

TO JOHN BLACKWOOD, 24 JULY 1871

After reading Book II Blackwood suggested that a possible feeling of the lack of continuous interest between the Brooke and Vincy parts did not matter since they were complete in themselves. The cottage at Shottermill had been let to George Smith, a painter, from 1 August; but the Leweses were able to secure a house across the road until 1 September. Mrs. Tennyson's journal records: "*July 14th*. A[lfred] travelled down from London with G. H. Lewes, who took him to his home . . . and introduced him to Mrs. Lewes." He called again with Hallam, 22 July: "She is delightful in a tête-à-tête and speaks in a soft soprano voice, which almost sounds like a fine falsetto, with her strong masculine face." [v, 168-69]

Shottermill | Petersfield | July 24. 71.

My dear Mr. Blackwood

Thanks for the prompt return of the M.S., which arrived this morning. I have just been making a calculation of the pages and I find, on a liberal estimate, that this second portion is about 190 pp. of the size you usually give to my novels—I think, 25 lines per page, is it not? "Miss Brooke" being about 150 pp. the two parts together would be equal to the larger volumes of Adam Bede and The Mill, which are at least 350 pp. if my memory may be trusted.

Mr. Lewes has been saying that it may perhaps be well to take in a portion of Part II at the end of Part I. But it is too early for such definite arrangements. I don't see how I can leave anything out, because I hope there is nothing that will be seen to be irrelevant to my design, which is to show the gradual action of ordinary causes rather than exceptional, and to show this in some directions which have not been from time immemorial the beaten path—the Cremorne walks and shows of fiction. But the best intentions are good for nothing until execution has justified them. And you know I am always compassed about with fears. I am in danger in all my designs of parodying dear Goldsmith's satire on Burke, and think of refining when novel readers only think of skipping.

We are obliged to turn out of this queer cottage next week, but we have been fortunate enough to get the more comfortable house on the other side of the road, so that we can move without any trouble. Thus our address will continue to be the same until the end of August.

Tennyson, who is one of the "hill-folk" about here, has found us out, so that we have lost the utmost perfection of our solitude—the impossibility of a caller.

Always yours sincerely
M. E. Lewes.