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I am thankful to the University of Leicester Library for permission to reproduce some of the illustrations from the *Good Words* serialization of *At His Gates* from their copy of the periodical, and particularly to Dr Simon Dixon for doing the scanning so expeditiously. I am also grateful to the ever-helpful staff in the Manuscripts Department at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, for their assistance during my work in July–August 2015 on the correspondence between Margaret Oliphant and John Blackwood.

Finally, I am grateful to Wendy Toole of the School of Advanced Studies, University of London, for her suggestion as to the meaning of ‘minister sauce’ (Explanatory Note 60).
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ABBREVIATIONS

BM  Blackwood’s Magazine


GW  Good Words


MOWO  Margaret Oliphant Wilson Oliphant

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Part VI

Part VI, the final set of this twenty-five volume edition of the Selected Works of Margaret Oliphant, contains three novels. The previous five parts have adopted a chronological approach to representing her career as a journalist, literary critic, historian, travel writer, biographer, writer of short stories and novelist. However, as is appropriate to a final set, this part takes a summative approach, selecting a novel from each of the last three decades of a long and extraordinarily productive writing career. The tyro work of the 1850s will continue to be of interest to those considering the development of this professional woman of letters, but nowhere equals the novels of her later decades, while the 1860s has already been copiously represented within this edition by the complete run of the Carlingford Chronicles. Each of the three works in Part VI, At His Gates (1872); The Ladies Lindores (1883); and her farewell to the novel, Old Mr Tredgold (1896), appeared in serial form in different periodicals, suggesting both how adept MOWO became at placing her work, and the popularity of a name upon which editors could count to attract readers. Despite each novel reaching several editions, not one of them survived the rapid collapse in her reputation at the end of the nineteenth century.

Reasons having little to do with intrinsic literary merit are not hard to find to account for these novels falling from publishers’ lists by the end of the nineteenth century. Many of the obituaries appearing in the weeks after her death on 25 June 1897 were composed by members of a generation too young to have grown up looking forward to her next publication, or gaining a picture of her oeuvre as it developed over time. The publication, the month before she died, of a short essay accompanying the republication of two short stories, would have confirmed the opinion that her work belonged to a previous era. Although late works, both these short stories had continued to rework aspects of the complex plot of At His Gates (1872), but revisiting them had led her to reflect that they had both been ‘produced under the influence of the strange discovery which a man makes when he finds himself carried away by the retiring waters, no longer coming in upon the top of the wave, but going out’.1 Her long years as a reviewer had accustomed MOWO to accept inevitable changes in literary fashion with good grace, and to recognize

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that the domestic realism at which she excelled was fast being superseded by tales of masculine heroics, and the values of aestheticism – which were antithetical in the first case to the range of experience upon which her own work drew, and in the second to her beliefs about the function of fiction. The philosophical tone of this essay’s reflections, which might have persuaded publishers that ‘the problems of common life’ with which her fiction so often dealt, were likely to continue to entertain the general reader, was to be rudely shattered by the appearance of her autobiography in April 1899. Roughly a half of this posthumous publication had been written after her remaining son died in October 1894, and this portion was heavily coloured by desolate questioning of the point of her life’s work, and the dismal conclusion that ‘I shall not leave anything behind me that will live’. When an author appeared to have so little faith in the enduring powers of her own creations, it was scarcely surprising that these works were dropped as publishers looked towards fresh titles and fictional genres for a new century.

Hindsight makes it possible for us a century or so later to detect the seeds of the darker vision that would suffuse her later work already present in her novels of the 1870s, and to conclude that a realist’s appraisal of human nature, and a tendency to distrust idealism in its various forms, were an intrinsic part of her gift as a writer, rather than as a consequence of the last years of personal disappointment, disillusion and loss. Indeed these traits formed part of her considered theory of the social function of fiction. Lacking a formal education herself, and having been brought up in ‘the most singularly secluded way’, MOWO was very conscious that many young women of her own generation had received consolation, or picked up such ideas as they had of a wider world, from fiction. Overpowered by regret for the role she had played as a loving but unsupportive wife, Helen Drummond of At His Gates, flies ‘into the world of fiction as a frightened child flies into a lighted room, to escape the ghosts that are in the dark passages and echoing chambers’ but can derive little sustenance from the romances she devours. The Ladies Lindores devotes the better half of a chapter to a discussion between a young girl and an old woman about their differing perceptions of fiction’s relation to ‘real life’, while the narrator of Old Mr. Tredgold laments the rise of a fin de siècle fiction offering heartless heroines as models in a world to which the ethical concerns of older novels can have so little to say.

In this final novel MOWO dared to implement the stroke to which her theory of fiction had all along been leading: Old Mr. Tredgold contains no successful love-story. MOWO had always been troubled by the implication to be derived from most Victorian novels that romance and marriage formed the apex of a girl’s aspirations, partly because ‘the monotonous demand for a love-story . . . crushes out of court all the rest of life — so infinite in variety, so full of complication, so humorous, so mysterious, so natural and true’, and partly because it encouraged girls in a profoundly mistaken search for the ideal lover. At His Gates, with its women characters arranged along a spectrum from Helen Drummond, who is bound to be disappointed because she expects too much of her husband, to the coldly cynical Mrs Burton, could be read as a guide to MOWO’s anti-idealist
message, which was to commend to her readers ‘honest girls . . . capable of lov-
ing a man as his wife ought, without worshipping him as his slave, and without
ever bowing herself down in delicious inferiority before him, grovelling as many
heroines do’.

The consistency of MOWO’s determination to represent men as being as sub-
ject to human frailty as women led many of her readers and acquaintances to see
her as resolutely misandrist. The way in which the reputation gained through her
authorship preceded her is suggested by the confident assertion of a woman who
had met MOWO only once, when staying as a guest of an Eton master’s family:
‘Mrs Oliphant struck me as being rather antagonistically inclined towards the
lords of creation.’ Written shortly after this episode, The Ladies Lindores, with
its pictures of husbands and brothers who so easily fall into the role of coarse bul-
lies when they gain the money or worldly position to ensure they can exert their
will, might seem to endorse this visitor’s view, but its sequel, Lady Car (1889),
is anxious to make clear that some women’s clinging to the notion of the ideal
lover, in the face of such evidence, makes them equally culpable. In one respect
MOWO’s last novel might be said to redress the balance in male lovers’ favour.
Each of the suitors in Old Mr. Tredgold is prompted as much by genuine admira-
tion of the woman to whom he proposes as by the prospect of financial gain, and
in the case of the two men who would still be happy to marry the older sister at
the end of the novel, both are hard-working men of considerable integrity, even if
they do not measure up to the ‘fantastical’ dreams which she has nourished during
her lonely life. Our belief as readers in the doctor’s injured, stiff, but nonetheless
stalwart devotion to her, and the years of loneliness which led the Indian civil
servant to take another woman as his wife, is, incidentally, a tribute to the way
in which MOWO had learnt over the years to use the reader’s engagement with
characters over the real time of the many months that a serial took to appear, to
allow her characters time to mature.

