center, UT Austin). Photograph of burial record in Morse, *The Quest for M. P. Shiel's Realm of Redonda* (p. [77]) and reprinted in his *Works*, chapter 9, vol. III, 660.

The most detailed account of M. P. Shiel's family is contained in a letter from Shiel's sister Harriet Garry Shiell to her niece, Olive Horsford, on February 2, 1932 (typed copy, the Ransom Center, UT Austin). This letter answers many of the questions raised over the years, including those by Shiel himself!—about their ancestry. All references in this work attributed to Harriet Shiell about these family details are based on that document.

3. Photograph of birth certificate for Priscilla reproduced in Morse, *The Quest for Redonda,* and burial record information provided in same source (p. [77]) and reprinted in his *Works*, chapter 9, vol. III, 660. The details that follow about her are contained in Harriet's letter to Olive Horsford mentioned in the preceding note.

4. *Caribbeana: Being Miscellaneous Papers Relating to the History, Genealogy, Topography, and Antiquities of the British West Indies.* Ed. by Vere Langford Oliver. (Toronto, Ont.: CanDoo Creative Publishing, 2000), 8 vols. This set was originally published at the beginning of the 20th century and is an indispensable resource for West Indian studies and genealogical research.

5. Coleridge, 171. It is likely the "noted Papist" he mentions was Dudley Semper, who had all his slaves baptized by Fr. O'Hannan, a Catholic priest, in 1824.

6. Richard Shiell and Dorothy Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* The Possible Origins of Matthew Phipps Shiell. http://alangullette.com/lit/shiel/family/Possible Origins. htm

7. Anderson and Shiell, *Montserrat to Melbourne: The Story of a Shiell Family* ([Melbourne]: 1985), 9.

8. "Magellan—The Ships Encyclopedia," http://www.cimorelli.com/magellan/default. htm This source lists the 1841 and 1843 visits. Dorothy Anderson observed that the *Montserrat Water Journals* notes the ship's arrival in Montserrat sometime in 1842 under Captain Watlington.

9. John Horsford, *A Voice from the West Indies,* 55.

10. Ibid.

11. Shiell and Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* Queely Shiell (1755–1847). William Shiell (1785–1853). John Shiell (1788–1847) James Phipps Shiell (1790–1834) http://alangullette. com/lit/shiel/#family. T. Savage English reported that Queely owned 655 slaves on Montserrat and one attending his daughter in St. Vincent (p. 280)

12. Ibid.

13. Sturge, 87-88.

14. Shiell and Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* William Shiell (1785-1853) http://alangullette.com/lit/shiel/ family/Shiell_William. htm

15. Hall, 159-160.

16. Ibid.

17. Shiell and Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* William Shiell (1785-1853) http://alangullette. com/lit/shiel/family/Shiell_William. htm

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Shiell and Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* James Phipps Shiell (1790-1834) http://alangullette. com/lit/shiel/family/Shiell_James_Phipps. htm

21. Richard Shiell and Dorothy Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* The Possible Origins of Matthew Phipps Shiell. http://alangullette.com/lit/shiel/family/PossibleOrigins. htm

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Riva Berleant-Schiller, 270-271, 277-278.

25. Ibid.

26. Semper, "Last Will," 3-4.

27. Wheeler, 35. Demets, 5. Original source for President's contribution misplaced.

28. Shiell and Anderson, *Shiell Genealogy: Essays.* William Shiell (1785-1853) [and] John Shiell (1788-1847)

http://alangullette.com/lit/shiel/family/Shiell_William.htm

http://alangullette.com/lit/shiel/family/Shiell_John.htm

29. Anderson and Shiell, *Montserrat to Melbourne.*

30. Notes by Dorothy Anderson, gathered from Colonial Office records for research relating to her great-great grandfather, William Shiell (1823-1899), and shared by Richard Shiell with Harold Billings via FAX on 23 April 2004.

31. Ibid.

32. Shiel, "About Myself" (1901), 630

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Margaret Mead, *Letters from the Field 1925-1975* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 291.

36. Shiel, "About Myself," (1901), 630.

37. Shiel, "About Myself," (1948), 2.

38. Shiel, "About Myself" (1901), 630.

39. Matthew Dowdy Shiell wrote Phipps and Augusta both in June 1887 about their mother's impatience with him. Using his own religious pronouncements against him must have been particularly galling: "... she pharisees like prides herself on her religion ..." Holograph letter from MDS to Phipps, 10 June 1887 (the Ransom Center.)

40. Shiel, "About Myself," (1901), 630.

41. There is no single source for the names and dates of birth and death for the Shiell sisters. Until late in 2004 it was presumed, for instance, that Augusta must have had a middle name as is known for the other three sisters. As it develops, "Horsford's," the newly adopted contemporary name for SL Horsford & Co. LTD, has provided online a brief history of the firm, noting that the Shiell interests in the firm were sold early in 1929 following the death of Alberta Augusta Horsford. So, Augusta was the middle name of Gussie, never previously mentioned in Shiell family correspondence, records or by John Gawsworth. Horsford's also lists the full name of Samuel Lamartine Horsford, previously identified only as Samuel L. One can only presume that the names of the Shiell sisters were likely based on maternal family members, probably Blake or Harman.

