After their Surrey summer at Red Hill and the completion of Middlemarch, George Eliot followed her usual pattern of taking a holiday as rest and reward for successfully bringing a novel to its conclusion. This time, she and Lewes decided on yet another spa visit, perhaps the most famous they ever made: to the fashionable precincts of Bad Homburg soon adapted by George Eliot as Leubronn in Daniel Deronda. From 21 September through 13 October 1872, probably by advance plan, the Leweses shared much time at Bad Homburg with frequent Priory guests Lady Castletown and Cecilia Wingfield.

Leubronn

Four years after their Baden Baden visit, the stay in Bad Homburg solidified George Eliot’s intention to insert watering-place gambling metaphors, settings, and scenes in future fiction. On reaching the spa chosen for relaxation after having concluded Middlemarch, George Eliot still needed to write the novel’s “Finale,” a 2,800-word composition with a firm deadline, in which she assigns Lydgate his defeat in accepting a fate he has once ridiculed in others: a position (in season) as a prosperous Continental spa physician.1 Meanwhile she found time to drink the waters, socialize, go

1 It has seldom been noticed that Rosamond thus ends up at a European spa, quite happy, while Gwendolen starts out in one in the first chapter of Daniel Deronda.
to the concerts, and observe the gambling in the Kursaal during the same period she was composing one of her firmest closures. She also wrote her famous letter to Anna Cross, describing a Gwendolen Harleth–like gambler who played in the casino during the first week she spent in Homburg. The “Finale” went off to Blackwood in the middle of the second. The Cross letter, with its acknowledged importance concerning the creation of Gwendolen, makes a neat transition point between the writing of }
march and that of Daniel Deronda. (She repeats her description of the scene in a letter to Blackwood a few days later.) But in fact, as her notebooks reveal, George Eliot had been mentally or in writing gathering material for both novels for years.

The roulette scene from George Eliot’s letter carries particular interest because of the identity of the fair young gambler, Lord Byron’s grandniece, Geraldine Leigh. Its placement in the in medias res opening guarantees its key position in the Daniel Deronda narrative. The spa provides the exclusive settings for chapters 1, 2, and 15, but gains reference at many other points in the narrative. Gwendolen and Deronda, in particular, refer to this setting frequently when they are elsewhere (Diplow, Topping, London) because of Deronda’s voluntary assumption of a mentor’s role toward Gwendolen there when he restores her pawned necklace. “As in Leubronn,” repeats Gwendolen to Daniel on the rare occasions she can contrive a private conversation with him, a repetition that reasserts the spa’s importance throughout the novel.

In Bad Homburg in 1872, the Leweses spent more of their three weeks among the Schwarzwald spa facilities and less out in the pine woods than they had done earlier, for example, at Schwalbach. This visit also contrasted with previous ones because of the serious increase in socializing. According to George Eliot, their social group in Bad Homburg in 1872 included both “grand” people and “others less grand” (GEL 5:312). They had their first encounter with Lady Castletown and her daughter Cecilia Wingfield on their second day there. Thereafter they seldom spent a day without meeting together in the Kursaal, attending the concerts, and, occasionally, driving out in Lady Castletown’s vehicle. The rainy weather sometimes confined them to taking their exercise in the sheltered arcade rather than in the lovely Kurpark with its scatterings of wells and baths, but they resolved to stay on anyway because “the certainty that the weather is everywhere else bad will help our resolution to stay here” (5:315). Their conversations, described later by Lewes as “deeply interesting,” created additional intimacy begun in the less intimate conditions at Sundays at the Priory.

By the time of the meeting in Bad Homburg, Lady Castletown and Cecilia Wingfield had become among the most faithful Sunday guests. An

2 On the basis of this incident, Collins (citing Haight) singles out Leigh, whom George Eliot saw only from a distance, as the “origin” of Gwendolen (170, n. 4). Likewise, because of the same incident, Bad Homburg attracts most notice as George Eliot’s model for Leubronn. But the briefness and remoteness of the sight of Geraldine Leigh allows attention to the spa visitors with whom the Leweses did spend time, the Castletowns, who share additional similarities with the characters in Deronda.
Figure 13. The Elisabethenbrunnen, Kurpark, Bad Homburg
introduction at a dinner at the Ernst Benzon's led to their first Sunday on 2 April 1871, and for four years the mother/daughter pair appeared with great regularity, sometimes supplemented by one or another of Cecilia’s many sisters. During the rest of April, Lady Castletown and Wingfield missed only one Sunday before the series of spring salons ended when the Leweses moved to summer in Surrey.

The Castletown pair skipped the following autumn Priory season but resumed regular visits in spring 1872, coming twice a month during March, April, and May. Then, after the singing incident described in chapter 4 and another summer in Surrey where George Eliot produced the final installments of *Middlemarch*, the Leweses shared with the Castletowns their interlude in Bad Homburg. Indeed from the spring of 1872 through the autumn of 1873, between Sundays and the Priory and a second season at the spa, the Castletowns were among the Leweses’ most frequently encountered friends.

Born the daughter of the Reverend Archibald Douglas in Ireland in 1810, Augusta Mary Douglas married John Wilson in 1830. In 1869, when their daughter Cecilia was in her mid-thirties, indeed shortly after her marriage, Wilson became the First Baron and assumed the surname Fitzpatrick.

The Castletowns received their lands in Ireland, some 23,000 acres, as a result of the marital choices of Henry VIII and their family’s compliant conversion to his Protestantism. The wife gave birth to a total of six disappointing daughters before producing the heir, Bernard, the future second baron of Upper Ossory, in 1848. At that point, free at last, Lady Castletown embarked on a mysterious relationship with a Brighton preacher.

Most of the egregiously numerous daughters married as successfully as any Mrs. Bennett might desire, into titles and/or wealth. Gertrude married Skeffington Smyth, and Augusta Fredrika (who was painted by Leighton) married twice. Her first husband, Vesey Dawson, a Coldstream Guardsman, died in the Crimean War in 1854, after which she married Charles Magniac, MP. Olivia Douglas Aimée became Lady to Sir John Gage Saunders Sebright; Edith Susan Esther married the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Augustus Murray, and Florence Virginia Fox married General Sir George Wentworth Higginson (*Peerage*).³

The most noticeable exception to the pattern of apparently successful marriages among the sisters, the Honourable Cecilia waited until she was thirty-five before choosing the Honourable Lewis Strange Wingfield, nine years her junior, the third son of Viscount Wingfield and Lady Elizabeth Jocelyn. The *ODNB*, after mentioning his education at Eton and Bonn,

³ The online *Peerage* grants the Fitzpatricks only four daughters.
and his stage debut in the London theater, summarizes a wealth of activities that would qualify Lewis Wingfield as unusually eccentric: going to the Derby as a “negro minstrel,” spending nights in a workhouse and pauper-lodgings, and becoming an attendant in a madhouse. He traveled in various parts of the East and was one of the first Englishmen to journey in the interior of China.

