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ED BY. HAYLEY SMITH

The INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR Victorian Women Writers Newsletter

Director's Cut

CAROLYN OULTON

Warning: I've got literary place on the brain. Which is partly because our co-editor Hayley has just passed her PhD viva with only the most minor of corrections. [Cheers].

Perhaps too because it's January, and getting light enough for an evening stroll so we can really admire those potholes. But who's complaining, when we had the Being Human Festival to get us through November?

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Managed by ICVWW's Susan Civale (ably supported by RA Katarina Kunova), CCCU was the South East Hub. Meaning PhD student Toni got to combine two of her favourite things (Henrietta Stannard and cooking) for our 'Cook Like a New Woman' event at the Green Kitchen in Cliftonville. I distinctly remember mentioning that 'this angel' had almost burned the house down during the last marmalade season. So you'll be relieved to hear that I was strictly on tea and washing up patrol (they let me out for just long enough to pose in that apron).

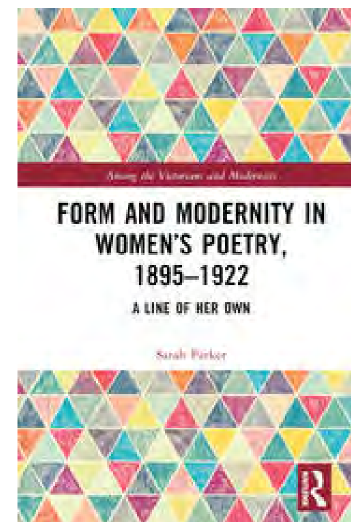
In other PhD news: Emily Cline tells us about her research on detective writer and spiritualist Catherine Crowe, breaking down some literary hierarchies along the way. Which is not what caused Elizabeth Barrett Browning to look at her sideways. But did you know that one of her heroines shares a name with Braddon's Lady Audley (not as unlikely as it sounds, when you think just how many names that woman clocks up)?

Speaking of curated identities, what do we really know about spiritualist and doctor Anna Kingsford, the 'dreamful girl who spoke to fairies'? Well, not all that much, thanks to the biographer who burned her papers at her death. Find out why Daniel Breeze is having none of it, and is far more interested anyway in Kingsford's relationship with her guinea pig. It seems Kingsford preferred animals to people, so Ella D'Arcy's claim to be 'the fly on the wheel' would have been seriously confusing. Louise Wenman-James takes us back into the (not even scorched) archives to work that one out. It's a story of menial but plentiful tasks, but ultimate success in 'a complicated and challenging environment'.

We'll drink a cup of tea to that. #Englishcreates

'Cook like a New Woman' event

Recent Releases
Form and Modernity in Women's Poetry, 1895-1922: A Line of Her Own by Sarah Parker (2024)



While W. B. Yeats's influential account of the 'Tragic Generation' claims that most fin-de-siècle poets died, or at least stopped writing, shortly after 1900, this book explodes this narrative by attending to the twentieth-century poetry produced by women poets Alice Meynell, Michael Field (Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper), Dollie Radford, and Katharine Tynan.

While primarily associated with the late nineteenth century, these poets were active in the twentieth century, but their later writing is overlooked in modernist-dominated studies, partly due to this poetry's adherence to traditional form. This book reveals that these poets, far from being irrelevant to modernity, used these established forms to address contemporary concerns, including suffrage, sexuality, motherhood, and the First World War. Click on the image of Parker's book above to navigate to the weblink and find out more!

We want to hear from you! Get in touch with us:

Out of the Archives
Ella D'Arcy (1857-1937)

LOUISE WENMAN-JAMES

My research focuses on women's authorial identities at the *fin de siècle.* For my thesis, I used the quarterly periodical, *The Yellow Book* (1894-1897), as a starting point to question how both published and unpublished work can help us build an understanding of the complex and shifting nature of women's experiences as writers in the late-Victorian period. Often considered to be a mouthpiece for the decadent movement, *The Yellow Book* is associated with literature and art that pushed the boundaries of the acceptable. Throughout its pages we can see an active engagement with discourses of gender, sexuality, and identity.