42. These photographs are located in the Ransom Center, UT Austin.

43. The "Horsfords" firm web site provides online the following history of S. L. Horsford & Co. http://www. horsfords. com/horsford/index. "The business was founded in 1875 when the Firm of Geo. W Bennett & Co of St John's, Antigua opened a branch in Basseterre, St. Kitts. Mr. Samuel Lamartine Horsford who was at that time the Accountant at Geo. W Bennett & Co was appointed as Manager of the St. Kitts branch. In February 1880 the business traded under the name 'The Estates Agency Depot' and was a partnership between Messrs Geo. W. Bennett & Co. and Mr. John Hardtman Berkeley, planter of Shadwell Estate, St. Kitts. In 1885, Mr. Samuel Lamartine Horsford purchased the business from its previous owners and started trading as S. L. Horsford and Co. On the 31 day of January 1912, a Company Limited By Shares and named S L Horsford and Co. LTD was registered on the island of St. Christopher under The Companies Act 1884 (No 20 of 1884) of the Leeward Islands.

In January 1929, Mr. B. Marshall purchased the shares owned by the late Mrs. Alberta Augusta Horsford (widow of Mr. S. L Horsford Dec'd) and the four surviving offspring of Mr. & Mrs. Horsford." [Cyril, Olive, Muriel and either Leonard or Reginald were still alive.]

44. The black-edged funeral card for Ada Catherine Shiell is located in the Ransom Center, UT Austin.

45. The note that Gawsworth made regarding Sallie's death date is mentioned in a footnote by Reynolds Morse in his *Works* "Shielography Updated," 421. Morse says he noticed the information in London in a notebook among the mass of disorganized material Gawsworth left to Jon Wynne-Tyson.

46. John Gawsworth indicated that Harriet Shiell died in 1946. Shiel wrote Olive Horsford on 6 September 1946: "My Olive / The enclosed will explain itself. I am sending to Miss Winifred Manchester, Sandy Point, St. Kitts, a contribution towards the funeral expenses ..." (Holograph copy by Gawsworth of this note in the Ransom Center, UT Austin) Description of Harriet by Arthur Ransome in his *Autobiography,* 81.

47. The sale of the Shiell family interests in the SL Horsford & Co firm in early 1929 followed Augusta's death in June or July 1927. Harriet wrote Olive from Montserrat on July 15, 1927, thanking her for the details of her "Ma's" illness and death. She had even "tried to picture how she looked lying there silent in death, but I have failed, and I do envy your uncle, and all, who had the privilege of having a last look on the poor dead face ... I should say that your home now should be with Muriel. Ada is quite well and was of course very grieved to hear of your Ma's death." It appears that Gussie was living in London with her daughters when she died, so Harriet had probably gone to stay with her niece Ada on St. Kitts. She wrote Phipps on 16 November 1928 that she had just returned to "the old place" on Montserrat after "a never to be forgotten six months in St. Kitts." The devastating hurricane of 12 September 1928 that killed 42, injured 100, and left hundreds homeless on Montserrat probably made the Shiell home in Plymouth uninhabitable. But Harriet would then have already been at St. Kitts for several months. Because of the devastation, Harriet could not have returned earlier if she had wished. (Wheeler, 50). Typed copies of letters by Olive Horsford are in the Ransom Center.

48. Holograph copy of letter from MPS to his sister, Augusta, 19 October 1924, 88 Grand Park Terrace, Chiswick W. (the Ransom Center, UT Austin) Did she hear of Montserrat's hurricane? Just to have been there, "to see that wind and feel it in my hair!" Harriet had been in St. Kitts at the time, he tells Gussie. (This storm was not the devastating one of 1928 that almost obliterated every church on the island. Augusta was then dead.)

49. The circumstances that elicited this remark are discussed in Phipps's letter of 12 February 1895 to his sister Augusta.

50. Typescript copy by John Gawsworth of letter by MPS to his sister, Augusta, Rugby Chambers, Bedford Road, W. C., 14 January 1895 (the Ransom Center) Gawsworth notes that this letter was written on embossed dove grey paper—suggesting better quarters? The letter regarding Shiel's race is from Walter Goldwater, "Shiel, Van Vechten and the Question of Color," in Morse, *M. P. Shiel in Diverse Hands,* 75–76.

John Squires has pointed out an important passage in Shiel's novel *The Yellow Wave* that forecasts the evolution of the races and is certainly a significant hint that Shiel was aware of being "flushed brown":

> "I wonder what it will all end in!"
> "Intermarriage, no doubt," said Mr. England. "Remember, Peterson, that Man is not a white animal: white men are a freak, like white mice or white horses, and will soon disappear. I have heard M[urino] make the same remark, and Schopenhauer, too, you remember makes it: that is why, says Schopenhauer, a fair woman likes dark men, because she has an instinct to return, in her offspring, to the original dark type of the race; but dark women have no corresponding impulse to marry fair men; in fact, often shrink from them. We fair types are a temporary accident, only human by courtesy. So I look forward three hundred years to one universal race, highly evolved, of a flushed brown as clear as the ruby, with melting, almond eyes, and a thick little coral mouth, with little pearls for teeth." [*The Yellow Wave*, p 250.]