In addition to these unusual pursuits, Wingfield reported on the Franco-Prussian War and wrote copiously: mainly fiction, travels, and theater reviews. Also a painter, he finally settled down as a costume and scene designer in the London theater during the mid-1870s. The *ODNB* concludes its entry with the statement: “Wingfield was slim and delicate-looking with a thin and feminine but musical voice.”

The *ODNB*’s description of Wingfield suggests that lack of mutual sexual interest may have kept the husband and wife apart. Cecilia Wingfield’s intimate communications with the Leweses, if they included her responses to her husband’s sexual indifference to women, would provide another demonstration of George Eliot’s awareness of the predicaments of same-sex love.

The Castletowns arrived in force in London just as the seventies began. While Lord Castletown, Lord Lieutenant of Queen’s County, had already had his place in the House of Lords, Charles Magniac took his in the Commons. The entire family quickly joined the most elite ranks of London society. With other titled masses (the hundreds invited to Queen Victoria’s drawing rooms and levees), they accepted royal invitations. Their other pursuits suited them to the circles in which they moved. The couple shared their enthusiasm for hunting and shooting. Year after year Lord Castletown attended the Fox Club meetings, which took place at Brooks’ or at the Trafalgar in Greenwich, and year after year he took office as Master of Hounds for Limerick or Kildare (*Times* 1872–79).

Lord Castletown’s participation in the hunting offers one identifiable similarity to *Daniel Deronda*’s great fox hunter, Grandcourt. Otherwise,

---

4 In the *Times* for 7 January 1871, “The Effect of a Bombardment” presents an anecdote featuring a more heroic Wingfield: “A little further on a infirmier hailed us and asked if we could do anything for a wounded man who on the Plateau d’Avron had received a ball through the foot. I was helpless, but fortunately my companion was Mr Lewis Wingfield, one of those Admirable Crichtons who have the secret of half a dozen professions at their fingers ends. He at once dressed the wound, and had the satisfaction of sending the wounded man away greatly relieved. We had not gone v much further when his surgical knowledge was a second time put into requisition. Our carriage was again stopped, and we found a crowd round a man whose hand had just been all but blown off by the bursting of a gun. Mr Wingfield bandaged up the wound, and we put the man in to the carriage to take him to an Ambulance and have amputations performed as soon as possible” (5, D).
Castletown regarded his position in the House of Lords most seriously while Mr. Gascoigne’s suggestion that the languid Grandcourt might take an interest in politics evokes bitter mental irony from Gwendolen, who knows well how little Grandcourt cares to improve the condition of England. Lord Castletown receives little attention in the George Eliot/Lewes letters, journals, and diaries; hence the available information neither confirms nor denies additional similarities to Grandcourt.

Nevertheless, if the confidences Lady Castletown shared in Bad Homburg with Lewes concerned her time in Brighton in 1849, they well deserved his adjective “interesting” and suggest additional fuel for George Eliot’s creative imagination. That year, still plain Augusta Wilson, she met Frederick William Robertson whose sermons earned him large congregations and the informal title “Robertson of Brighton” (Beardsley xvii). Because Robertson left a notebook in code, the record of his activities has unusual reliability. These activities included close friendships with the (then) Wilsons, who were visiting Brighton with two of their daughters, especially with the mother. Over and over, he records kissing her with excitement and delight. When she successfully persuaded Robertson to depart from his customary extemporaneous sermons by writing them down, she became his “muse” (306) and sustained control over the materials that would later form the basis for the posthumous biography his audience, in particular a most earnest admirer Lady Byron, desired as a memorial. It was Augusta who chose Stopford Brooke as editor, an editor whom she could count on for both accuracy and discretion.

Christina Beardsley confirms that the illicit couple ultimately consummated their love. An athletic Anglican in the muscular Christianity tradition, Robertson frequently went riding over the Downs with his equally athletic woman friend, and Beardsley quotes an agreement they made on one long ride: “She not to count life over, not give up happiness. I to shew [sic] her if God permit that her influence in this w[orld] [Beardsley’s brackets] is for good, not evil, by striving to cultivate power and be true to myself and God” (135). Both of them unhappily married (as their compact indicates), the couple struggled conscientiously against the sin and the potential scandal of their love. Weekdays he showered kisses on his beloved; Sundays he delivered sermons about achieving Christian virtue. Meanwhile his diary records the ups and downs of their passion in simple code.

John Wilson Fitzpatrick manifested his jealousy of Robertson several times (Beardsley146, 148, 152); nevertheless, Robertson of Brighton, leaving his pregnant wife behind, accompanied the Fitzpatricks to their estates in Ireland in August 1849 and for several years afterward. At Lis-
duff in Queens (now Laois) County, Robertson made his most significant notation: “4 hours in bed with Augusta” (152). Beardsley concludes that despite suspicions, Stopford Brooke managed to cover up the affair. Nevertheless, when Robertson died early, at the age of thirty-seven, his beloved mistress supervised the collection of his letters and sermons, exercising what Beardsley describes as a powerful intellect that made part of her charm for Robertson whose death followed shortly after he decided to leave his wife.

In *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot scrambles details of the Castletown family. Like Gwendolen and Grandcourt, the couple participated together on the hunting field. Like the Irish husband Mrs. Glasher leaves for Grandcourt, Lord Castletown served as an army officer. Like Lady Mallinger, Lady Castletown produced one daughter after another, but persevered through six (rather than three) births until the seventh produced a male. Like Gwendolen, Augusta conducted a relationship with a man in a role that included (in their case among other things) serious discussions and advice on finding meaning in the sort of ghastly, motiveless life described in their compact and assigned to Gwendolen by the *Deronda* narrator. Like Grandcourt, Wilson tolerated a relationship between his wife and a good-looking young man.

After the Castletown/Wingfield party departed as planned for Baden Baden, not to return until 5 October, the Leweses’ social center of gravity dropped as they began a quieter week punctuated by headaches and the company of the “less grand.” This group included S. D. Williams, Jr., a friend from long ago, whom they had encountered in Weimar on their honeymoon and mentioned as a welcome guest throughout their lives. It also included the Alfred Wigans and their son.