Freed from the compulsion to concentrate her plotting energies on bringing
about the lasting bliss of hero and heroine, MOWO was able to devote detailed
attention to the larger social framework in which each set of characters oper-
ated. Each of the novels selected for this last set demonstrates her ability to tap
into the contemporary zeitgeist. Reviews of At His Gates repeatedly alluded to
the topicality of the bank crash and its devastating consequences for investors.
Although the sudden elevation to gentry status of the new earl in The Ladies
Lindores depends upon a succession as unexpected as that of the heir in her next
novel, The Wizard’s Son (1884), reviewers were quick to see that the treatment of
swift upward mobility was timely. Similarly reviewers of Old Mr. Tredgold were
gratified by her hard-hitting satire on the newly-moneyed classes, and expressed
the view that the novel would in time come to enjoy the status of a historical
document. Certainly the ability, apparent in this novel, to sum up, after a brief
visit, the socio-economic life of an island society and its visitors, so different from
the stable provincial community of the Carlingford novels, suggests that personal
tragedy had in no way blunted her intellectual curiosity.
Both these themes drew on her own experience. *At His Gates* was written in the aftermath of having to deal with her brother Frank’s financial malfeasance in 1868 and his reappearance as a broken man from exile in 1870 to become, with his young children, a further drain on her earning capacity. The arrival of this older brother who had progressed little socially from their shared childhood in a relatively humble Liverpool home, in a household where her own sons were already enjoying an education with Eton’s aristocratic intake, sharpened her awareness of the divisions caused by class aspiration. By the time that she came to write *Old Mr. Tredgold*, however, she found herself being patronized by wealthy industrialists, in the shape of Harry Coghill, the husband of her hitherto dependent cousin, and her niece’s jute-manufacturing husband, William Valentine: both of whom she regarded as singularly lacking in the culture she had striven to acquire for herself and the relatives she had supported and educated.

These phases in her own experience came to inflect the subtle variations she effected over the years in reusing familiar tropes. In novels written more than twenty years apart two self-centred, avaricious daughters, Clara Burton and Stella Tredgold both plan to equip themselves with a fortune by way of jewellery, and make sure that the wedding for which they elope is legally watertight, before disobeying a rich father’s wishes. The point bore repeating: only by acquiring such portable property could women achieve a dowry otherwise denied them, and if girls were to elope then better they did so without trusting unduly to the lover’s probity. On closer inspection, however, in both *At His Gates* and *Old Mr. Tredgold* jewellery becomes a touchstone for revealing character. In the former, an artist’s daughter values diamonds for their aesthetic – ‘like a quantity of dewdrops when the sun is shining’; a dissenting family (ch. 26) see them variously as a vanity inviting temptation and a misuse of wealth better devoted to the poor; a fraudulent banker’s wife is aware that by wearing them she lends her husband credibility, while his daughter sees them simply as a liquid asset. By contrast, with his fortune secure, that hard-headed tradesman, the eponymous old Mr. Tredgold, can afford to take a more relaxed attitude, ‘They’re things that always keep their value. It’s not a paying investment, but, anyhow, you’re sure of your capital.’ The rivière of diamonds – ‘ridiculous for a little girl, all the ladies said’ – that he proceeds to buy for his younger daughter manages simultaneously to suggest his ‘illimitable wealth’ and vulgarity, and her compulsive desire to be the centre of attention at whatever cost. Taught from childhood to test her father’s affection for her in tangible terms, she finds it impossible to believe that, having given in to her desire for the investment diamonds so easily, he will cross her in her choice of suitor. Yet, eventually she reveals herself as the old materialist’s true heir, when she tells her sister of the misery she endured in India because, having exchanged the genuine article for imitation diamonds, she had lacked the solid assurance of real wealth and thus the sense of her own value they had given her.

The widening social circle to which MOWO was exposed as her children grew up notably enriched the dialogue of her novels. In particular, *The Ladies Lindores* and *Old Mr. Tredgold* contain a new register absent from *At His Gates*: that of the
young bachelor, man-about-town. The young army officers stationed in Windsor, attracted by her frequent visitors, the Tulloch girls, joined in her household theatricals and jaunts, while her eldest son’s return from Oxford to enjoy any such idle dissipation as the locality afforded, meant that his mother developed a sharp ear for the rhythms and vocabulary of the conversations which occurred in bachelor society. Earl Lindores’s son provides a prototype for the misogynistic drinking-club habitués of *The Wizard’s Son*: “Women are such queer cattle, you never know how to take them,” the experienced young man said. A man is not in a crack regiment for nothing, but this remark is made in the course of domestic chat with his father rather than with men his own age. By the time she wrote *Old Mr. Tredgold* the gossip circulating among ‘the men in the clubs’, where ‘they tell each other everything’, becomes at one and the same time a comic device, a measure of the vacuous, irresponsible lives of the young army officers billeted on the island, and one of the plot drivers.

Although recurrent themes and tropes can be traced in this fiction from three successive decades, each novel manages to establish a distinctive world and each offers moments which are memorably unique to that work, whether it is the stern composure with which during a long night Mrs Burton takes in the magnitude of the family’s ruin before serving a sumptuous breakfast to her departing guests; Lady Car’s hysterical relief at her bullying husband’s death; or the overturning of the small domestic routines of a lifetime which convey to Katherine Tredgold that the home in which she has so long been mistress is hers no more.

The three novels in Part VI also function as signposts to MOWO’s professional development as a novelist in the last three decades of her productive writing life. Collectively they exemplify the increasing number of outlets as well as publishers with whom she engaged in the second half of her career. As a trio they also reflect the changes in fiction publishing from the 1870s to the 1890s. *At His Gates*, serialized in Alexander Strahan’s *Good Words* in 1872 under the editorship of the Reverend Norman Macleod, marked a turning away from William Blackwood and Sons as the primary publisher of MOWO’s fiction, ironically at a period when her relationship with John Blackwood, head of the publishing house and editor of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, was at its most secure. The move from her publisher of choice was not her decision. From 1870 onward Blackwood and Sons began to shift its focus away from the publication of three-volume novels in response to the discounts demanded by the circulating libraries and a sense that this long-established format for fiction might finally be in decline. MOWO’s *John. A Love Story* ended its serialization in *Blackwood’s* in July 1870. Later that year she sounded Blackwood out about publishing her next serial, not yet written, for the advance sheets of which an American publisher had offered her the ‘appalling’ sum of two thousand pounds. She would not be disappointed if he refused, she told him, somewhat disingenuously, although she confessed that she felt considerable delight at the prospect of ‘getting some money out of those Transatlantic robbers’. She was also flattered, she admitted, by their assurances of her popularity in America.
When Blackwood eventually declined the new novel she turned to the popular monthly *Good Words*, with whose proprietor and editor she had established a good working relationship, one which was to continue to the end of her career.22 *Scribner’s Monthly*, who had made the unprecedented offer for the advance sheets of the British serial, was a new American magazine modelled on the highly successful *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*.23 Its initial policy was to adopt *Harper’s* practice of serializing fiction by foreign as opposed to American writers. Hence the first three novels *Scribner’s* published were by George Macdonald, MOWO, and Jules Verne.24 Another policy decision taken at the outset was that *Scribner’s* was to be distinguished by high-quality illustrations. *At His Gates*, prolifically illustrated with James Mahoney’s wood engravings, must have seemed doubly attractive to the new editor and proprietor.25 The three-volume edition was published in Britain by Tinsley Brothers, comparative newcomers to fiction publishing, whose list included G.A. Sala and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. *Scribner, Armstrong & Co.* published the first one-volume edition in New York.26