J. Squires, "Some Contemporary Themes in Shiel's Early Novels," in Morse, *Diverse Hands,* 280.

51. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 3.

52. This is referenced in Morse, *Works*, vol. II, part 1, 27. Told to Morse by George Locke and quoted in Locke's *A Spectrum of Fantasy: The Bibliography and Biography of a Collection of Fantastic Literature* (London: Ferret Fantasy, 1980, p. 194)

53. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 1.

54. Shiel, "About Myself" (1901), 630.

55. Horsford, *A Visit,* 93.

56. Shiel, "On Panic," *Science, Life and Literature,* 198.

57. Shiel, "On Reading," *This Knot of Life,* 68-69.

58. Shiel, "On Panic," *Science, Life and Literature,* 197.

59. In addition to the characters that are based on Shiel's boyhood friends that are mentioned here, there are undoubtedly many others scattered throughout his novels and short stories if one were familiar enough with the individuals to spot them in the fiction. In some cases, like that of Mary Semper, in *How the Old Woman Got Home* (1927), he simply attached a familiar name to a character without there being any specific known characteristic that belonged to both the real and fictional person.

Perhaps even more so than characters, were the geographic locations that he frequented in his personal life that he used in his fiction. Even in short stories, like "Many a Tear,' (published in *Pearson's,* New York, September 1908 issue) wherein there seems little to relate the location to the fictional events, the story is placed near Woolaston where a young love of his, Mary Price, lived in years just before 1908. The accuracy with which out-of-the-way but real physical locations are described in *The Purple Cloud* has attracted the interest of literary geography scholars.

60. From holograph notes by John Gawsworth of information told him by Shiel that he recorded on the backs of old photographs (in Ransom Center, UT Austin) One of Shiel's several women friends insisted that "there is much of your own personality" in the character Shan in *The White Wedding* so she had started thinking of him as "Shan." (Holograph letter from Margaret Bertram Hobson to MPS, Gordon House, Billinghay, Linc. [1908] the Ransom Center, UT Austin).

61. Note by Gawsworth on photograph of Paddy Burke (the Ransom Center).

62. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 2-3.

63. Ibid.

64. Shiel, *This Knot of Life,* p. 51. From the introductory essay, "On Reading," reprinted somewhat revised and as "On Reading" and "On Writing" by John Gawsworth in *Science, Life and Literature* and also in Morse, *Diverse Hands.* (It is difficult to understand how Shiel was able to convince the publisher to include this dense essay in an Edwardian romantic novel.)

65. William Drysdale, "A Visit To Montserrat: Two Hours in Plymouth, Its Capital Town. Where Steamers Do Not Often Land And Strangers Are As Good As A Circus - A Reception In The Market Place," *The New York Times* (Sunday, Dec.29, 1885): 4.

66. Ibid.

67. Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies.*

68. Morse, *The Quest for Redonda*, p. [29] On the basis of the memory of the son (John C. Kelsick), of Harriet Shiell's attorney, Morse identifies this as the location of Matthew Dowdy Shiell's store. MDS mentions two locations for the store in his letter to Phipps of 13 May 1887—one at O'Glaria House where he had been before Phipps left, and his present location, not identified (holograph original located in the Ransom Center). Photograph of Shiell home in the Ransom Center. It appears that the Shiell home was not the location of the first store, although Matthew probably relocated the store to the family home after his strokes. The "Lease" is located in the Ransom Center.

69. Holograph letter (in the hand of Sallie Shiell Killikelly?) from Priscilla Shiell to MPS, 26 June 1905 (the Ransom Center, UT Austin).

70. Holograph letter from Harriet Shiell to MPS, Basseterre, St. Kitts, 12 Nov.1944 (the Ransom Center) The firm of J. G. Eid was still in business in Plymouth in 1973.

71. Shiel, *This Knot of Life,* 68.

72. Ibid. Footnote, 36.

73. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 4

74. Ibid, 3.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Shiel, "About Myself" (1901), 630.

78. Shiel, "The Montserrat Spectator," mutilated text.

79. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 4.

80. Holograph letter dated 21 November 1946 from Cyril Horsford to M. P. Shiel (the Ransom Center)

81. Oliver, *The History of the Island of Antigua.*

82. The birth dates (years) of the two Horsford daughters have been estimated from those of their brothers, who appear to be older than the girls.

83. Holograph letter from MDS to his son, 29 April 1887 (the Ransom Center) There is no information that can be found regarding Rev. Killikelly's background. The Killikelly family was one of long historical record and importance on Barbados, and one would think that he was a member of this family, although perhaps not from a legitimate line, as was so frequently still the case for many of the persons in this book.