Actor, theater manager, playwright, Wigan had often performed on the London stage alongside his wife, especially during the 1860s. Victorians regarded him as a gentleman/actor. Montagu Williams, who sometimes shared the stage with him, quotes actress Mary Ann Keeley: “One of the pieces which I consider the most famous for individual acting was *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Mr. and Mrs. Wigan, Miss Fortescue (Lady Gardner), Miss Woogar, and Mr. Emery took parts. What a marvellous piece of acting was Wigan’s Montague Tigg!” (136). In *Tracks of a Rolling Stone*, Henry Coke reports similar opinions about Wigan whom a friend believed “the best ‘gentleman’ he had ever seen on the stage. I think this impression was due in a great measure to Wigan’s entire absence of affectation, and to his persistent appeal to the ‘judicious’ but never to the ‘groundlings’” (299). Having retired from the theatrical life, Wigan and family came to Bad Homburg.
Wigan and Lewes spent much time in Homburg exchanging anecdotes during all-male interludes of lounging about the rooms and arcades and smoking, especially after dinner and on rainy days. Lewes, in the offhand tone he often adopts when emphasizing his indifference to the fashionable world to Charles Lewes, writes of employing the “strategy of a Von Moltke” (GEL 5:316) to elude the Wigans. But Lewes’s strategies could not have matched the success of Helmuth Von Moltke’s victory at Metz as one or the other or both of the Leweses spent time with one or more of the Wigans five out of the seven days the Castletowns and Mrs. Wingfield were gone.5

In Bad Homburg went forth all the rituals of the ultimate spa, including both therapy and recreation. Leubronn in Daniel Deronda offers the same rituals and similar scenes of all-male exchange, which in the novel take place between an insouciant aristocrat, Sir Hugo Mallinger, and an anecdotalist, Mr. Vandernoodt. In Homburg, Lewes and George Eliot spent the majority of their time with the mother–daughter pair, but Lord Castletown occasionally joined them for dinner or a drive. On several occasions, the single activity that Lewes consistently pursued away from George Eliot, his cigar smoking, he shared with Lord Castletown in the most characteristically male spaces. On 7, 8, and 10 October Lewes smoked his cigar with Lord Castletown in the billiard room.

After a few days indulging these pastimes, Lewes’s journals begin to swell with anecdotes: about an American tourist, a German doctor, Mazzini’s opinion of English food, the latter attributed to Wigan specifically.6 Though he certainly had his own reputation for anecdotes, in his Bad Homburg journals Lewes becomes more anecdotal than ever in conversations among the male members of the party who smoked cigars, generally on the arcade in front of the Kurhaus. This repeated story telling suggests Wigan as partly a model for Mr. Vandernoodt who complains to Daniel that Grandcourt shows no respect for his anecdotes, abruptly turning his back and walking away during one which Vandernoodt considers among his best.

The group spent its remaining time drinking the waters, foregathering in the arcade or the Kursaal, hearing music, walking, and going out

5 Lewes’s antipathy could have proceeded from an incident in 1864 (GEL 2:222) when he wrote a play especially for Wigan to perform. The project did not come off, and Lewes’s play did not debut until it opened in New York in 1864. The New York Times, in its “Amusements” column for 30 May 1864 anticipates the opening by calling it “a play of unusual promise” by “an English writer, of universal culture, whose labors have graced almost every branch of letters” (n.p.).

6 Late in his life, Lewes packed his letters to Robert Lytton (GHLL 3) with anecdotes, always finishing them up with five or six examples of his best to cheer the burdened diplomat awash in his public duties and grieving the loss of two baby sons.
to dinner at the Hessicher Hof. George Eliot complained that the concerts occurred only in the afternoons, leaving the evenings unoccupied other than by gambling. But, for all her horror of greed and compulsion, it was also the atmosphere of the Kursaal that perturbed her: the hazy air produced and compressed in the gas-lit chambers. She mentions such details four times in chapter 1 of *Daniel Deronda*. The room is a "suitable condenser for human breath," containing a "visible haze" and people playing with "dull, gas-poisoned absorption." Later, in the evening the room is "stiffly heated" and "brilliant with gas" (ch. 1).

George Eliot and her party went to see the gambling at least five times during their stay, a repetition that raises the question of why the abstainers so often drifted into the casino to observe the activity for which they had no taste. In Bad Homburg, geography helped make watching the gambling a usual occupation even for the non-gambling guests. The Kursaal devoted only one portion of its space to gambling and accommodated many rooms with other purposes, often serving as the site of the concerts as well. The building sat on the edge of the stately and attractive Kurpark, with its paths and springs, and made a logical stop for refreshment after a stroll or when driven inside by a sudden rain shower. Hence the guests might make a quick pass through the casino on their way elsewhere. In any event the crowds divided into the gamblers and the lookers on, the actors and the audience, all of which reinforces the theatricalization of the spa casino setting in which Gwendolen appears at the opening of the novel.

The gambling scene that opens *Deronda* includes many of the components that make up the descriptive portions of the nineteenth-century guides to German spas. Many authors, physician/authors as well as the writers for the standard guides, repeatedly mention two aspects of spa life. They nearly all describe the diversity of the groups that gather at the roulette table or the rouge et noir and accompany this observation with expressions of horror at the hazards of gambling. In the "Preface" to *The Spas and Their Uses*, Madden calls the "pilgrims to Hygeia" a mixed group socially (iii): "This cursaal always seemed to me by far the worst of the German gambling houses; there is no pretext of any other object" (26). He continues by observing that "struggling for places round the gaming tables of Baden may be seen noblemen and their grooms, ladies of high rank and spotless reputation and ladies of the ‘demi-monde,’ clergymen and blacklegs, all elbowing and pushing aside each other on terms of perfect equality" (261). George Eliot echoes this observation in *Deronda* as she concentrates in chapter 1 on the ethnic variety and social contrasts visible at the gaming tables in Leubronn.
The Salons, the Spas, and Daniel Deronda 121

The specific gamblers described by guide book authors are not always reckless young Gwendolens. Although the spa guides unanimously offer glimpses of young gamblers that convey strong disapproval, they differ in the kinds of young people they report having seen. Madden calls gambling “the black spot of German life” (62), observing its prevalence at spas where most guests participate out of feebleness, desperation, or compulsion. He illustrates his point with references to a young man he has watched lose all his stake, and concludes that gambling, because so exhausting, is especially bad for invalids. The young gambler need not be losing at the tables to convey the moral indignation of the guide authors. In A Three Weeks’ Scamper through the Spas of Germany and Belgium (1858), Erasmus Wilson observes a “young girl” who “had a pile of silver coin before her; she had earned her week’s lodging, and more . . . Alas! The destruction that that one night of gain might bring” (300). John Aldridge in A First Trip to the German Spas and to Vichy (1856) creates a more elaborate scene at Ems:

I observed one young lady, of about three or four and twenty, handsome, but with a certain hardness and shrewish expression in her countenance, who seemed to be a gambling heroine in the estimation of her acquaintances. She always played gold herself, but would oblige a friend by staking a thaler or two for him. There she sat, amid a bevy of cavaliers, with some young girls, almost children, near her; and she laughed and talked with an air the most nonchalant, until suddenly an inspiration seemed to come on her; she would take a cue, push over her stake with determination to a selected part of the table; and then, relapsing into her former manner, appear heedless of the event. I watched her making several bets and she invariably won. But although the observation of this seeming good fortune for a certain number of events, I calculated the surprise that young lady’s term of ill luck, if she continues to gamble, will most surely come. (47)

The opening scene to Daniel Deronda offers a similar view of a gambling young person, in that case both winning and losing. In her letters to Cross and Blackwood about the reckless gambler, as well as in her novel, George Eliot was working within an established guide book set piece.