William Blackwood and Sons was to publish only seven of her remaining novels between 1870 and her death in 1897.27 Her links with the publishing house remained strong, however, and she was contracted for her *Memoir of Count de Montalembert* (1872), and for a series of Foreign Classics for English Readers which included her own volumes on Dante (1877), Moliere (1879) and Cervantes (1880). Later there would be biographies of John Tulloch (1888) and Laurence Oliphant (1891) and her history of the firm, *Annals of a Publishing House*, published shortly after her death in 1897. She kept the channels of communication regarding her novels open, testing the waters when she thought a novel might suit the magazine or noting in passing that they seem to be publishing more novels of late, and using that as a pretext for offering a new one.28

She had determined that *The Ladies Lindores* would be a Blackwood publication, the first to be published under the editorship of John Blackwood’s successor, his nephew William Blackwood III, with whom her relations were less equable, although they had both weathered the transition from the regime of the senior Blackwood satisfactorily. Unusually for her, she wrote the novel in advance, sending several instalments to Blackwood in May 1881 and completing it in the autumn of the same year, although the serialization did not begin until April 1882 and ran until May 1883. Sending the final instalment to Blackwood in October 1882 she pressed him for immediate payment in advance of volume publication, recollecting that if the sale reached 1250 he had promised her ‘the usual thousand’ for the novel.29

*The Ladies Lindores* was written at a time when MOWO was frenetically busy even by her own standards, propelled by yet another personal financial crisis.30 While working on the novel she also wrote four of the instalments for her series on ‘Autobiographies’ and two further articles for the magazine.31 Her next novel, *The Wizard’s Son* began its serialization in *Macmillan’s Magazine* in November 1882, running in tandem with *The Ladies Lindores* for seven months.32 Meanwhile she was also writing *Hester*, which was published by Macmillan in the traditional
three-volume format at the end of 1883.\textsuperscript{33} The conjunction of the volume publication of three major novels led her to consult G. L. Craik of Macmillan’s in case one of the reprints should be held back, but after discussion the books came out as planned and the market for her novels seems not to have been adversely affected.\textsuperscript{34}

The third novel in Part VI, \textit{Old Mr. Tredgold}, was written more than a decade later and serialized in \textit{Longman’s Magazine} from June 1895 to May 1896.\textsuperscript{35} The intervening years between the publication of \textit{The Ladies Lindores} and \textit{Old Mr. Tredgold} had witnessed two crucial events in fiction publishing, both of which had an impact on her final novel. The first was the passage by the US Congress of the International Copyright Act of 1891, known as the Chace Act, which granted American copyright to foreign authors provided the work was manufactured in the United States. This did not give full protection to British authors but it was regarded as a step in the right direction. The second, which was directly relevant to \textit{Old Mr. Tredgold}, was the collapse of the market for three-volume novels that had sustained the circulating library system since the 1820s. Following the novelist George Moore’s pamphlet ‘Literature at Nurse: or Circulating Morals’ published in 1885 there were a number of effective challenges to the three-volume system, resulting in its complete demise by the mid-1890s. \textit{Old Mr. Tredgold}, serialized in \textit{Longman’s Magazine} in twelve monthly parts was republished in one volume, not the customary three. Consequently it was shorter than most of Oliphant’s three-volume novels (163,000 words in comparison with 220,000 words for \textit{The Ladies Lindores}, and 193,000 for \textit{At His Gates}).\textsuperscript{36} According to R. L. Wolff, MOWO’s contemporary Mary Elizabeth Braddon, a shrewd analyst of the literary marketplace, had anticipated the change in format and in the 1890s wrote novels of varying lengths, suitable for publication in either three volumes or one.\textsuperscript{37} Although she did not claim such prescience, MOWO’s novels of the 1890s show a gradual reduction in length. Some like \textit{Kirsteen} (1890), \textit{Janet} (1891), \textit{The Railway Man and His Children} (1892), \textit{The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent} (1892), and \textit{The Marriage of Elinor} (1892) retained the three-volume format. \textit{The Mysteries of Mrs Blencarrow} (1890), serialized in provincial newspapers, was one volume in length when republished; \textit{Diana Trelawny} (1892), serialized in \textit{Blackwood’s} over a six-month period was published in two volumes as was \textit{A House in Bloomsbury} (1894). Her last five titles, written from 1893 onward, were published in the now standard single volume.\textsuperscript{38}

The 1891 Chace Act had an immediate impact on the serialization of British novels for the American market. The near-simultaneous serialization of \textit{At His Gates} in \textit{Good Words} and \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} in 1872 had presumably been effected by an agreement between Alexander Strahan and Charles Scribner & Company, by which the advance sheets of the monthly numbers were sent across the Atlantic to be reset in return for a one-off payment, in this instance a handsome one.\textsuperscript{39} The publisher, not the author, was normally the beneficiary, hence MOWO’s delight at Scribner’s original offer, which she saw as a triumph over ‘Transatlantic robbers’. Blackwood and Sons had a similar and long-standing arrangement over advance sheets with Harper Brothers. However no agreement seems to have been in place.
for *The Ladies Lindores*. Its serialization in *Littell's Living Age*, as described in the Headnote to Volume 24 was unlikely to have been accompanied by a payment to the British publisher.40

MOWO’s relationship with *Longman’s Magazine*, which serialized *Old Mr. Tredgold*, had been facilitated through her old friend Principal John Tulloch, the editor of *Fraser’s Magazine* until 1880. Longmans’ new sixpenny house magazine was established in 1882 as a successor to *Fraser’s*, which the firm had published since 1863. Having serialized *In Trust* (1881–2) in *Fraser’s*, she went on to serialize *Madam* in *Longman’s* in 1884–5. By June 1895, when *Old Mr. Tredgold* began its serialization, the magazine was published in New York and Bombay as well as London, thus guaranteeing copyright protection to British authors, and eliminating any issues arising from the payment of royalties or fees.41 As the Headnote to the novel explains, although this arrangement should also have guaranteed stability to the text when it was reissued in volume form, in fact the serial and the volume formats of the novel have two distinct textual histories.42