84. Census of England, 1891.

85. I am extremely grateful to Richard Wildman, School Archivist of Bedford Modern School, England, for sharing information about the Horsford sons' attendance at the school by e-mail on 5 November 2004. In response to my query as to whether racial prejudice or color might have affected admission to the school in the 1890s, Mr. Wildman responded by e-mail on 8 November 2004: "As far as I know, there wasn't any racial prejudice at that time (or later) as far as the Harpur Trust schools were concerned. From the 1880s, Bedford was a favourite retirement town for 'Anglo-Indians', which meant former (British) Indian Army and Indian Civil Service officers who had married relatively late (to younger wives) and came to Bedford because new houses (with servants) could be rented cheaply, and Harpur Trust school fees (and the infant mortality rate) were low. In the case of families with a long tradition of service in India, especially, there would have been a likelihood of mixed race ancestry. There were also similar links with South Africa, and on a smaller scale with the West Indies and South America."

It is also interesting to note that Augusta was staying at 9 Keppel Street during a period when Leonard was in school. Phipps, his wife Carolina, daughter Dolores Katherine (Lola), and sister Harriet were living at 11 Keppel Street at the time of the 1901 Census. Phipps had earlier lived at no. 7.

86. The history of the S. L. Horsford Co. is detailed under footnote no. 43.

87. The precise date of Samuel Horsford's death in 1913 is unknown. It must be presumed that he was in London at the time of his death, as would have been Augusta, Cyril, Olive, Muriel, and probably Leonard who wrote his Uncle Phipps in 1916 suggesting a firm, The Hepworth Co., to which MPS might offer a screenplay. This was the "White Wedding" synopsis according to a note written by John Gawsworth on the letter (the Ransom Center) There are references to another niece of Shiel's in London, Nella, but it is not likely that she was a sister of Olive and Muriel, but more likely a daughter of Leonard, but there is no proof of this.

88. The history of the S. L. Horsford Co. is detailed under footnote 43.

89. *The Star*, Tuesday, October 26, 1937. Available at the Javier Marías web site http://www. javiermarias.es/REDONDIANA/redondaarticles.html

90. Sunday Referee, October 24, 1937. Available at the Javier Marías web site http://www. javiermarias.es/REDONDIANA/redondaarticles. html

91. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 2. There may be a kernel of truth to some of this. The US Guano Islands Act of 1856 (amended, 1872) provided that Americans who discovered guano deposits upon unclaimed islands could petition the US government for protection of their claims from third parties or foreign governments. In 1863 the US and British governments had debated this very issue regarding American claims on the island of Sombrero at the northern end of the Leewards, but let the matter rest until later to resolve. M.D. Shiell might have tried to exercise a claim to Redonda in order to gain guano-mining rights. Though Redonda is not mentioned, a history of this issue is described in Skaggs *The Great Guano Rush*. (Redonda was formally annexed by Britain to Antigua in 1872.)

92. *The Star,* Tuesday, October 26, 1937. Bishop Mitchinson was most active with events relating to Harrison College in 1880, just before Phipps's first attendance at the school on January 1, 1881, so this is most likely the only contact that Shiel ever had with him.

93. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 3.

94. H.N. Haskell. "Notes on the Foundation and History of Harrison College," *The Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* (9, no. 2): 64-68.

95. Ibid.

96. It is difficult to imagine that when Shiel wrote the lengthy letter to the Horsfords from his early days in London in 1885 that he would list the works he was reading as Dickens, Longfellow, "and then" the Bible!

97. Haskell, "Notes," loc cit.

98. Per a note by John Gawsworth in the Ransom Center

99. This document is in the Ransom Center

100. This document is in the Ransom Center. The text is reprinted in Morse, *The Quest for Redonda*. Mr. Dyett went to considerable effort in making this notarized document look official, including the attachment of a red ribbon to it.

101. It may be that the seriousness of the family's financial circumstances did not become clear until Phipps found himself in London virtually penniless, and his father paralyzed from two strokes. If speculations about his life before he left Montserrat for a final time are true, Phipps would have been rather sheltered at home during the time until he was 11 or 12, then at school in Devonshire, then at Harrison College. He would not have had to manage his own finances until he was in London at age 19.

102. Holograph letter from Matthew Dowdy Shiell to Phipps 15 April 1887 (the Ransom Center). "The 25th instant will be two years since I saw you last." It is possible, of course, that Matthew saw his son elsewhere, on some occasion after he had already left Montserrat; but this seems highly unlikely given the difficulties and expenses in travel described in the Shiell correspondence. If there is an alternative to Matthew seeing his son depart from elsewhere than Montserrat, it might be St. Kitts from whence a ship might have sailed or steamed for England.

103. Although MDS did not make this comment to Phipps until a letter in 1887, he probably told him the same thing in person. It appears to represent a concern that he voiced in different ways to Phipps on a rather regular basis. In another letter, he says not to "make strange."

What type of possible "strange" behavior by Phipps he anticipated, or what the basis of it was, is not clear. But there must have been a history of behavior that concerned the father.