The Castletown/Wingfield party, having returned from Baden Baden (and having anticipated Grandcourt’s detour there in Daniel Deronda), dramatically increased their intimacy with the Leweses. On 6 October, during an evening together, “Lady C. gave curious sketch of her early life” (GHL). The following day Lewes read one of the sermons of Robertson of Brighton. On 9 October, after two visits to the springs in the park, a long walk, and a substantial recital and discussion featuring Lady Hildegard,
George Eliot listened with absorption to the confidences of Cecilia Wingfield, the wife who lived at spas apart from her husband. Later on that same day Lewes and Lady Castletown had their “deeply interesting talk” as they “promenaded in the corridor” (GHLJ 9 October 1872) after dinner. Their talk could not fail to touch on the subject of Robertson, whose sermon Lewes had just read, undoubtedly at the instigation of their de facto editor, his companion, Lady Castletown.

The mother–daughter intimacy, together with the problematic marriages of the pair, and even more the sequence of continental watering places they visited, brings Cecilia into the scramble of similarities between the Castletown family and events in Leubronn. In addition, the countess Hildegard makes a reasonable prototype for Catherine Arrowpoint, who, though far from beautiful as Hildegard, is a “thorough musician” who “made a softening screen for the oddities of her mother” (ch. 5). Describing Hildegard, Lewes calls the mother “a rattling, noisy, energetic, woman only tolerable on account of her lovely daughter” (GEL 5:317). Hildegard has “an exquisite face, the temperament of an artist, a large nature” (5:317). The important day together ended as the Leweses returned in a downpour of rain to their spacious rooms in the Obere Promenade for tea.

Such temporary and intensely intimate relationships with the fellow spa visitors help indicate how, in addition to forming the setting for three important chapters, the Black Forest spas contribute to the Deronda narrative in yet other, more pervasive and subversive ways. Gwendolen’s time in Leubronn, when she pawns her necklace, is far from her first visit to such a place. The Deronda narrator remains vague on the circumstances of Gwendolen’s childhood, mentioning only her mother’s marriages and her family’s “roving from one foreign watering place, or Parisian apartment, to another, always feeling new antipathies to new suites of hired furniture, and meeting new people under conditions which made her appear of little importance” (ch. 3). From girlhood, the spa has been one of Gwendolen’s milieux where she has developed the sense of unimportance in others’ eyes that she is planning to overcome as the novel opens.

Several circumstances of a young girl’s residence at a sequence of nineteenth-century spas might convince her of her lack of consequence. As both Lewes and George Eliot mention, watering places frequently lack men. At Bad Peterstal in 1868, she comments, “The ladies are in the majority” (GEL 4:454). At Schwalbach, she observes the heavily female company: “There is a deficiency of men, children, and dogs” (GEL 5:278). In addition to women seeking therapy, wives who needed an excuse to live apart from unpleasant husbands swelled the female populations. Gwendolen, at a spa, could easily develop the “sense of empty benches” (ch. 11) she finds unin-
teresting among all-female companies, even though she has little respect for or interest in most of the men she captivates. When a schoolgirl at a spa, Gwendolen could hardly attract the attention she gains when she can enter the spielbank as an adult and theatrically place her bets. Moreover, a child-Gwendolen would have nourished her antipathy toward physical weakness among the genuinely sick people whose wheelchairs and nurses crowded the watering-place promenades and encumbered the paths of the Kurparks.

Possibly more importantly, Gwendolen knows well the components of the spas: the springs, the promenades, the conversation rooms, the gambling, the hotels, the pawn shops. She follows her preordained plot with fidelity in Leubronn, the plot of gambling loss, financial desperation, and furtive patronage of the pawnbroker.

Her knowledge of the spas also heightens Gwendolen’s sense of herself as a star. Gwendolen gathers an audience, a huge audience as a matter of fact, for George Eliot places “fifty or sixty” people around Gwendolen who stands in the first rank behind the chairs, a large crowd for a gaming table only about eight or ten feet in length. If Gwendolen theatricalizes everything, she has been preparing her debut with a thorough knowledge of the stage she will occupy when she runs away from involvement with Grandcourt and toward the viewing and being viewed along the promenades, in the rooms, visiting the casinos, and, finally, patronizing the Leubronn pawn shop.

The following year, the Leweses and the Castletowns again returned to Bad Homburg for a substantial period of nearly two weeks. With the gambling temporarily in abeyance, and in quieter (and more expensive) lodgings, they experienced a less exciting and less social time. Nevertheless, the confidences of the previous year still occupied George Eliot’s thoughts, as, according to Lewes, they discussed “The Wingfield story” (GHLJ 3 August 1873). But this time the company included only Lord and Lady Castletown, and, without the liveliness of the daughters’ presence and the recitals by Lady Hildegard, the days also passed uncomfortably because of continuing illnesses and miserable weather. Whether Lord Castletown had a dampening effect on the smaller party or whether illness and the chilly rain were to blame, Lewes ended the 1873 stay with the exclamation that forms the motto for this chapter: “Last day and glad to leave!” (15 August). The Leweses had worn out Bad Homburg.

After the publication of Deronda, the Castletowns never returned to Sundays at the Priory. Although Lady Sebright, one of the daughters present at Bad Homburg in 1872, made an overture in 1875, her mother and her sister stayed away, having made their last visit the previous spring, on
7 March 1875. Lady Sebright invited the Leweses to her home in Hertfordshire near the end of that year, but George Eliot replied on New Year’s Day 1876, tempering her refusal with a renewed invitation to Sundays at the Priory: “We are hermits, and rarely know anything of the world except through the stragglers from the crowd who visit our cell” (GEL 6:207). This wildly inaccurate metaphorical description of her salons, both the guests as “stragglers” and the Priory as a “cell,” precedes her invitation, which she couples with an inquiry after Lady Castletown’s health, apparently unimproved by the spa therapies she was still pursuing at Fontainebleau. Lady Sebright made one final appearance at the Priory the following September 1876, but her mother, father, and sisters stayed away.

Ironically, Lady Castletown, in whose presence Lewes had delighted in 1869, was far from the virtuous noblewoman he imagined her to be. In attending the salon of an illicit couple she was not raising the level of its respectability. Whether or not the Leweses, or their guests, knew of the gossip about the preacher of Brighton, she herself knew that she was only adding one more adulterer (for example, technically, Lewes himself, and, incorrigibly, Edward Burne-Jones) to the group.

1876:
Summer in Switzerland

In the summer of 1876, with Daniel Deronda finished, the Leweses followed their habit of initiating a long journey to celebrate the completion of a new George Eliot novel. Appropriately, given the novel’s settings, their reward journey took them to one watering place after another. They stopped at Aix-les-Bain for five days and then paused at Chambéry, Lausanne, and Vevey. But they took for their main destination the mountains of eastern Switzerland where they spent most of July and August. By way of Berne and Zurich, they traveled to Bad Ragatz where they remained for more than two weeks. In August they moved on to Stachelberg for eleven days and then blundered on to Klönthal where the beauty of the landscape could not compensate for inadequate rooms, “noisy children who made the corridor their playground” (GHLL 2:225), and masses of annoying flies hovering around their frequently aching heads.