The changes in MOWO’s professional writing life between the Carlingford novels of the 1860s43 and the three novels in this final part of her *Selected Works* are a snapshot of the changes in novel publishing and serialization over three decades. Until the end of the 1860s her novels were published by three houses, Blackwood and Sons, Macmillan, and Hurst & Blackett, the successors of Henry Colburn, her first publisher. Blackwood and Macmillan published two highly regarded house magazines which they used to showcase the fiction in their lists. But as entrepreneurial publishers created new magazines to meet the demands of a widening readership for novels, so MOWO moved with the times, accepting invitations from *Good Words*, *St Paul’s Magazine*, the *Graphic*, the *Cornhill*, and *Longman’s* magazines. In 1883 she syndicated her first novel in provincial newspapers using Tillotson’s Fiction Agency.44 It was by any measure a rapidly changing marketplace. Having been encouraged by the approach from *Scribner’s Monthly* in 1870 and the intimation that her name was popular with American readers, that particular opening was quickly shut down. The *Scribner’s* team reversed their decision to feature foreign writers in favour of American fiction by which they created and sustained a high reputation for the magazine and its successor the *Century Illustrated Magazine* into the twentieth century.45 Apart from *At His Gates*, and her story ‘The Two Mrs Scudamores’ MOWO published nothing else in the prominent American magazine.46

Undeterred she spread her net even wider, accepting approaches from the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Scottish Church*, the *Leisure Hour*, the *Ladies’ Pictorial* and *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, the last, as she admitted to William Blackwood “a coming down from Maga certainly”.47 To a detached observer of the fiction marketplace from the mid-1880s onward, some of MOWO’s outlets might have suggested a writer clutching at any opening in order to place her work, regardless of the track record or prestige of the magazine or newspaper. But the quality of her major novels in this period, as exemplified in the titles chosen for Parts V and VI of this selected edition of her work, gave no sign of diminishing powers or of a
novelist running out of steam. MOWO was a professional woman of letters in the Victorian mould; most of all she was a novelist who knew the market, and who adapted her work to suit its demands.

The copy-texts for two of the three novels in Part VI are the first publication in volume format. For reasons detailed in the Headnote, the serial version of *At His Gates* has been preferred to the volume format. As is the practice in the *Selected Works of Margaret Oliphant*, the copy-texts have been compared with relevant lifetime editions over which there is thought to have been authorial oversight. The variants are listed in the Textual Notes. As has been our practice we have silently corrected turned or dropped letters or punctuation marks but have otherwise left the copy-texts as they were originally published. The silent corrections are summarized at the head of the Textual Notes to each volume.

Elisabeth Jay
Joanne Shattock

Notes

3 Jay (1990), p. 136; vol. 6, p. 95.
4 Jay (1990), p. 24; vol. 6, p. 23.
5 *Selected Works*, vol. 23, p. 158.
6 *Selected Works*, vol. 24, p. 63–5; and see the Introduction to vol. 25.
8 *Selected Works*, vol. 23, p. 255.
9 Henriette Corkran had been staying with Francis and Blanche Warre Cornish when MOWO had been sitting for Frederick Sandsy’s portrait of her, completed by 1881. *Celebrities and I* (London: Hutchinson, 1902), p. 337.
11 e.g. *Observer*, 20 October 1872, p. 2; *Graphic*, 9 November 1872, p. 439. See also Headnote to vol. 23, pp. xliii–xliv.
14 Jay (1990), p. 129; see vol. 6, p. 89.
15 *Selected Works*, vol. 23, pp. 168, 267, 269.
16 *Selected Works*, vol. 25, pp. 63, 238.
17 Jay (1990), pp. 127–8; see vol. 6, pp. 88–9.
18 *Selected Works*, vol. 24, p. 50.
19 *Selected Works*, vol. 25, p. 39.
21 National Library of Scotland Blackwood MS 4266, [1870] f. 87.
22 See the Introduction and Headnote to *At His Gates*, pp. xxii, xxxix for details.
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24 Mott, p. 160.
25 See the Headnote to At His Gates, p. xlii for details of the illustrations. There is no evidence to suggest that Scribner's had any input into these. The American magazine later pioneered a new technique using photography to improve the quality of engraving on wood blocks. See Mott, p. 466.
26 See Headnote to At His Gates, p. xliii and pp. 332–5 for an analysis of the variants between the British and American editions.
27 These were The Story of Valentine and his Brother (1874–5), The Ladies Lindores (1882–3), A House Divided Against Itself (1886) [serialized in Chambers’s Journal], Joyce (1887–8) [published in three volumes by Macmillan], Sons and Daughters (1890), Diana Trelawny (1892) and Who was Lost and is Found (1894). Clarke (1986) lists Blackwood as the publisher of the first British edition of The Duke’s Daughter; and The Fugitives (1890). See pp. 59–60.
28 See for example, MS 4424 [1881], 4 May: ‘I always find with my work that it shapes itself and I am never quite sure in beginning a story what character it may take. This one I feel more and more to be better suited to the Magazine than to any other medium of publication. . . . I feel that it may (though I am no very good critic in my own case) grow into a better book than usual and its character is so much suited (I think) for the Magazine that I am really impelled to return to the question in respect to it in spite of myself. I really don’t want to offer it to you yet cannot help doing it.’
29 Blackwood MS 4424, 9 October and 27 October.
30 ‘People say that to have a thousand pounds more than one has is the ideal of comfort but the half of that would make me clear and the quarter of it would take an immense load from my shoulders’, she wrote to William Blackwood. Blackwood MS 4437 f. 63 9 March [1882]. See this Introduction, p. xiv for the additional family responsibilities which had been thrust upon her.
33 Selected Works, vol. 20.
34 MS 4449 [1883], f. 47.
35 See Headnote to vol. 25 for the date of composition.
36 The word counts are approximate, based on the scanned texts of the three novels. Printers accommodated the variable lengths of ‘three deckers’ by altering the size of sheets, fonts, margins, and in the days of hand setting, the leading between lines. The change to single volumes in the 1890s resulted in a more dramatic reduction in length.
38 As well as Old Mr. Tredgold, these were Sir Robert’s Fortune (Methuen, 1895), Who was Lost and is Found (Blackwood, 1894), Two Strangers (T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), and The Unjust Steward (W & R Chambers, 1896).
39 See the Headnote to At His Gates, p. xliii, for a tabulation of the slippages between the two serials, the possible cause and the consequences.
40 Littell’s Living Age was notorious for its blatant ‘borrowing’ from British periodicals without payment. See the Headnote to The Ladies Lindores, vol. 24, p. xxxi for details of the unauthorized American serialization.
42 See the Headnote to vol. 25, Old Mr. Tredgold, and pp. 291–9 for the textual variants between the British and American editions.
43 Selected Works, vols 15–19.

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This was *Sir Tom*, serialized between January and July 1883. See Clarke (1986) for details of the newspapers that carried this novel and others serialized with Tillotson’s.