104. There are no specific birth or death dates available for Olive Horsford, who was still corresponding with her uncle in 1944. (Based on her brothers' birth dates, it is estimated that she was born about 1879.) Shortly after 1900 she was studying art and was producing "miniatures"—probably small paintings based on photographs. She visited Jerusalem and Bethlehem among many other sites, and her Uncle Phipps envied her this particular trip since he would have liked to search for the tomb of Lazarus. During the German bombing of London one of her feet was badly injured, and Phipps repeatedly cautioned her, "Don't let them amputate!" Her sister Muriel was also in a building that was bombed twice, supposedly against the odds. There are also hints that one of the sisters (probably Muriel) managed property in London. (From correspondence between MPS and Olive in the Ransom Center)

105. Gawsworth's holograph copy of Shiel's lengthy letter of ca. June 1885 to Horsford family (the Ransom Center)

106. Shiel to his sister Augusta in a letter dated 18 November 1885 (typescript transcription by John Gawsworth) located in the Ransom Center.

107. Holograph letter from Lydia Furley to MPS, Ardingly, Hayward's Heath, n.d. [1909?] (the Ransom Center)

108. Holograph letter from Lydia Furley to MPS, [London, November? 1908] (the Ransom Center)

109. Holograph letter from Lydia Furley to MPS [London] Tuesday–13th [April 1909] (the Ransom Center)

110. Holograph letters from Matthew Dowdy Shiell to Phipps, 4 February 1887 and 5 March 1887 referring to how happy Phipps had been with Mr. Leaf at Matlock. MDS says he had advised Phipps not to leave. (With contemporary photographs of MPS at Hunt Bridge House, Matlock. All located in the Ransom Center)

111. Since Shiel was so adamant about studying medicine at St. Bart's it is quite possible that he gave up the teaching position at Hunt Bridge House in Derbyshire to go to London for this purpose. Based on his father's comments to him about the good situation he had with Mr. Leaf,

and evidence of a pleasant time that he had at this Derbyshire school, one would think it must have been a powerful motive that led him from Hunt Bridge House to London at this time in 1886.

112. There is no contemporary correspondence relating to Ada's death other than the funeral card. MDS could easily speak of her with reference to what he thought was inadequate medical attention following his own stroke early in 1887, and Phipps referred to her—"How silent was Ada!"—when lecturing his father in 1887. One can only wonder whether this was a personality trait of Ada, or whether a physical condition might have been involved. The fact that she was still unmarried at 31 seems unusual, except that Harriet told Olive Horsford that their father did not even want the two elder daughters to look at a man.

113. Matthew Dowdy Shiell's letters at this time suggest that he owned two vessels in 1887 prior to the loss of the "Dreadnaught"—that vessel and possibly the "Gold Hunter" which he would have been unable to master following his stroke.

114. What common goods these stores carried are not known. Based on the clothing and materials that MDS sent Phipps from the shop, and given that Sallie was able to select goods from the shop for her dowry, it appears that the emphasis was on basic mercantile items, but there is just not sufficient information to be certain.

115. It is unclear why there is no extant correspondence from MDS to his son prior to this time. It is especially puzzling as to what Phipps was doing between the period he left Hunt Bridge House in Derbyshire at the end of the summer in 1886 and these early months in 1887. One can speculate that he might actually have been sitting through lectures at St. Bart's. In any event, Gussie was on her way to check on him, and he would soon start a teaching position at Hornsey.

116. Phipps's address during this period is unknown. Whether Gussie found him in living quarters preparing to go to the Anglo-French High School in Hornsey, or whether he was already at Hornsey is not clear.

117. Ibid.

118. Holograph transcription in a contemporary hand of both the request from Rev. C. Killikelly and the response by Matthew Dowdy Shiell, front and back of same sheet (the Ransom Center)

119. Phipps never commented about the Rev. C. Killikelly in any letter read to date.

120. This correspondence represents all that is known of Rev. C. Killikelly. If his were a forced retirement, after eighteen years of marriage to Sallie, he would have been considerably older than she when they married.

121. This is an interesting comment because it suggests that the practice of concubinage was still on the minds of Montserrat's inhabitants, and it further underscores MDS's lecturing Phipps every time he uses language that the father disapproves.

122. Ibid. "Nello," the name of MDS's dog, sounds like a plantation name.

123. Holograph letter from Matthew Dowdy Shiell to Phipps 15 April 1887 (the Ransom Center)

124. The issue of when MDS last saw Phipps is discussed under note 101.

125. Bromide of potassium was used as a sedative, while Easton's Syrup was prescribed as a restorative, containing quinine and strychnine in addition to iron. (Holograph letter from MDS to MPS, 15 April 1887, the Ransom Center) Dr. Richard Shiell comments that the £15 fee charged by Dr. Johnson was "enormous," possibly the equivalent of several thousand dollars today.

126. Holograph transcription by John Gawsworth of letter from Phipps to his father [April/May] 1887 from Anglo-French High School, Ferme Park Rd., Hornsey N. (the Ransom Center)

127. Holograph letter from MDS to Phipps, 24 April 1887 (the Ransom Center)

128. Ibid. It is unclear why Augusta and Sammie were married on Nevis. Sammie must have been working for Geo. W. Bennett & Co. of St. John's on Antigua (where he was born) at the time. Their first child, Reginald Shiell Horsford, was born on Antigua, and it does not appear that the family moved to St. Kitts until Horsford's firm opened a branch on that island in 1875.