Although they longed for the well-remembered pleasures of Bad Peterstal, they despaired of finding rooms there. Nevertheless they proceeded back to the Schwarzwald northward by way of Zurich and Schaffhausen, both broiling in the summer sun, until they arrived at St. Blasien to remain for a week. But the long summer of strenuous travel brought only uneven
improvements to their health, and the following year the purchase of their country home at Witley obviated the need for them to undertake the rigors of constant railway travel in the European mountains. And, although their health fluctuated, as with *The Spanish Gypsy*, their travels abroad had allowed them to keep themselves at a distance while the first reviews of *Daniel Deronda* were appearing in London.

**Late Arrivals**

During the final years of Sundays at the Priory, the guests included old friends, socialites, and some of the most important psychologists of that early, pre-Freudian age. Indeed the cutting edge psychological periodical, *Mind*, debuted in January 1876 as the project of a number of Priory guests. Alexander Bain, who financed it, visited the Priory occasionally between 1868 and the mid-seventies, one of the male guests who often came to St John’s Wood along with his wife, Frances, who, like some of the other women guests, had helped encourage women’s education, in her case through her involvement in the founding of Bedford College. George Croom Robertson, the first editor of *Mind*, also dated his attendance from an early age. Indeed, Robertson, a prodigy, began his work at University College London in his mid-twenties, the same age at which he became a conspicuously youthful Priory visitor as early as 1869. He, too, showed no reluctance to introduce his wife to the occasions. When queried, the Leweses replied with a warm invitation for the young couple, and Robertson often arrived with his wife, Caroline.

Unlike Bain and Robertson, their longtime colleague, James Sully, did not arrive at the Priory for his first Sunday until later in the decade. On 28 March 1875 he initiated a relationship that made him one of the most important of the psychologists growing increasingly thick on the Priory carpet during the mid-seventies. His training in Berlin and his 1874 publication of *Sensation and Intuition* gave him much in common with other guests and, especially, with his host, ever busy with such topics as “Laws of Sensibility” and “Organization of Impressions” for *Problems*. Having read *Sensation and Intuition* in February 1875, Lewes invited the young psychologist for a private visit, which occurred on a Monday, 22 February. He retained his importance after Lewes’s death by supplying advice and proofreading skills while George Eliot was completing, as far as she could, the posthumous edition of Lewes’s *Problems of Life and Mind*.

In 1877 Sully published *Pessimism: A History and a Criticism*, which George Eliot read right away (Fleischmann, “George Eliot’s Reading” 66).
and which devotes an Appendix to “Mr Lewes’s View of Consciousness” that politely takes its stand in opposition to Lewes’s theories. On the other hand, Sully placed a quotation from Lewes concerning the relationship between philosophy and personality as the motto to his first chapter. His welcome at the Priory after the appearance of *Pessimism* and its unflattering Appendix suggests Lewes’s seriousness about reaching valid conclusions, his generosity of spirit, and his respect for his younger colleague, Sully.

Meanwhile, in another demonstration of journalistic incestuousness common at the Priory, Bain reviewed Sully’s *Pessimism* in an October 1877 issue of *Mind* in a seven-page essay. Bain writes enthusiastically of one section: “This chapter is full of delicate psychological discriminations on the subjects of pleasure and pain, and the influences of temperament upon our judgment of the great matter at issue. The conclusion is a very graphic portraiture of the individualities of Schopenhauer and Harman, and also of the circumstances in the European situation that favour the reception of their creed” (565). He adds that “Departing alike from optimism and from pessimism, the author rests finally in the watchword suggested to him by George Eliot—Meliorism” (565). Thus do the Priory hosts and guests come together in the pages of the new periodical.

In his mid-thirties at the time of his initiation, Sully continued visiting through 1878, with no variation as to pace, regularly once a month throughout subsequent Priory seasons. He had some luck in chancing upon celebrity guests. On 30 April 1876, he encountered Charles Darwin and wife, a most unusual visit, and also a late visit from Anthony Trollope who came more rarely now. Sully also visited on 28 May 1876 in a group of nearly thirty people, all or some of whom may have heard George Eliot read “two chapters of Daniel Deronda” (GHLJ 28 May 1876). On 25 March 1877, he found himself in the company of Tennyson and two of his sons.

Even after Lewes’s death, Sully sustained his rigid objectivity in evaluating his Priory host’s work. As Martha Vogeler has pointed out, George Eliot did not spend the first year of her bereavement in idleness but instead hard at work completing *Problems of Life and Mind*. Sully and Michael Foster reviewed the proofs for her (Vogeler 83). She tried to keep Lewes’s reputation strong during the inevitable period of evaluation provided by the obituaries. According to Alexander Bain, “James Sully had been entrusted by her with the drawing up of a sketch of Lewes for publication in Magazine form” (343). Sully brought the proofs of his article along with him on a walking trip to Scotland he and Bain pursued that August, and Bain asserts that Sully showed him the proofs and asked advice of him.
The psychologists who made the Priory one of their important gathering places provided a ready-made set of likely reviewers for the posthumous publication of Lewes’s last work. Henry Maine published a review whose moderate estimate of Lewes’s philosophical powers disappointed George Eliot (Vogeler 83). Joseph Delboeuf’s obituary appeared in *La Revue Scientifique* (1 February 1879, 730–33), and his review of the completed *Problem* in *La Nature* on 5 December 1879. Other obituaries followed the psychologists’ pattern of placing him within their own groups. Frederic Harrison describes him in *The Academy* as an out-and-out Positivist. More literary authors singled out the *Biographical History of Philosophy* and his life of Goethe as his most significant contributions.

As for Sully, he also shared the proofs of his Lewes article with George Eliot. Vogeler summarizes George Eliot’s exchanges with Sully about his article in the *New Quarterly Magazine* for October 1879. George Eliot thought Sully might delete some of the material about Lewes’s acting, as well as the plot summary of the novel *Rose Blanche and Violet*. But she becomes serious about Sully’s reports of Lewes’s early critical responses to the work of poets who later became Priory visitors, notably Browning and Tennyson: “I beg you in his name and my own to omit the paragraph. . . . I know that he would have objected to have attention called to his early observations on two living poets—observations which his later mind would have considerably modified” (*GEL* 9:272–73). Her final two comments in this important letter concern Lewes’s later work and the triumphant reception of the *Life of Goethe* in Germany. Throughout, she expresses her gratitude both for the content of the piece and for Sully’s thoughtfulness in consulting her before publication.

But Vogeler concludes that Sully’s essay did not “satisfy her” despite the author’s more positive responses to Lewes’s last two volumes of *Problems* (83). Simcox describes the situation more bluntly: George Eliot was “vexed” (103) at “the well-meant blundering way” of Sully’s article “which she said was written by a clever man and a friend!” (103). Only once did George Eliot voice approval of Sully’s work. To Cross, by this time her “best loved and loving one” (*GEL* 7:210), she mentions in passing that Sully’s essay was “v well done” (164). During the year of her intense bereavement and hard work, Priory regulars, including Sully, Sidgwick, Foster, and Cross, continued to figure in her life despite the abolition of the Sunday afternoons.