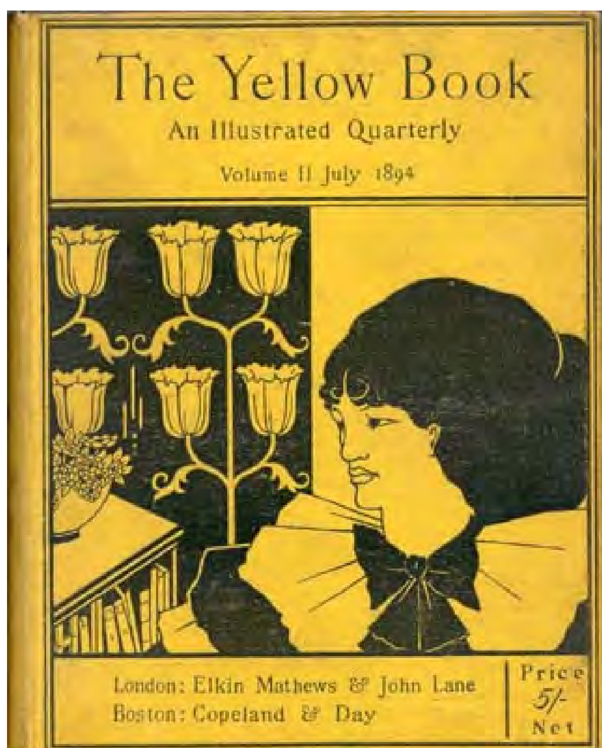
Ella D'Arcy published prolifically in *The Yellow Book*. Archival sources provide an insight into how her authorial identity shifted and changed throughout her career. Her biography is elusive; different sources cite her birth as being at various points in the 1850s, and there are significant gaps in her life where we have little information on where she was and what she was doing. However, there are certain cornerstones of her life that we do have an awareness of, and these shape our perception of her.

D'Arcy was born in London and initially trained to be a painter, but her poor eyesight led her to turn to writing. She wrote many short stories throughout her career and she contributed to ten out of the thirteen volumes of *The Yellow Book*. D'Arcy also became an informal editor for the periodical, specifically noting in an 1895 letter that she had **'proofcorrected, paginated, arranged the pictures, indexed, interviewed everybody, and, like the fly on the wheel, congratulated myself on having driven the Y.B. coach most successfully to its goal'** (D'Arcy, cited in Beckson, 1979, p. 331).

Ella D'Arcy, courtesy of Wikicommons

When I first read this quotation, I became interested in how D'Arcy lists these menial but plentiful tasks while ironically describing herself as a 'fly on the wheel'. Her satirical and tongue-in-cheek style makes her writing difficult to decipher, but I read her, here, as being simultaneously proud and self-deprecating.

To explore D'Arcy's construction of her professional identity further, my research took me to the John Lane Company Archives, held at the Harry Ransom Research Center in Austin, Texas. In the archives I read readers' reports and letters that many women writers, including D'Arcy, had sent in to the publishers of *The Yellow Book*. I found many letters that furthered my understanding of the power imbalance between female writers and publisher John Lane. As in the above letter, I found a sense of pride over her work throughout her letters. In 1899, D'Arcy responds to feedback received from The Bodley Head. She writes **'Thank you so much for your criticisms. I am relieved to know that it will not please the average reader, or the average critic. I do not write for such dull elves'** (HRRC, 12.1). D'Arcy's defensive response places her conception of her authorial self above and beyond the 'average reader'. The reference to 'dull elves' nods towards a letter Jane Austen wrote to her sister in which she asserts that her work is for an intellectual readership (Austen, cited in Toner, 2017, p. 167). D'Arcy sees her work, too, as being above average, and in line with Austen's great writing.



July 1894 issue of The Yellow Book
Courtesy of Wikicommons

However, further letters in the archive demonstrate a more fragile and sensitive approach to her work. In an 1899 letter to Lane, D'Arcy writes:

I shall be glad to know what you think of the story, which I do not wish you to publish unless you think it very good indeed. If I were certain that it were not good, I should not wish it published at all. (HRRC, 12. 1)

Here, D'Arcy's tone is more paranoid; she seeks Lane's approval and does not want him to publish her potentially weak writing. I found a similar concern amongst other female writers in the letters in the archive. Although often asserting ownership over their writing, these letters show a power dynamic that, for many female writers, was inescapable. Letters from 1899 show that Lane holds onto D'Arcy's work for prolonged amounts of time, and she gets increasingly frustrated with this:

Will you please give orders that my MS be returned to me? For it has been in your hands nearly six months, and that you should not have been able to accept it in that time, I take to be equivalent to a refusal. [...] I offer you now a volume of short stories. Vol. to be the same length of "Modern Instances"; to be published before Xmas, and to be paid for on acceptance. I will take £25 advance royalties, but I reserve the American rights. And you are so familiar with my short story work, and with some of these very stories, that I hope you will let me have your decision [by] return of post. (HRRC, 12.1)

D'Arcy seems more assertive than in the earlier letter in which she seeks Lane's approval. She takes his reluctance to respond as a refusal, and the second part of the letter illustrates a reclamation of her power over her work. Instead of seeking approval, she demands a timescale for publication, she states the amount of royalties she will accept, and she acknowledges that Lane is familiar with and looks favourably on her short story writing. D'Arcy's letter seemingly goes unanswered, and Lane does not publish any more of D'Arcy's work.

Female identities in D'Arcy's fiction are self-assured and strong-minded, but they often demonstrate an inability to escape patriarchal oppression. The letters in the archive helped me to understand how this reflects her experiences in a male-dominated literary marketplace. D'Arcy's literary output decreased into the twentieth century, and she died in 1937 after experiencing poverty for much of her adult life. Her short stories receive increasing critical attention, and viewed alongside her letters, her writing contributes to the image we can build of a complicated and challenging environment for women writers at the fin de siècle.

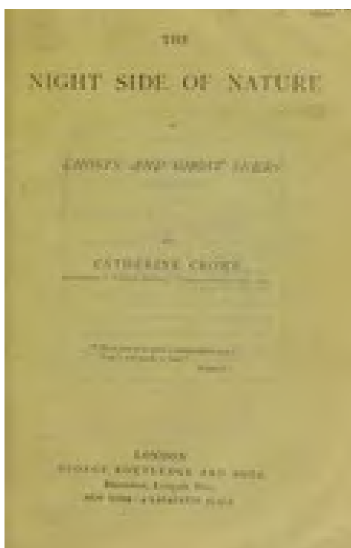
If you are working on an archival project featuring Victorian(ish) women writers, we'd love to hear from you! Drop us an email at ICVWW@canterbury.ac.uk or get in touch via Twitter or Facebook @ICVWW.

Interview with a Guest

THIS ISSUE WE SPOKE TO EMILY CLINE, A PHD RESEARCHER AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, CANADA

What is your PhD project about?

My dissertation examines the work of the author Catherine Crowe, who was well-known in her time for her ghost stories and popular novels, but whose works mostly fell into obscurity after her death in 1872. I'm writing about her female-centred plots of crime and investigation, which, in contrast to later more rationalist detective stories, hinge on feminised ways of knowing like second sight, intuition, and ghost-seeing. I'm interested in the ways her heroines challenge women's exclusion from narratives of authority like medicine, law, and broader scientific discourses that constructed women and other marginalised groups as less reasonable sources than professional men. As one sceptical lawyer declares in her novel Lilly Dawson, 'few people are capable of observing facts or giving evidence.' The blending of science and the Gothic in her works, from detection and sensation to the 'true' ghost stories in *The Night-Side of Nature* (1847), subverts Victorian discourse about objective versus subjective knowledge by resisting any such binary or hierarchical constructions.



THE

NIGHT SIDE OF NATURE

CATHERINE CROWE

LONDON

Left: Title page of The Night Side of Nature. *Courtesy of Wellcome Collection.*

Right: sketch of Catherine Crowe, from the University of Kent website.

What originally sparked your interest in this topic?

I had never heard of Crowe when I picked up *Night-Side*, thinking it was a collection of Victorian ghost stories; I was fascinated to find that it clearly was not meant to be a fictional account, but a scientific one. The book seemed to anticipate the rise of debates surrounding the credibility and pseudo-scientific origins of Spiritualist communications with the dead. After ghost stories, my favourite genre is detection, so I was delighted to find that Crowe had also written an early detective novel featuring a female, working-class detective. I continue to be surprised by how almost modern her self-sufficient, practical heroines are; their stories offer a notable alternative to 'angel in the house'-type plots associated with the works of the rising class of professional women writers during the 1840s and 50s. Her popular, non-canonical works presented an opportunity to unpack women's marginality to dominant discourses like law, science, and 'highbrow' literature.