129. Holograph letter from MDS to Phipps, 13 May 1887 (the Ransom Center)

130. Ibid.

131. Bethel plantation had been the property of Queely Shiell, of William Shiell, and later of the Joseph Sturge family, and the Sturge Montserrat Company that followed, as it bought up property all over Montserrat for virtually nothing after 1865, when Montserrat enacted the Encumbered Estates Act. This authorized sale of distressed property was enacted as many sugar estates were going bankrupt. Much of this land became lime orchards. It is not clear why Bethel would be an appropriate place to honeymoon, although it had a Methodist Church and a lovely setting. While Rev. Killikelly evidently was a minister on St. Vincent at this point, it also appears that by 1900 he was ministering on Nevis, considerably closer to Priscilla Shiell, and it was to Nevis that Priscilla moved to live with Sallie in 1900. While we know that Rev. Killikelly was retired by the church in 1905, there is no record of what became of him.

132. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 27 May 1887 (the Ransom Center)

133. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 10 June 1887 (the Ransom Center)

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid. At least one of the picture postcards sold at the Jas. Wall store in Plymouth in the early 20th century shows a sign hanging over a prominent building that says Llewellyn Wall Co. (A similar photograph does not show the sign.) This not only reminds one of the Florrie Wall mentioned in this letter, but of the "Mr. Llewellyn" for whom Phipps had jokingly suggested to his father that Harriet could become a concubine. Whether this firm was of Shiel's generation or later is not known.

Howard A. Fergus, the author of a number of volumes about Montserrat, includes a sketch of John Clifford Llewellyn Wall in his *Gallery Montserrat*. J. C. L. Wall was a prominent businessman and politician on Montserrat (b. 1903) who succeeded his grandfather, James J. Wall, and father, William Llewellyn Wall, as a leading merchant and promoter of educational reforms. Harriet named him one of her executors in 1945. It is not clear if the Llewellyn Wall store related to the Llewellyn and Wall families, or if this was just the name of W. L. Wall on the shop's sign. (The general historical work of Fergus regarding Plymouth and Montserrat underlies much of this biography.)

136. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 6 July 1887 (the Ransom Center)

137. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 21 July 1887 (the Ransom Center)

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid. It is likely that it was more the wish of Matthew that Phipps come home than any real interest of Phipps.

140. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 19 August 1887 (the Ransom Center)

141. Ibid. "Moro" does not sound like an English or Irish name.

142. Typed copy by John Gawsworth of letter from Phipps to his sister Augusta, Guildhall Library, 13, Southhampton St., Pentonville N., 24 August 1887 (the Ransom Center)

143. The Conservative–Liberal party disagreements were as vigorous as they have always been. Phipps had written Horsford in 1895 that he was afraid the Conservatives were going to get in next time since they were winning all the bye-elections. Phipps probably began paying a great deal more attention to politics after socialistic theory grew in influence in the late 1880s, with his own attention strongly drawn to the theories of Henry George. Shortly after the turn of the century he attended (briefly) meetings of the Fabian Society, and became more aggressively involved as the suffrage movement for women strengthened. This may have been to influence a favorable opinion of him by Lydia Furley. A song such as "Two Lovely Black Eyes" could be equally popular in the music halls since it easily called to emotions on any party line.

144. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 10 September 1887 (the Ransom Center)

145. Ibid.

146. Ibid. This is the only reference that has been located that identifies the birth date of Matthew Dowdy Shiell.

147. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 28 September 1887, Nevis (the Ransom Center)

148. This document is located in the Ransom Center

149. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 28 September 1887, Nevis (the Ransom Center)

150. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 28 October 1887 (the Ransom Center)

151. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 11 November 1887 (the Ransom Center)

152. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 25 November 1887 (the Ransom Center) Superstition was obviously still a strong legacy of the slave days.

153. Ibid

154. Ibid. It is uncertain whether the "Gold Hunter" was currently owned by MDS or whether his reference was to a schooner owned at a previous time. Dr. Richard Shiell suggests still another explanation for MDS's reference to the "Gold Hunter."

A favorite pocket-watch of many years ago was a "gold Hunter," a British term for "a valuable gold pocket-watch some 2-3 inches in diameter, kept on a chain and very popular with pick-pockets."

155. Holograph letter from M.D. Shiell to Phipps, 9 December 1887 (the Ransom Center)

156. Burial record copied by A. Reynolds Morse on his trip to Montserrat (*The Quest for Redonda*), unpaged.

157. Note from Ada Killikelly is undated and photograph is not present (Ransom Center) Photo of Kathleen Manchester and Christmas card are in Ransom Center. Holograph letter, the Ransom Center

158. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 3-4. Morse adds a footnote citing a letter that MPS wrote the World Publishing Company for its 1946 edition of *The Purple Cloud,* printed on its dust jacket, in which MPS says he taught mathematics for two years in Derbyshire.