While the psychologists at the Priory established the venue as an important site in the early and ever-less-shadowy history of psychology, the social side of Sunday at the Priory also gained cachet during the later seventies. Between 1875 and 1878, the Grosvenor cousins added a socially
elite pair. Norman Grosvenor fit in well at the Priory. A fan of William Morris, he counted Leslie Stephen and Edward Burne-Jones among his friends. Described by his grandson as kindly and gentle with a streak of romantic melancholy, he reveled in several occupations that competed for his time. In addition to enjoying grouse hunting, “he was happiest dressed in his oldest clothes, going fishing or studying harmony and counterpoint” (quoted in Lownie 94). During the same period he was participating in Sundays at the Priory, he launched his successful project of bringing classical music to London’s poorer neighborhoods. According to J. A. Fuller-Maitland, “In 1878 the Honourable Norman Grosvenor, with a handful of amateurs like-minded with himself tried the experiment of giving classical music concerts in the East End of London . . . nothing but the best music was good enough for their purpose” (317). Their organization, the People’s Concert Society, charged a penny per concert and survived until 1936. He began visiting the Priory regularly in 1876 at the age of thirty-one and continued through 1878.

After a few Sundays, Norman Grosvenor began to arrive with his cousin Richard. Although both at different times MPs (Norman, member for Chester, 1869–74; Richard, for Flintshire, 1861–86), during their period as Priory guests they shared the more emotional bond of being unhappily single. Richard was mourning his first wife, Beatrice Vesey, who died in 1876 shortly after giving birth to their daughter Elizabeth. He remarried in 1879, and his second wife, Eleanor Hamilton-Stubber, bore five more children. Norman Grosvenor was waiting with as much patience as possible to marry Caroline Stuart Wortley, whom he first met in 1875. But Norman’s father survived into 1893, postponing or eliminating whatever chance a younger son might have at an inheritance, and the couple waited until 1882 to marry. Meanwhile, both temporarily single cousins spent many afternoons at the Priory.

In 1876 another philosopher/scientist (and, eventually, archaeologist), Charles Waldstein, began joining the company. Lewis S. Feuer assigns an important role to Waldstein’s presence at the Priory for he believes that Waldstein encountered there ideas responsible for a major shift in the thinking of Karl Marx. Feuer describes how the meeting between Priory visitor Edwin Ray Lankester and Marx resulted in a friendship that demonstrates how “in his last years, Marx appears to have been longing to evolve from ideology to science” (646). The short biography that Feuer includes in his essay narrates Waldstein’s rather wandering vocational path from studying philosophy at Heidelberg, moving to London to write his dissertation on Kant and Hume, and somehow ending up delivering a series of art lectures at the British Museum during the winter of 1876–77.
He first turned up at the Priory on 29 October 1876, the same day as a visit by Maxim Kovalevsky who, according to Waldstein, introduced him to Marx, making possible in turn the pivotal Lankester introduction (Feuer 645). 

Waldstein went on to become known as an archaeologist and eventually Slade Professor of Art at Cambridge, but when he remembers his years at the Priory he emphasizes his youth. Two of his publications reflect his experiences as a young visitor to George Eliot’s salon. The more direct appeared in Charles Dudley Warner’s 1896 Library of the World’s Best Literature Ancient and Modern for which Waldstein wrote the section on George Eliot. Warner’s format called for a critical biography followed by excerpts from George Eliot’s novels. Probably because of his reading of Cross’s Life in Letters, Waldstein narrates the youth of his subject with far less inaccuracy than so many of the Priory guests produced in their 1881 obituaries. When he comes to George Eliot’s later life, he describes how the Sunday afternoons reassured him: “The present writer remembers with grateful piety how, when he was a very young man struggling to put a crude thought into presentable form before these giants of thought and letters, she would divine his meaning even in its embryonic uncouthness of expression, and would give it back to him and to them in a perfect and faultless garb; so that in admiring and worshipping the woman, he would be pleased with his own thoughts and think well of himself” (5364). He places his analysis of her work in an Arnoldian Hebraic/Hellenic frame, putting her on the Hebraic side of the binary and praising her as a novelist and poet but “above all a social philosopher” (5364). When he writes on Daniel Deronda, he confines his interest largely to Gwendolen, identifying the subject of the novel “the development of her soul” (5374). Lewes himself, he concludes, ratified his interpretation: “When she comes out of the final soul’s tragedy we feel that the woman has stood the test of fire, and has realized the greatness and overwhelming vastness of the spiritual world. G. H. Lewes, to whom

7 Feuer suggests that either Darwin or Huxley might have introduced him at the Priory, but Lewes’s notes fail to support this. Darwin attended the Priory only twice, once in 1873 and once in 1876; Huxley does not appear on Lewes’s list at all. Waldstein himself suggests the Darwin/Huxley possibility in his essay on George Eliot for the Library of the World’s Best Literature Ancient and Modern in which he describes Sundays at the Priory: “I might meet in one and the same afternoon Charles Darwin, Robert Browning, Tennyson, Robert Wagner, Joachim the violinist, Huxley, Clifford, Du Maurier and Turgénieff” (5363). Waldstein uses his “might” judiciously, since that particular group never assembled all at once on any given Sunday.

8 See Collins’s excerpt from Waldstein’s Truth: An Essay in Moral Reconstruction (1919), which also dwells on his gratitude to George Eliot for her helpfulness as he attempted to express himself effectively at the Priory (George Eliot 90).
the writer communicated this conception of ‘Daniel Deronda,’ assured him that he had grasped the central idea which George Eliot had in her mind, and the actual history of the story’s construction” (5374). His segment on George Eliot concludes with excerpts from *The Mill on the Floss, Silas Marner,* and *Romola.*

In 1894, Waldstein, born in New York to Jewish parents, published anonymously *The Jewish Question and the Mission of the Jews.* His analysis vastly underestimates the force of European anti-Semitic movements of which he concludes, “they are artificial and false in their origin and ephemeral in their vitality, and they are doomed to die soon” (4), but he also engages the possibility of a homeland in Palestine, a matter he leaves untouched in his analysis of *Daniel Deronda* for the *World’s Best Literature* volume. He distances himself from the matters he discusses through consistent third-person references, including his chapter titles: “The Mission of the Jews,” “Money and the Jews.” The future “Sir Charles Walston,” whose path took him from New York through Heidelberg and London and on to Cambridge, learned and benefitted from his attendance at the Priory, but he did not share George Eliot’s more accurate (in the light of history) ideas about the future of European Jewry.