46 The connection established with Scribner’s for *At His Gates* was probably the reason she contributed to their new magazine for children, *St. Nicholas*, in 1876. See Clarke (1997) p. 61. For details of the serialization of ‘The Two Mrs Scudamores’ see the Headnotes to *At His Gates*, p. xli–xlii and to *Selected Works*, vol. 11, pp. 1–2.

47 See MS 4449, [1883], 24 November. Blackwood published *A House Divided Against Itself* in three volumes in 1886 after its serialization in *Chambers’s*. 
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INTRODUCTION

In April 1876, a few years after the publication of *At His Gates*, MOWO reviewed in *Blackwood’s Magazine* the *Memoir of Norman Macleod*, about the life of a distinguished figure in the Church of Scotland. Here MOWO recalls her only real-life encounter with Macleod:

The writer of these pages saw him but once, never more, and thereupon opened the floodgates of the soul to him and spoke – wondering afterwards to have so spoken – as dear friend speaks to dear friend. Why? for no reason on earth except that nature compelled it – that the man was such as he was – his heart open, his ear ready, his sympathy given ere it was called for, with understanding as well as with feeling. For it was in him not only to feel as you felt, but to perceive what you meant – deepest union of comprehensions.¹

Her tribute is heartfelt, but it does not disclose the writer’s identity: *BM* retained, throughout MOWO’s decades-long association with it, the convention of authorial anonymity. It was a circumstance she took advantage of through the various personae she adopted in her periodical writing throughout her career – but her voice here is unusually personal.

In 1860, Norman Macleod had helped to establish and begun to edit *Good Words*, the popular monthly periodical in which *At His Gates* was serialized throughout 1872. Macleod died part-way through the serialization, in June of that year; on account of his many other commitments, too, he had been only nominal editor for some years.² But the novel evokes, through the experience of Stephen Haldane, some of the vagaries of editing under pressure a magazine with a religious agenda – as was *GW*.

Haldane’s situation and story are deployed, moreover, partly as a projection of MOWO’s own predicament at the time of writing. Crippled by a sudden stroke as well as by the financial crisis which is the main driver of the plot, Haldane comes to rely for much of his income as family breadwinner on both editing and contributing to a periodical owned by his religious denomination. Haldane thus reflects his creator’s situation in his restricted opportunities – his disability corresponding

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to disadvantages MOWO felt she suffered as a woman in a man’s world – in his responsibilities for others (a mother and sister), and in his reliance on external decision-makers as regards whether or not his work is published.

Stephen Haldane is one of several figures in the novel who can be construed as representing aspects of MOWO and her situation in the early 1870s. Whereas in her tribute to Macleod in 1876, anonymity would enable her to make a personal confession without revealing her identity, in a novel published under her own name, MOWO grapples with her own concerns by projecting them onto some of her characters. Both of the central couple, painter Robert Drummond and his wife Helen, are used to explore the predicament of the artist: the vagaries of public and critical taste, and the potential financial consequences thereof; the relationship between the artist’s professional and private life; the difference between the mediocre popular artist and the man of genius. Another figure who receives much attention is Clara Burton, who turns out to be important less for her role as wife of the novel’s chief wrongdoer, than for her viewpoint as a cynical and usually unemotional onlooker of other people’s behaviour – behaviour which she almost always finds predictably self-interested. While Clara Burton cannot be identified straightforwardly with the novel’s narrator, the extended focus on her perspective arguably reflects an experiment on MOWO’s part, in inhabiting an emotionally unengaged stance as an observer of human life.

*At His Gates* is, therefore, a novel that can be read as an exploration of various authorial identities, various ways in which MOWO dealt with issues preoccupying her in the early 1870s. As my outline of Stephen Haldane’s role suggests, nevertheless, this is also a novel demonstrating self-consciousness about writing itself. This characteristic is evident not just in subplots, but also in the structure and tone of the text, which show much self-awareness about fictional themes and conventions. While the novel has received little critical attention, the emphases I have identified here have been highlighted respectively by the two critics who have written on *At His Gates* in some detail. One is Elisabeth Jay, who, as MOWO’s biographer, has pointed out how the novel addresses motifs from the author’s life;³ the other is Tamara S. Wagner, who in her 2010 article, “‘Very Saleable Articles, Indeed’: Margaret Oliphant’s Repackaging of Sensational Finance”, considers the interplay of domestic realism and sensation in *At His Gates* in the context of the novel’s constant self-reflexiveness.⁴ What follows is partly indebted to the insights of these critics.

**The conundrums of creativity**

MOWO was writing *At His Gates* after events in the life of her older brother Frank Wilson which added to her financial commitments. In 1868, he had fled to Europe on failing in business; after his wife’s death in 1870, he returned to England following a breakdown, and he and his four children were thenceforth supported by MOWO. By this time, she had established a successful career as a
novelist and journalist, but with two sons to support, plus her brother and family, MOWO needed more financial resources for a comfortable life free of debt, than she was ever again able to muster through her writing. In the early 1870s, she did not know that the financial pressure would never let up, and that she might end up competing with herself through being so prolific, but her letters of the period register the financial strain.

MOWO had submitted the first volume of *At His Gates* to John Blackwood in 1870, to be considered for possible serialization in *BM*. But, having just serialized her novel *John: A Love Story* (November 1869 to July 1870), Blackwood told her in December that he believed ‘the readers of the Magazine require[d] a greater change of diet’, and so had to decline the novel. MOWO responded the next day, declaring that she was ‘deeply grieved and disappointed’ at Blackwood’s decision, since it made ‘the season a most anxious and painful one’ to her: life was ‘very hard upon [her] just now’. Although she was able to place the novel in *GW*, and it was serialized simultaneously in *Scribner's Monthly* in New York, her distress, aggravated as it was by new monetary pressures, must have impressed on MOWO the unpredictability of the life of the creative artist. In *At His Gates*, when Stephen Haldane loses the annuity his former congregation has been sending for his support, he is rescued from penury only by a windfall from the sales of one of his books. And although Robert Drummond’s financial woes don’t result from failure to sell his work, he knows artists worse off than himself.

A painter or writer is also subject to the vicissitudes of critical and public taste. Robert Drummond’s paintings are consistently mediocre, as he himself recognizes. He has tried to ‘break through his mediocrity’, but the critics ‘warned him against the sensational’ (p. 4). MOWO is glancing here at the debate over ‘sensation’ fiction which had continued since the successes in the previous decade of its leading practitioners, Wilkie Collins, Ellen (Mrs Henry) Wood and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. The genre had been criticized for (among other things), its appeal to the emotions and senses rather than the mind, its prioritizing of plot over character, and its deployment of dramatic and implausible events. She herself had both attacked this kind of novel, and practised it – notably in *Salem Chapel* (1863). In drawing attention to Robert Drummond’s situation here, the novel shows how critical assumptions add to his difficulties. Public taste is not treated with much respect either: when Stephen Haldane’s book *The Window* sells well, he realizes that the ‘personal twaddle’ that he considers the weakest part of the work is the aspect mostly responsible for its success, since ‘the British public is fond of personal twaddle’ (p. 223).