159. Morse, *The Works of M. P. Shiel,* vol. III, part 2, 423-424. (Text of Barrett letter)

160. Ibid.

161. Shiel, *The Invisible Voices* (London: Richards Press, 1935), 16-17.

162. cf. Website for King's College London Archives http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/quicksearch

163. Charlesworth Ross, "The First West Indian Novelist."

164. cf. Phipps's letter to Augusta, 24 August 1887.

165. cf. MDS letter to Phipps, 9 December 1887.

166. While this story published in *Rare Bits* is the first known work of fiction published by Phipps in England, there may have been previous unrecorded efforts. John Gawsworth revised this story somewhat and reprinted it as "The Master" in his *Crimes, Creeps and Thrills* (London, 1936) under the authorship of Shiel and himself (Fytton Armstrong).

167. The publication that resulted from the Congress is 12 volumes in length, with papers having been presented in a number of languages, but there is no indication of the part that MPS played in the publication of the papers of the various sessions in English translation.

168. Shiel, "About Myself" (1948), 5.

169 John Gawsworth indicates in a note that Phipps had an opportunity to work with Florence Nightingale in the Congress. There is no record of what that activity was.

170. Shiel, *Weird o'It,* 198. *The Invisible Voices,* 16-17.

171. Ibid.

172. Ibid.

173. That Phipps was able to have several of his works published in Newnes periodicals suggests an editorial link to someone in the firm. The connection might well have been Herbert Greenhough Smith, the editor of *The Strand Magazine* from 1891–1896. A copy of *The Lord of the Sea,* for sale through the Internet, bears the inscription: "H. Grenhough [*sic*] Smith, / From the Author. / July 10th, 1901." This reflected, perhaps, an earlier close relationship with Smith.

174. Copy by John Gawsworth of a note, that while lacking a salutation, was obviously written by Shiel to Morris Colles, 17 April 1892 (the Ransom Center)

175. Holograph copy by John Gawsworth of a note from Shiel to Morris Colles, 21 September 1892, 41 Coldbath Chambers, Roseberry Avenue, E.C. (the Ransom Center)

176. Note by John Gawsworth (the Ransom Center)

177. Shiel, *The Weird o' It,* 186 ff.

178. Flower and Maas, 279.

179. Holograph copy by John Gawsworth of letter from MPS to Morris Colles, 20 March 1893, Rugby Chambers (the Ransom Center)

180. Holograph copy by John Gawsworth of letter from MPS to Morris Colles, 31 July 1893, Rugby Chambers (the Ransom Center)

181. John D. Squires and Steve Eng, *Shiel and his Collaborators: Three Essays on William Thomas Stead, Louis Tracy and John Gawsworth.* (Kettering,Ohio:VaingloryPress [2004]),

http://alangullette.com/lit/shiel/essays/shiel_stead. htm

182. See, for example, note 59.

183. "Short Story Sources," holograph Ms. list of sort stories and their original place of publication in the hand of M. P. Shiel responding to questions by John Gawsworth, April 12, 1935 (the Ransom Center).

184. Typescript copy by John Gawsworth of letter by MPS to his sister, Augusta, Rugby Chambers, Bedford Road, W.C., 14 January 1895 (the Ransom Center) Gawsworth notes that this letter was written on embossed dove grey paper, probably suggesting improved finances and better housing.

185. Ibid

186. Ibid. Phipps kept referring to bringing Harriet "over." Harriet finally went to stay with Phipps in 1900, basically to help him look after his wife Lina and the soon-arrived baby daughter Dolores Katherine (July 26, 1900). His mother Priscilla Shiell wrote him on May 23, 1900: "My love to Lina. I hope the Good Lord will bring her safely through her trouble." She hopes too, that he and Harriet will get on well. The shop is closed. She is going to stay with Sall, although she is unhappy about it since she will not be able to "attend service." (Holograph letter Priscilla Shiell to Phipps, 23 May 1900, the Ransom Center)

187. Ibid.

188. Typescript copy by John Gawsworth of this letter from MPS to his sister Augusta Horsford, 12 February 1895, Rugby Chambers (the Ransom Center).

189. Mix, *A Study in Yellow,* 41.

190. "Mr. Louis Tracy," *The Bookman* (September 1904): 4.

191. John D. Squires, http://alangullette. com/lit/shiel/essays/RediscoveringMPShiel. htm

192. Typescript copy by John Gawsworth of this letter from MPS to his sister Augusta Horsford, 30 April 1895, (Ransom Center).