The women regulars during the Priory’s last two years drew from the usual groups: Pre-Raphaelites, singers, and Bodichon’s protégées. Henrietta Rintoul’s 1905 obituary in *The Mercury,* published in Hobart, Tasmania, devotes most of its space to her father, Robert Stephen Rintoul, longtime editor of *The Spectator.* Once courted by William Michael Rossetti, she corresponded with Christina Rossetti, who never came near the Priory.Within the musical contingent, another woman guest, Augusta Redeker, sang with Liebreich to a large group of twenty-seven on 14 April 1878. The following year she married one of the guests in the audience that afternoon, Sir Felix Semon. The new Lady Semon won fervent praise from P. McBride, her husband’s biographer, who eulogized Sir Felix in 1913. He describes her as “charming,” talented, and, what’s more, devoted to her domestic duties. Artist Emily Greatorex, friend to both Bodichon and Marks, later committed herself to assuring that Girton College accepted and exhibited Bodichon’s portrait (Hirsch 307–8).

Lord Acton began turning up at the Priory only during its last days as a Sunday salon in the spring of 1878, but his effects on the legacy of George Eliot persist out of all proportion with the length and depth of their social relationship. A highly active, almost a professional Catholic, Acton spent much of his intellectual life embroiled in the controversies facing Victorian Catholicism, in particular the Vatican decree of papal infallibility. He
survived with the possibility of excommunication ever hovering about his publications and lectures.

During the early 1880s, Lord Acton immersed himself in George Eliot’s life and works, assembling a mass of note cards now in the Cambridge University Library. They suggest that Acton may have projected a biography of his own. Indeed he participated actively in the writing of John Cross’s Life in Letters, which Cross worked on partly while wintering on the French Riviera. In 1892 Queen Victoria selected Acton as her Lord-in-Waiting. His performance in this undemanding role, which consisted largely of sharing the Queen’s evening meals, enabled him to reverse financial woes and retain his home in Shropshire, as well as his chalet in Germany and La Madeleine, his villa in Cannes (Hill 343). He delighted in the crowning joy of his life when he became Cambridge University Regius Professor of Modern History in 1895, despite his Catholicism, supported by old Priory friend Henry Sidgwick (367) and in competition with Oscar Browning, by this point generally regarded as a figure of fun (368).

**Selected Futures**

Sundays at the Priory, in the form Lewes and George Eliot conducted them for nearly ten years, ended abruptly in November 1878. Lewes’s death occurred on a Saturday night. Several friends—Browning, Tennyson, Spencer, Maine—anticipating the devastation George Eliot would suffer, hesitated to forward their sympathy notes right away. Du Maurier, too, feared “to intrude on her grief” (GEL 7:84). He wrote instead to Charles Lee Lewes, his friend and neighbor, telling about how he actually set out from his home in Hampstead Heath for Sunday at the Priory on 1 December, rehearsing along the way a song adapted from Lewes’s Life of Goethe with which he hoped to please his host. Charles Kegan Paul’s letter of condolence mentions that, like Du Maurier, he had “intended calling at the Priory yesterday afternoon” (ms. letter, Beinecke, 2 December 1878). Indeed the condolence letters that piled up awaiting George Eliot’s ability to read them, as well as the list of mourners who attended the services at Highgate Cemetery, read like one of Lewes’s diary lists of frequent visitors to Sundays at the Priory.

After Lewes’s death, the Sundays ceased, although George Eliot remained in isolation for many months. But by March 1879 the old standbys were beginning to call on random days of the week, first the men involved in the George Henry Lewes Studentship, then a few women: her
daughter-in-law Gertrude Lewes, Maria Congreve, and Georgiana Burne-Jones. From 22 May until 1 November, she stayed at Witley where callers were frequently local, including Tennison and other neighbors.  

Among the people who mourned the death of Lewes and remained on social terms with George Eliot afterwards, some did not outlive their Priory hosts for long, while others went on to change their lives and find pursuits that took them in surprising directions, sometimes directions that showed the influence of their participation at the Priory and their acquaintance with the people that gathered there. Among their contemporaries, Trollope (1882), Browning (1889), Bodichon (1891), and Tennyson (1892) did not make it into the twentieth century while Burton (1900) and Spencer (1903) died in their mid-eighties. Bice Trollope married in 1880, but died young, the year following her wedding.

Of the Leweses’ other juniors, the most long-lasting popular fame of all came to the modest cartoonist songbird with the weak eyes. Taken together, Du Maurier’s three 1890s novels have yielded a variety of twentieth-century dramas, movies, operas, and television productions, but among the three, *Trilby* takes the lead in indelible popularity. The style of hat to which it gave its name has still not gone completely out of style in the twenty-first century.

Artist Felix Moscheles describes the youthful hijinks he shared with Du Maurier in his reminiscences of “Bohemia with Du Maurier,” as experiences that he believes provided the material for *Trilby’s* Parisian setting and plot events. He concludes that his own ability to mesmerize in those distant days impressed Du Maurier. Of his mesmeric abilities, he expresses his confidence “that du Maurier was inoculated with the germs that were eventually to develop into Trilbyism and Svengalism” (59). But during the years between the 1850s in Paris and the writing of *Peter Ibbetson*, *Trilby*, and *The Martian* in the 1890s, Du Maurier had multiple opportunities to observe, discuss, question, and become inspired to plot spiritualism, hypnotism, and reincarnation into his fiction by the company he shared at the Priory, especially Myers, Sidgwick, and Gurney.

---

9 *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, crowded with authors of varying degrees of reliability and success, set in many a drawing room, and written during the last days of Sundays at the Priory, offers a tempting array of possibilities for characters drawn from George Eliot’s own salon. But they provide at once too much and too little information to establish similarities between, say, “The Too-Ready Writer” and Leslie Stephen who, in writing for the *Cornhill Magazine* tackled topics ranging from touring in the Alps to Shakespeare or “Too Young” to Croom Robertson, who stuck with coming to the Priory long enough to have outgrown his singularizing precocity. While George Eliot’s coded communications may have offered telling details for her in-crowd of guests, the identifying significance of the fall of a lock of hair here or a broken bootstrap there lies beyond the twenty-first-century investigator.
who embraced the various processes represented in Du Maurier’s novels. The Priory days did not remove thoughts of such things from Du Maurier’s memories of an artistic youth, but rather intensified them during the decades between youthful experimentation and the creation of the relationship between Svengali and Trilby that has delighted and terrified audiences throughout the years since its publication by the late-blooming novelist.

Not only his plot but Du Maurier’s plentiful allusions in Trilby also show signs of his regular Priory attendance. While Du Maurier’s mentions of names such as Burne-Jones and Rossetti make likely references in a novel about artists irrespective of their mutual socializing with its author, Priory-related literary references turn up in Trilby as well. On Little Billee’s train journey to Devonshire to visit his mother and sister, he provides himself with reading matter that includes the work of three participants in Priory society: Silas Marner, Origin of Species, and Punch, although the character gives most of his attention to the first. Meanwhile, Du Maurier’s anti-Semitic construction of Svengali himself reveals that the cartoonist-become-novelist did not completely accept the message of respect George Eliot delivers in Daniel Deronda.