As regards creativity, however, the key issue investigated by the novel is the difference between the mediocrity and the creative genius – or rather, whether the first can ever morph into the second. In a part of her autobiography written in 1885, MOWO would recall the financial demands made by her new responsibilities in the early 1870s, and would observe that, despite feeling the ‘stirring of
ambition’ to take more time and try to write a really ‘fine’ novel, she chose instead to write at speed so as to support her expanded family. But she now wonders if it might have been preferable to produce ‘better work’.8

These thoughts of 1885 were prompted by the appearance of George Eliot’s Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals: George Eliot (d. 1880) had been the acknowledged pre-eminent woman novelist of the 1860s and 1870s. In MOWO’s view, Eliot’s relatively untroubled life (as she saw it) enabled her to aim at quality over quantity, and to leave a lasting reputation. Back in the early 1870s, while MOWO kept several publishing ventures on the go in fiction and journalism, Eliot brought out (over 1871–2) her most ambitious novel yet, Middlemarch. This is a text partly built on a contrast between the remarkable individual and his or her ordinary fellow-citizens – but as regards that novel’s heroine Dorothea Brooke, a St Theresa of Avila transposed into the nineteenth century, MOWO remonstrated with John Blackwood (who was also Eliot’s publisher):

These superior heroines are very awful people. I wish George Eliot however would not be so hard ‘upon all the mediocrities’ – for after all mediocrity is the rule and only a very few of the human race can be superior.9

In At His Gates, MOWO explores the aspirations towards genius of Robert Drummond, and especially of his wife. Indeed, Robert’s ambition to improve his painting is motivated primarily by his sense that he has let Helen down by not turning out to be an artistic genius, and Helen’s disappointment in his achievement is made very evident to the reader as well. In treating this situation, MOWO evokes a text which is known to have been personally significant for her: Robert Browning’s poem ‘Andrea del Sarto’, about the Florentine painter of that name (1486–1530), published in his 1855 collection of dramatic monologues, Men and Women.10 Andrea, as speaker of this poem, embodies a paradox: his painting is in one sense perfect, in that its depictions are always faultless, but his work lacks inspiration, and hence a spark of the divine. He thus compares himself unfavourably to other artists who may be deficient in accuracy but who possess more vitality and genius – Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. So in Andrea’s art, ‘All is silver-grey / Placid and perfect’, the product of his ‘low-pulsed forthright craftsman’s hand’, whereas the other, apparently less accomplished painters create works that are ‘nearer heaven’: ‘all the play, the insight and the stretch’ in Raphael’s painting is impossible to Andrea.11

Andrea attributes the difference between himself and the geniuses to the influence of his wife Lucrezia, who is pretty but brainless, only interested in her husband’s art for the money it brings in, which takings she pays over to her cousin (implied to be her lover). Andrea speculates that his art may have been very different if he hadn’t wed, or if his wife had instead ‘urged / “God and the glory! never care for gain”’ (ll. 128–9). Helen Drummond is no Lucrezia, and, by contrast, fervently wishes that her husband, whom she considers not even
as talented as Andrea del Sarto, could be truly great. His most notable painting at the time the novel opens, depicting the adulterous lovers Paolo and Francesca from Dante’s *Inferno*, makes the couple look sweet rather than passionate, and Helen is very frustrated by this lack of vitality. She even wonders, echoing Browning’s poem, whether marriage in itself is the barrier to greatness: ‘Those others – Leonardo, and Angelo, and the young Urbinese [Raphael] had none of them wives’ (p. 15).

What happens in the novel is that Robert Drummond produces one true work of genius. But it is at a tremendous emotional cost. After the failure of Rivers’s bank which leaves him both impoverished and tainted by scandal, Robert attempts suicide, but is rescued and taken to New York. Here he reworks a painting he had embarked on back in England as his financial worries worsened, and gets it exhibited under a pseudonym at the Royal Academy, to great acclaim:

> It was the picture of a face looking up, with two upward-reaching hands, from the bottom of an abyss, full of whirling clouds and vapour. High above this was a bank of heavenly blue, and a white cloud of faintly indistinct spectators, pitiful angel forms, and one visionary figure as of a woman gazing down. But it was the form below in which the interest lay. It was worn and pale, with the redness of tears about the eyes, the lips pressed closely together, the hands only appealing, held up in a passionate silence. (p. 234)

The word ‘passionate’ is especially resonant here, signalling the transformation of Robert Drummond’s art. It is clear that what the painting represents is Robert’s experience of intense suffering over the previous seven years. He is the man in the abyss, lonely and guilt-ridden in his separation from Helen, who is herself figured in the woman gazing down. And it is Robert’s anguish, anguish that he had once not been able to encompass imaginatively in his conception of Paolo and Francesca, which has invested his painting with genius.

Yet the novel points also to the result of sustaining the emotional intensity required for this level of artistic expression. Robert Drummond’s suffering has been severe and protracted, making him appear like an old man although still in his forties. Thus this New York painting turns out to be the only one of his works that genuinely represents artistic genius. Once he is reunited with his family and the actual culprits in the collapse of Rivers’s are exposed, his painting returns to competent mediocrity. And Helen accepts this outcome, realizing that her own ambitions for her husband and her obvious disappointment in his achievement had undermined his self-confidence as an artist, and therefore had contributed to the attractions of Rivers’s for him. The reader of ‘Andrea del Sarto’ figures out that the painter’s situation is more complex than Andrea himself recognizes; likewise, the reader of *At His Gates* is encouraged to realize that the difference, or choice, between mediocrity and genius is not clear-cut either.12
INTRODUCTION

Dives, Lazarus, and sensational finance

Another important allusion in the novel is to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in St Luke’s Gospel: this links the artistic motif and the financial plot, as well as providing the novel’s title. The relevant passage (Luke 16:19–26) is:

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Accounts of the story usually give the name ‘Dives’ (Latin for rich man) to the wealthy man, and in At His Gates, the painting that reveals that Robert Drummond is still alive is called ‘Dives’. Here he puts himself in the role of the rich man seeking relief from torment, and Helen in the role of Abraham – in that the woman figure may be the source of potential judgement – or of Lazarus, if she is the source of possible succour. That this ambiguity exists suggests that the parable evoked in the painting does not map closely onto the Drummonds’ story. Although he becomes temporarily wealthy, Robert does not neglect the poor (rather the opposite), and it is his feelings of guilt about the consequences of his pursuit of wealth that bring him near to death. And unlike his counterpart in the parable, Robert is forgiven, and can lie in the bosom of Abraham, as it were. The novel also transposes the motifs of the parable entirely into the earthly realm (no one actually dies).