193. Morse, *The Works of M. P. Shiel*, vol. III, part 2, footnote, 422.

194. Penelope Fitzgerald, *Charlotte Mew and Her Friends.* (London: Collins, 1984), 64-66. 84-86.

195. Ella D'Arcy, *Some Letters to John Lane.* Ed. By Alan Anderson. (Edinburgh: Tragara Press. 1990), 6, 9.

196. John Gawsworth named Ian Fletcher and Jon Wynne-Tyson as joint executors of his estate. Fletcher was professor of English at the University of Reading and held several visiting professorships in the United States. He died while at Arizona State University in 1988. Gawsworth stayed with Fletcher's young family for some eighteen months in the early 1950s, and shared numerous stories with him regarding the several British authors with whom Gawsworth had made friends in the 1930s. Jon Wynne-Tyson, a first-rate novelist in his own right, was designated as Gawsworth's heir to the "Kingdom of Redonda" as King Juan II, and was given possession of numerous boxes of Gawsworth detritus following his death. JW-T retired from his "office" as king in 1997 and the noted Spanish novelist, Javier Marîas, assumed the "kingship." Wynne-Tyson has published his memoirs, *Finding the Words: A Publishing Life* (2004).

197. D'Arcy, *Letters,* 9.

198. When George Egerton acknowledged Shiel's thank-you note to her in 1935 for supporting his Civil List Pension application, she could not restrain herself from commenting, as she probably had years before, on the particular origin of the "Shiel" name, and suggested that he complete a form to submit to a genealogical society to learn more about the family! She remarked how particularly important it was to supply maternal information. She forgot to enclose the form, she acknowledged in a second letter. (Holograph letter from Egerton to Shiel, 31 July 1935, the Ransom Center)

199. J. Lewis May, *John Lane and the Nineties,* 78.

200. "Short Story Sources" list by Shiel (see note 182).

201. Typescript copy by John Gawsworth of this letter from MPS to his sister Augusta Horsford, 3 November 1896, 24 Percy Circus, W.C. (Ransom Center

202. "Lizzie" Chambers had loaned MDS £1 to send to Phipps in 1887.

203. "Afternoons at home, evenings in the drawing-room were features of social life in London. Only the shyest and most diffident young artist could avoid inclusions in some such circle. Jerome K. Jerome said that the 'At Homes' were so numerous it made his brain reel to remember them and that he usually turned up on the wrong day." Mix, 31.

204. Typescript copy of letter from MPS to his sister, Augusta, 3 November 1896, 24 Percy Circus, W.C. (the Ransom Center)

205. Shiel, *Shapes in the Fire* (London: John Lane, 1896; [Leyburn, North Yorkshire] Tartarus Press [2000], iii.

206. Ibid. , 134.

207. Mix, *A Study in Yellow,* 143-144, 160-161.

208. Ibid. 165.

209. Shiel, "The Good Machen," in *The Good Machen: A Centenary Tribute Recalled.* Certainly his description of Olivia Shakespear, mentioned specifically by name in this piece, matches every detail of beauty that Phipps admired in a woman. She and Yeats had their run at romance during 1894-96 with its consummation in early, cold 1896. It is unlikely that she and Shiel were ever more than minor acquaintances. See Harwood, *Olivia Shakespear and W.B. Yeats.*

210. Ibid.

211. Typescript copy by John Gawsworth of letter from MPS to his mother, Priscilla Shiell, 3 November 1897, 3 Grays Inn Place, W.C. (the Ransom Center)

212. Anyone interested in an excellent overall presentation of the life and work of M. P. Shiel should explore the works of John D. Squires listed in the References. Several of his essays are available online at Alan Gullette's MPS web site. Other print publications are available through JDS Books, P.O. Box 292333 Kettering OH 45429 U. S.

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The Author

Harold Billings has spent sixty years among libraries, books and book people. He served for twenty-five years as director of General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. In 2002 the American Library Association awarded him its annual Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award for his "long commitment to innovation in automation, resource sharing, and creative management." He is the author of *Magic and Hypersystems: Constructing the Information Sharing Library* and editor of *Edward Dahlberg: American Ishmael of Letters,* Dahlberg's *The Leafless American* and *A Bibliography of Edward Dahlberg.* He helped gather the remarkable archive of Shiel's works and documents for the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin that has served as a major resource for this biographical work.

A Note on the Type

The book has been set in Sabon,
a typeface of great clarity.
It was created by Jan Tschichold,
the distinguished German typographer.

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M. P. Shiel

West Indian born British author Matthew Phipps Shiel has been recognized for over a century as one of the most accomplished stylists and story tellers to emerge from the 19th century yellow nineties—author of such classics of the imagination as *The Purple Cloud, The Lord of the Sea, Shapes in the Fire* and a handful of supernatural tales that can stand with anyone's best.

This biography tells the story of his ancestors—the "Shiell" family, who commanded the island of Montserrat through its days of slavery and superstition—and of Shiel's own exciting youth in this volcanic wilderness, at school in Barbados and England, and his years as a young literary artist in London's days of Bohemian glory and decadence.

Never before published family photographs in the West Indies and the texts of previously unpublished letters and documents add color to this biography of Shiel in his formative years as a fascinating literary figure whose works continue to excite new cycles of readers.

Rebecca West: *"A writer of imperial imagination."*

Arthur Machen: *"Poe with an unearthly radiance."*

H.P. Lovecraft: *"Shiel has done so much better than my best that I am left breathless and inarticulate."*

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M. P. Shiel: A Biography of His Early Years

Harold Billings

Roger Beacham