Edmund Gurney’s death in the Brighton hotel did not paralyze the psychical group. F. W. H. Myers and his friends pursued spiritualism, and they became increasingly known for his psychical research. Myers died 1901 in Rome and is memorialized with a plaque in the A-Catolico Cemetery near the Porta Paolo. His wife, Eveleen, born in 1856, became a photographer, often including wistful portraits of her children among her subjects.

In addition to Du Maurier, other ex-Priory guests wrote novel after novel. Betham-Edwards continued writing novels and travels. Lucy Clifford wrote children’s stories, while Lewis Strange Wingfield and Charles Hamilton Aidé also continued to turn out fiction. William Allingham’s poetry received a high compliment when W. B. Yeats edited his volume of “Sixteen Poems” in 1905. Kate Field continued her journalism and between 1890 and 1895 edited her own newspaper, Kate Field’s Washington, which appeared weekly (Scharnhorst 25).

After a lifetime suggesting domestic submission, continued self-sacrifice, and patience with her erring husband, Georgiana Burne-Jones became what she had little reason to believe part of her future: a politician and an author. She won election to the parish council in Rottingdean Surrey where the Burne-Joneses had made their refuge from London and the Grange at Fulham. Then, at the age of 65, after her husband’s death, she wrote his Memorials, still consulted today for its biography of one of the
most famous and productive of the Pre-Raphaelites who was also a con-
stant visitor at the Priory.

James Sully concentrated his later efforts on child psychology and the
publication of textbooks in 1884, ’85, ’95, and ’97, before returning to a
subject more typical of his Priory days: *An Essay on Laughter* (1902). As late
as 1923 Sully demonstrated evidence of his easy relationship with the Lew-
eses. In a departure from his usual topics, a set of *Italian Sketches*, he refers
offhandedly to the Leweses’ travels. He mentions in particular their 1860
journey as part of a decade that drew many important *Inglesi* to Italy and
that marked “the triumph of the long struggle of the Italians for freedom
and national unity” (61). In his arrangement of important visitors to Italy
during that time, the Leweses come after Henry Taine and before J. A.
Symonds and Herbert Spencer.10 He mentions how the Leweses had to
plan their movements to avoid the campaigns of Garibaldi, and he praises
George Eliot’s eye for the colors of the ruins of Paestum, its three ancient
temples rising out of meadows of wildflowers she also admired. His casual
references this late in the game suggest he has no need to boast of the
friendship; it was a matter of course to link the Leweses and 1860s Italy.

Phoebe Sarah (Hertha) Marks became the second wife of her professor,
W. E. Ayrton, and stepmother to Edith Ayrton who married author Israel
Zangwill. She enthusiastically joined a family circle active in the late nine-
teenth-century women’s suffrage effort (Rochelson 15). Described as a “sci-
ettist, writer, and lecturer in London” (15), she later successfully invented
and sold a fan that she designed to disperse poisonous gases from World
War I trenches. She named her daughter after Barbara Bodichon.

Charles Waldstein continued his distinguished work as an archaeol-
ogist. Knighted in 1913, he took the honor under the name Sir Charles
Walston (Feuer 644). But his most unusual achievement for a Priory visi-
tor occurred in 1896 when he participated in the Summer Olympics. A
member of the committee formed to revive the games in 1894, he was
everywhere when they actually took place in Athens two years later. He
participated in shooting events and, though he won no medals, organized
athletic and gymnastic competitions, and served as referee for bicycling
and tennis.

Edith Simcox, despite a huge pile of achievements, never found
happiness. During the first seven years after George Eliot’s death, she

10 Like Waldstein’s contributions to the *Library of the World’s Great Literature*, Sully here
contributes to one of the many Victorian collective biographies Alison Booth calls prosopog-
ographies and which often include George Eliot. While most authors who attended the Priory
Sundays include her among sketches of famous people the authors have known, Sully nar-
rors his process of selection to famous people he can also present as Italophiles.
remained preoccupied with her love, going over memories of this day or that, pondering the beliefs expressed in the novels, and making pilgrimages to places associated with George Eliot. She met with George Eliot’s old friends, including Barbara Bodichon, Cara Bray, Sara Hennell, and, during a lasting friendship, Maria Congreve. She traveled to Warwickshire where she failed to persuade Isaac Evans that she, not Johnny Cross, should write the biography of his sister. Although she eventually gave up both supervising Hamilton and Company and also her membership on the School Board, she remained active in workers’ groups, meeting with miners, visiting sweatshops, and traveling to conventions. She continued writing, including the *Vignettes*, her allegories of love for George Eliot.11

For four years Simcox waited anxiously for the appearance of Cross’s book. When it finally came, she first reacted with relief: “the blasphemers I think will be at a loss for anything to take hold of and the invention of the arrangement is good,” although “I could have spared all the references to myself especially the last, which seems to me in questionable taste” (211). Afterward, she kept the volumes by her, rereading George Eliot’s letters as a source of comfort.

Then, in 1888, references to George Eliot cease: her last reference, in March 1887, identifies herself and Lewes as “worshippers at one dear shrine” (241). This reference in the *Autobiography* follows up a long reflection about growing up without romantic interest in boys and precedes a detailed report concerning the International Workman’s Congress in London and Paris. It then yields to a long narrative of her mother’s decline and death. Even when referring to Maria Congreve in 1891, when George Eliot’s old friend taught Simcox to ride horseback (and again later in 1894), she does not mention her lost love. Notes concerning former Priory guest George Romanes in 1895 do not prompt reflections concerning the beloved hosts of the Sunday salons. In the end, the *Autobiography* concentrates almost exclusively on her mother’s slow death, after which she concludes that “I rank her above my other love in perfection for all human relations” (280). The diary ends ominously with the statement that “[t]he few pages that remain will serve to report if any work gets done in the few years that remain” (280). The disturbing absence of further entries suggests that her last year and a half of life yielded little satisfaction. She died 15 September 1901.

The later experiences of the Priory visitors confirm that at the same time George Eliot was drawing on her acquaintances and experiences

---

11 Rosemarie Bodenheimer’s “Autobiography in Fragments: The Elusive Life of Edith Simcox” describes the *Autobiography* as “a struggle with George Eliot” (2) and a search for an “acceptable life plot” (3) for herself.
there to create her composite characters, those acquaintances were participating in a literary atmosphere that kept many of them writing in various genres and for various audiences, often even more intensely than when they were actually in attendance. Into the eighties and nineties, many of them continued to move in the same circles that visited in St John’s Wood on Sundays, circles likely to take an interest in their specialized activities, such as Cobden Sanderson’s Doves Press or Sully’s child psychology. In addition to Cross’s biography, extensive sets of their notes suggest unachieved biographical ambitions on the parts of Acton and Simcox, while dozens of the guests produced their versions of Sundays at the Priory, sometimes as a minor detail in a memoir and sometimes as a chapter in a propsopography devoted to famous people the author has known. If George Eliot turned to her guests for creative inspiration, it worked both ways when, after the salons ceased, Priory guests inserted long or short descriptions of Sundays at the Priory to add the sparkle of celebrity name-dropping to their letters, memoirs, and autobiographies.