The wealthy man can in fact be identified more straightforwardly with Reginald Burton, since after the financial crisis, he has both Helen and Norah Drummond and the Haldane family living ‘at his gates’ (the dwelling is even called the Gatehouse). Early in their sojourn there, the Gatehouse residents watch Burton taking his regular evening drive back from the station – a habit that the novel points to several times as evidence of his smug self-satisfaction. Stephen Haldane speculates about Burton’s thoughts, and asks, ‘I wonder if he is comfortable when he reflects who are living at his gates?’; Haldane speaks in a ‘tone that [i]s almost fierce in its self-restraint’, and thus stirs up Helen’s own feelings of suspicion about Burton.

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and his business associate Golden (p. 129). That is, just as Dives in the parable is implicitly reproached by Abraham for neglecting Lazarus in life, Stephen and Helen intuit that Reginald Burton bears some responsibility for their own plight. A direct allusion to the parable appears again when Golden returns to Dura in Chapter 32. In conversation with Burton, Golden observes that Helen’s attractive daughter Norah will be ‘a new weapon for her’, so that he wonders that Burton has ‘such a family established at [his] gates’ (p. 209). Again, the implication is that Helen might have a grievance against Burton. Yet Helen, in a reversal of the roles of Lazarus and Abraham, aids Burton’s escape from the forces of the law.

By deploying in the early 1870s a plot based on the sudden collapse of a financial institution, MOWO was not being original. Many such plots had been spawned by the unexpected failure in 1866 of Overend and Gurney, owing eleven million pounds: the crisis had resulted from an oversupply of shares in a situation where, because of the blockade of the Southern states in the American Civil War, American currency was not readily convertible into gold. It was the sort of event that could easily be adapted into fiction of a ‘sensation’ kind, with its scope for rapid changes of fortune, the emotional crises arising from these, and evocations of skulduggery. Overend and Gurney had been the most important financial institution in Britain after the Bank of England, just as Rivers’s is represented as in At His Gates, and its collapse, like that of Rivers’s, generated much abuse of the directors in the press.¹³

But as Tamara S. Wagner points out, MOWO in this novel ‘capitalized on the quickly established alignment between finance and sensationalism less to criticize commercial pressures than to turn them to good effect as the shapers of new literary motifs’.¹⁴ For example, when Reginald Burton is on the run, Helen forces him to write a confession, such that he is also obliged to reconsider the ‘fables about feminine weakness’ (p. 261) that had made him confident of Helen’s unquestioning help.¹⁵ And Burton does escape the legal punishment readers might expect, because Helen and later Robert Drummond refuse to pursue personal vengeance once Burton has supplied the information that will clear Robert. Nor is there any dramatic remorse scene focused on Reginald Burton. Clara Burton is cynical about her husband’s capacity to change, and the novel bears out this cynicism: this Dives barely repents of his behaviour, ignores its effects on his family, and mostly regrets getting caught.

At His Gates, then, oscillates between sensational motifs (financial crash, apparent suicide, return from the dead) and the domestic realism that was the overall hallmark of MOWO’s fiction. So after Robert’s reappearance, the Drummonds return more or less to their original situation, and although the family set-up is inevitably altered by Norah’s marriage to Ned Burton, the narrative takes pains to emphasize the ordinariness of Ned’s career. Neither a financial speculator like his father, nor an artist of any kind, Ned ends up as a junior clerk in government service – such that, ‘If he lived long enough, and nobody was promoted over him, and nothing happened to him or the office, the chances were that after thirty years or so he might find himself in enjoyment of a thousand a year’ (p. 308). Much earlier in the
novel, Robert Drummond is shown as if potentially caught between the sensation plot and that of domestic realism. Isolated and desperate, he had headed toward the Thames, bent on suicide. But before that, he had sat at home in a stupor, with the rest of the household nearby, and the narrator points out that he ‘might have been restored to the sense of life and its necessities, might have been brought back out of the delirium of his ruin at that moment, had any one in the house known that he was there’ (p. 60). All might have been different, too, had Robert, on the way to the river, encountered Helen and Norah, who were then just in the next street. It is as if Robert Drummond is caught up in the sensation plot, with the domestic realism plot just a few yards away. So At His Gates thematizes the relationship between the two genres, if it ultimately chooses ordinary life ‘and its necessities’.

The mainstay of the domestic realism plot was, of course, the love-story. When reflecting on Charlotte Brontë’s fiction, MOWO claimed she herself had come to believe that, unlike in Charlotte Brontë’s novels, ‘the love between men and women, the marrying and giving in marriage, occupy in fact so small a portion of either existence or thought’. But until her final novel Old Mr. Tredgold in 1896, she did not feel that she could avoid the successful love story in her fiction (see General Introduction).

So for several chapters, the ‘sensation’ plot is suspended while Norah Drummond grows up from childhood to adolescence, and comes to be pursued by two suitors. There may be some personal relevance in this development, in that MOWO had lost her only daughter Maggie at the age of ten, and so in Helen Drummond may be projecting herself into the role of a mother fortunate enough to have a daughter survive to grow up and marry. But overall, the treatment of the romance plot is gently satiric. The first suitor, Cyril Rivers, emerges initially in the sensation plot in Chapter 18. He happens to be with Golden when Helen confronts the latter with the accusation that he is responsible for Robert’s fate: Helen apparently makes such a strong impression on Rivers that readers might expect him to function in the story as the avenger of a wronged widow. But when he does reappear, he quickly turns into the suitor of Norah, so in that capacity enters the romance plot. Indeed, he is deployed there as a figure whom Norah thinks of quite explicitly as a novel-hero – as ‘almost too handsome’ (p. 167), and possessing a novel-hero’s name. She is conscious herself of her life being like a novel, so that Cyril Rivers’s attentions may be flattering, but Ned Burton, the boy (literally) next door, with the plebeian name and the big nose, will turn out to be her true love. Cyril accordingly tarnishes his image (being ashamed to introduce Norah to his aristocratic mother), and although Norah and Ned have their misunderstandings, the reader is never in any doubt of their final union. MOWO has supplied what the reader, and indeed Norah herself, expect.

The ways of God to man

I do not wish to imply, however, that At His Gates is simply a web of textual allusions and games with fictional genres. The questions it asks about artistic creation
and the costs thereof are serious ones. The cynical treatment of Reginald Burton and his daughter Clary, too, filtered through the perspective of Clara Burton the wife and mother, is pointing to what MOWO arguably sees as truths about certain kinds of people. Moreover, the novel does grapple with convincingly rendered human emotions, and these include the religious quandaries aroused when human beings are pushed to extremes, as are both Robert and Helen Drummond.

As he confronts his own ruin, and realizes also its implications for his friend Stephen Haldane, Robert cries out to God in despair – but, we are told:

He was left all alone in that moment of his agony. God, to whom he had appealed, was beyond the clouds, beyond that which is more unfathomable than any cloud, the serene, immeasurable, impenetrable blue, and held out no hand, sent no voice of comfort. (p. 62)

Then Helen, facing her husband’s assumed suicide and the scandal about him, has to keep up her faith in God ‘instinctively, not by any doctrine’, hoping that God recognizes her husband’s innocence (p. 102). Questions about God’s apparent failure to intervene against injustice and suffering are not really answered.