Can you tell us a little about your recent publications?

In my article on John Polidori's 'The Vampyre' (1819) in *Hektoen International*, a medical humanities journal, I was interested in how physiological language in vampire tales points to anxieties about the transition from human subject to corpse object. Histories of medicine and science continue to influence my research concerning how pathology features in Victorian fiction about ghosts, monsters, and the many individuals constructed as less-than-human during the period.

My article 'True Feminine Pertinacity' in the graduate journal, *Oxford Research in English*, is the culmination of my Master's research project on Crowe, and it forms the foundations of my current PhD project. The article argues that the focus of Crowe's most popular books on the evidence and perspectives of women resists the objective or scientific standard that tends to discount traditionally feminine expertise.

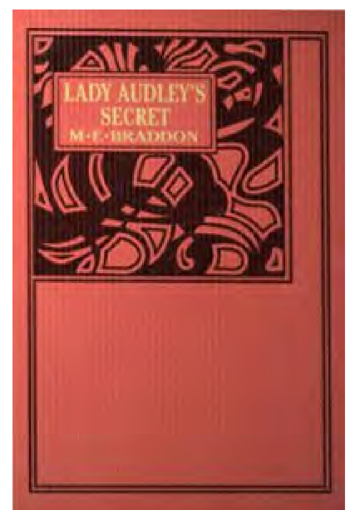
I'm excited about an upcoming article in *Crime Fiction Studies*, where I compare the investigative approaches of the mute signing and/or fingerspelling detectives in Crowe's *Susan Hopley* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Trail of the Serpent* (1861). The crime-solving of Julie Le Moine and Detective Peters, respectively, challenges oralist constructions of voice as a measure of human reason and agency.

Is there anything you've come across throughout your research that has been particularly intriguing or surprising?

Having had the opportunity to do some archival research in the Catherine Crowe Collection at the University of Kent and in the Harry Ransom Center's holdings at the University of Texas at Austin, I've been especially interested in the unexpected ways that Crowe pops up in her contemporaries' correspondence. I was excited to find one letter where M. E. Braddon mentions performing in a theatrical version of Crowe's book *Susan Hopley* (1842), complete with a creepy description of the corpse of Susan's murdered brother. I also enjoyed tracing the sympathetic mentions of Crowe in a handful of letters between Elizabeth Barret Browning and medium and poet Mary Brotherton. I think E. B. B. expresses it well when she writes, 'I seem to know Mrs. Crowe sideways'. Crowe does pop up at the sides of several literary figures, from Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell to Charles Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emmerson, and Hans Christian Andersen. These offhand references and unexpected connections have lent surprising insight into Crowe's overlooked contributions to the mid-Victorian literary scene.

What are your favourite texts by Victorian women writers, and why?

It's not surprising that the top spot goes to Crowe! I read *Night-Side* first, but I was most intrigued by *Susan Hopley* given the novel's relatively early place in the history of the detective novel combined with its focus on female sleuths and radical stunts of detection, like Julie Le Moine's risky undercover work. Staying on the theme of detection, M. E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) is another favourite of mine. It's interesting to note that Lucy Graham, one of Lady Audley's aliases, is also the name of the heroine of Crowe's second proto-detective novel, *Men and Woman* (1843); maybe it's just a coincidence, but I like to think it might be a nod from one pioneering female detective writer to another! I have to add some ghost stories to round off my list: I'm a fan of Margaret Oliphant's *Stories of the Seen and Unseen* (1889), especially 'The Library Window,' with the protagonist's second-sighted visions, and 'The Open Door,' with its atmospheric Gothic ruins and wailing ghost.



Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret. *Courtesy of Wikicommons.*

On Women Writers
Anna Kingsford (1846-1888): the lives of a vegetarian eccentric

DANIEL BREEZE

For one so little known, Anna Kingsford's life can so easily tumble into narrative cliché. The dreamful girl who spoke to fairies in her childhood garden becoming the young woman who wrote an early feminist *Essay on the Admission of Women to the Parliamentary Franchise* (1868). The headstrong daughter of a successful merchant and shipowner who went against the wishes of her family to marry the cousin clergyman for love, rather than class or prospects. The short-term editor of a women's periodical who then set out to become part of the first cohort of British women to earn a medical degree. The campaigner who then used this qualification and her oft-commented upon dizzyingly good looks to argue against the vivisection of innocent animals and in favour of a fleshless diet. The woman whose nights were filled with dream-visions, which led her into the world of spiritualism and esoteric religiosity. All of this: the forceful nature, the independence of mind, and the strength shown in the face of a patriarchal world, which culminated in the ultimate fight with tuberculosis. Kingsford died in 1888 at the age of 41. So goes the narrative. However, we should remain aware of the problematic tangles within such narratives. The history is often messier.

Left: Anna Kingsford. Right: Edward Maitland. Images courtesy of Wikicommons.

It is a contention of mine (and others) that the clichés emerge because the main source of information about Kingsford is Edward Maitland's *Life of Anna Kingsford* (1896). He was, in a word problematic now to our ears, described as her "protector" of sorts. A travelling companion and intellectual bon ami would perhaps be kinder to our ears; and it would get at the hint of ambiguity that surrounded their relationship. An ambiguity that was unfounded, but inevitable all the same. As a historian interested in Kingsford, I will never be able to forgive Maitland (1824-1897) for burning Kingsford's unpublished papers in order to render his often rambling and frequently egotistical Life the definitive statement on her life as it was.

My feelings on the matter reflect those expressed by Kingsford's friend, the feminist and journalist Florence Fenwick Miller (1854-1935). Miller's own unpublished memoir – she devoted an entire chapter to the "unique personality" of Kingsford – reveals a clear apprehension and general dislike for the older man. She was unimpressed by Kingsford's turn towards the psychic and the esoteric and she clearly believed, no doubt correctly, that it was Maitland who fostered this side of her friend Anna. This turn was cemented in 1882 with the publication of *The Perfect Way; Or, the Finding of Christ*, a set of theosophical lectures delivered by the collaborators over the previous summer. A good feminist, though, Miller gave Kingsford the space to choose her own path and respected her agency in the matter. She was even good enough to wait until Maitland's death in 1897 before she tore apart the portrait he had painted of her estranged friend:

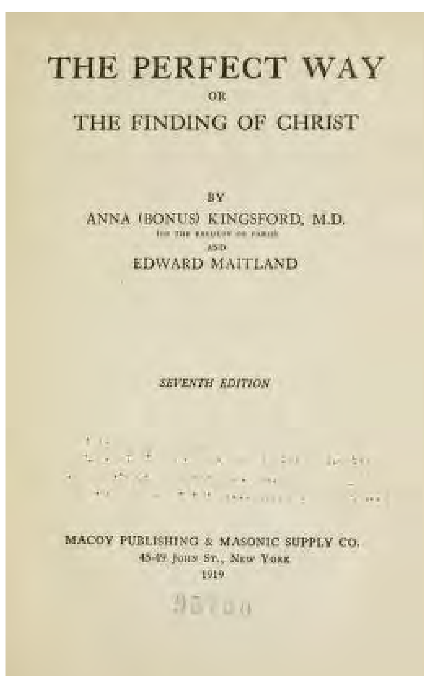
this unhappy book […] what a melancholy display […] The Anna Kingsford that I knew, the clever, intelligent woman (the most beautiful creature that I have ever seen in my life, too), was absolutely non-existent in that book.

It is this Millerian anxiety about Maitland's portrait that, at least in part, informs my own approach to Kingsford within my PhD thesis. If the traditional, authoritative assessment of Kingsford's life is contested to such an extent by Miller, what are the threads that can be pulled to spin another history? Homing in on her overarching mission as a defender of animals, I examine this in comparison to her own interactions with animals in a phenomenological animal-human biography. In doing so, another narrative emerges, hopefully one that both challenges and deepens the existing ones through a blending of the intellectual and material aspects of Kingsford's living-alongside and becoming-with animals.

