

TO MRS. ELIZABETH GASKELL, 11 NOVEMBER 1859

When Mrs. Gaskell, long a dupe of the Liggins myth, learned that Marian Evans was the of *Adam Bede*, she wrote a generous letter telling how "earnestly, fully, and humbly" she admired her books. "I never read anything so complete and beautiful in fiction in my whole life before." But she could not resist adding, "I should not be quite true to my ending, if I did not say before I concluded that I wish you were Mrs. Lewes. However that can't be helped, as far as I can see, and one must not judge others." [III, 198-991]

Holly Lodge, South Fields Wandsworth. I November 11. 59.

My dear Madam

Only yesterday I was wondering that artists, knowing each other's pains so well, did not help each other more, and, as usual, when I have been talking complainingly or suspiciously, something has come which serves me as a reproof. That "something" is your letter, which has brought me the only sort of help I care to have—an assurance of fellow-feeling, of thorough truthful recognition from one of the minds which are capable of judging as well as of being moved. *You* know, without my telling you, how much the help is heightened by its coming to me afresh, now that I have ceased to be a mystery and am known as a mere daylight fact. I shall always love to think that one woman wrote to another such sweet encouraging words—still more to think that you were the writer and I the receiver.

I had indulged the idea that if my books turned out to be worth much, you would be among my willing readers; for I was conscious, while the question of my power was still undecided for me, that my feeling towards Life and Art had some affinity with the feeling which had inspired "Cranford" and the earlier chapters of "Mary Barton." That idea was brought the nearer to me, because I had the pleasure of reading Cranford for the first time in 1857, when I was writing the "Scenes of Clerical Life," and going up the Rhine one dim wet day in the spring of the next year, when I was writing "Adam Bede," I satisfied myself for the lack of a prospect by reading over again those earlier chapters of "Mary Barton." I like to tell you these slight details because they will prove to you that your letter must have a peculiar value for me, and that I am not expressing vague gratitude towards a writer whom I only remember vaguely as one who charmed me in the past. And I cannot believe such details are indifferent to you, even after we have been so long used to hear them: I fancy, as long as we live, we all need to know as much as we can of the good our life has been to others. Ever, my dear Madam,

Yours with high regard
Marian Evans Lewes.

Mrs. Gaskell.