Helen’s underlying suffering is intense enough for her feelings to revive with the unexpected reappearance of Golden at Dura. As a result, she succumbs to the temptation to use her daughter as a weapon of revenge against the Burtons, in a move that is explicitly linked to the Old Testament practice of retribution, and contrasted with the New Testament teaching of forgiving one’s enemies (pp. 205–6).

Knowing that the Burtons are seeking a match between Cyril Rivers and their daughter Clary, Helen deliberately encourages Cyril’s courtship of Norah, even though she knows that Ned is in love with her daughter. But when Ned, the Burton Helen actually likes, retires from the fray and disappears entirely, Helen repents of having embraced Old Testament morality. This is then the context for Helen’s subsequent assistance to Reginald Burton: she has been horrified at her own vengeful tendencies.

The Drummond family story has a happy ending, but not so that of Stephen Haldane. So here again the question of God’s plan and its meaning is posed, without reaching any resolution. Early in the novel, Stephen’s sudden stroke leaves him totally reliant on his daily needs on his mother and sister Jane, while financially, he is dependent on a pension from his former congregation and the income from editing the denominational journal. His financial straits lead him to invest in Rivers’s, with disastrous consequences, while his incurable disability constrains his further earning capacity. What makes his situation worse, however, is that his mother, a woman of simple piety, interprets events as straightforward evidence of the will of a Providence that cannot be challenged. Her son’s helplessness has been mandated by God, and therefore he should not want to ‘have it different’ (p. 127). Stephen does think and feel very differently, but can’t communicate this to his relatives. As a result, he develops an often wordless bond with Helen, who empathizes with him in his anguish at the suffering that God has apparently
wished on him. He gains some comfort from this bond, and is in fact secretly in love with Helen – but even this source of solace is withdrawn with the return of Robert Drummond.

The predicament of Stephen Haldane brings me back to cleric and *GW* editor Norman Macleod. *At His Gates* as a whole demonstrates a cynical attitude to the press – its sensationalism, its fickleness, its clichéd diction. Haldane, on the other hand, in editing his denominational journal, wishes to expand its thematic and intellectual reach, and make it a force for good. He is naturally fired up especially by the scandal surrounding his friend Robert Drummond, and uses the journal to write at length in Drummond’s defence. But his denomination reprimands him, and requires him to confine the journal to strictly denominational matters.

As already noted, it is likely that MOWO is commenting here on the vulnerable situation of those who sometimes find themselves obliged to fit in with an editor’s or a proprietor’s wishes, or risk losing their income. But more specifically, as regards Haldane’s role as an editor, there may also be a kind of tribute to Norman Macleod. When Macleod had set up *GW* back in 1860, he had tried to bridge the divide between publications aimed at a specifically religious audience and those seeking a secular readership. He hence sought an outlet that would ‘embrace as great a variety of articles as those which give deserved popularity to publications professedly secular, but having its spirit and aim distinctively Christian’ – especially since avowedly religious periodicals were often both narrow, and weak in a literary sense. In this context, the ‘wholesome power of fiction’ was especially required. In the event, Macleod was very successful, with the magazine reaching its heyday in the 1870s, and, at 6d an issue, undercutting the rival, shilling monthlies. But in the early years, Macleod had been distressed by criticism from narrow evangelical organs, which attacked what they saw as the over-secular content of the magazine, and sought both a more restricted range of material and a strong theological line. While always retaining a Christian underpinning, as well as much overtly religious content, *GW* was nonetheless to remain receptive to a variety of theological positions. And one proof of its breadth is its accommodation of the range of religious perspectives in *At His Gates*.

Notes

5 Letter of 26 December 1870, Blackwood MSS 30363.
6 Letter of 27 December 1870, Blackwood MSS 4266.
INTRODUCTION

9 Letter of 2 December 1871, Blackwood MSS 4280.
10 The poem is referred to in the Autobiography and Letters in the discussion of George Eliot just cited, pp. 16–17.
12 Elisabeth Jay suggests that MOWO is also reconsidering her own relationship with her artist-husband Frank Oliphant, expressing both her hurt at his concealing his imminent death back in 1859, and her realization that her ‘naïvely intransigent standards’ may have contributed to this decision (Jay (1995), p. 261).
14 Wagner, ‘“Very Saleable Articles, Indeed”...’, p. 53.
15 Wagner, p. 68.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS FROM
GOOD WORDS

I have listed here all of the illustrations that accompanied the serialization of *At His Gates* in *Good Words* over the course of 1872. Those asterisked are included in the Appendix on pp. 313–19.

I am grateful to the University of Leicester Library for permission to use their copies of *Good Words* as the source for the scanning of these illustrations, and especially grateful to Dr Simon Dixon for his timely and efficient scanning of them.

**Part 1**

*First initial of the first chapter: Robert Drummond at his easel. (p. 314). Robert and Helen Drummond on the river at Richmond (Chapter 2). Robert and Helen Drummond and the fallen portrait in Robert’s studio (Chapter 3).*

**Part 2**

First initial of Chapter 4: Robert at the Haldanes’ door.

*Robert, Helen and Norah Drummond, at home, with Dr Maurice (Chapter 5). (p. 314). Robert Drummond and Mrs Haldane at Stephen Haldane’s bedside (Chapter 6).*

**Part 3**

First initial of Chapter 7: Norah Drummond at the piano.

Robert Drummond remonstrates with Charles Golden outside Rivers’s (Chapter 8).

Robert Drummond confides in Helen (Chapter 9).
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS FROM GOOD WORDS

Part 4
*First initial of Chapter 10: Helen and Norah Drummond in grief. (p. 315).
Helen Drummond looks at Robert’s suicide note with Dr Maurice looking on (Chapter 11).
Conversation between Reginald Burton and Dr Maurice (Chapter 12).

Part 5
First initial of Chapter 14: Ned and Clara Burton at the Gatehouse.
The Burton family and pets en route to the Gatehouse (Chapter 15).
(p. 315).
Helen Drummond in mourning in her bedroom in London (Chapter 16).

Part 6
First initial of Chapter 18: Helen and Norah Drummond at the Gatehouse door.
*Helen Drummond with Norah, confronting Charles Golden with Cyril Rivers (Chapter 18). (p. 316).
*Ann of Dura Den and her grandson at Stephen Haldane’s window (Chapter 21). (p. 316).

Part 7
First initial of Chapter 22: Dr Maurice on the train.
Dr Maurice in the Gatehouse garden with Norah Drummond (Chapter 22).
Norah Drummond and Ned Burton talking in the Gatehouse drawing-room (Chapter 23).

Part 8
First initial of Chapter 26: Ned Burton buying a mongrel puppy from the station porter.
Encounter between Ned Burton and Cyril Rivers the day after the ball (Chapter 27).
*Ned Burton and Norah Drummond in the Daltons’ garden (Chapter 28). (p. 317)

Part 9
First initial of Chapter 30: Guests in the Burtons’ drawing-room.
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