Her medical thesis, *L'Alimentation Végétale de l'Homme*, was translated and published as *The Perfect Way in Diet* (1881). It became, according to Miller, the foremost scientific publication to argue for a vegetarian diet in a manner both medical and ethical. (It was originally rejected by the examiners at the Paris Medical School for its implementation of moral arguments; these were hence stripped out, only to be reinserted for the published version). But it was not simply vegetarianism, Kingsford drafted articles and made speeches against the vogue of vivisection and wrote letters to the press arguing against seal hunting for furs. She avoided leather and wrote, also, against murderous millinery. The former of these led to her declaration at an 1882 vegetarian gathering that she had successfully obtained vegetable boots; a declaration that, in turn, led to a derisory verse being penned in the humorous magazine *Fun*. These extensions made her vegetarianism an embodied form of proto-veganism. She explicitly noted this wholistic character of her convictions when she wrote the following in a letter to *The Standard*:

Two or three years ago, when I used to lecture on the cruelties of scientific experiments, I remember feeling my ardour considerably damped by the not infrequent spectacle of ladies arrayed in sealskin jackets, seated in the front row of my audience, and applauding vigorously my protests against vivisection. (Letter to The Standard, 12 October, 1887).

However, she did defend the adornment of ostrich feathers – "obtainable without slaughter, and, I am assured, without cruelty" – and the use of wool as cruelty-free fashion, which complicates this sort of proto-vegan framing.

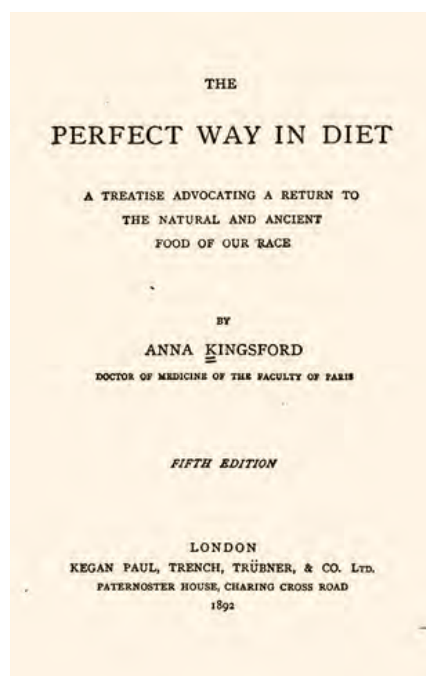


THE PERFECT WAY
OR
THE FINDING OF CHRIST

BY
ANNA (BONUS) KINGSFORD, M.D.
AND
EDWARD MAITLAND

SEVENTH EDITION

MACOY PUBLISHING & MASONIC SUPPLY CO.
45-49 John St., New York
1919



THE
PERFECT WAY IN DIET

A TREATISE ADVOCATING A RETURN TO
THE NATURAL AND ANCIENT
FOOD OF OUR RACE

BY
ANNA KINGSFORD
DOCTOR OF MEDICINE OF THE FACULTY OF PARIS

FIFTH EDITION

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER, & CO. LTD.
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, CHARING CROSS ROAD
1892

Title pages of The Perfect Way; or the Finding of Christ *and* The Perfect Way in Diet. *Both images courtesy of Archive.org.*

Instead, I read Kingsford's vociferous attacks against the injustices faced by animals in light of her own animal companions and encounters. The ideal as forged through her lifelong companionship with guinea pigs, for example. Or her anger at seeing dogs ill-treated amongst the streets of Rome, when riding a cart through the Eternal City. I take these quotidian encounters as phenomenologically relevant to the woman she became and the ideas she espoused. It was sentimentalism that became principled objection. This sentimentalism can be traced back to her juvenilia which included the poetry collection River Reeds (1866), wherein the titular poem appears to betray a debt young Annie owed to the poetess who was perhaps an idol, Elizabth Barrett Browning. The principled objection (retaining, admittedly, that kernel of sentimentality) came in the early 1870s, when she decided on her path. According to Maitland, this is how she articulated herself at that moment of decision:

"[…] I do not love men and women. I dislike them too much to do them any good. They seem to be my natural enemies. It is not for them that I am taking up medicine and science, not to cure their ailments; but for the animals and for knowledge generally. I want to rescue the animals from cruelty and injustice, which are for me the worst, if not the only sins. And I can't love both the animals and those who systematically ill-treat them. Can I, Rufus dear?" she exclaimed to her guinea-pig, and kissing it tenderly, as if to make some amends for the wrongs endured by its fellows at human hands. (Maitland, *Anna Kingsford: Her Life, Letters, Diary, and Work*, vol. 1, 2nd edn. London: George Redway, 1896), 48.

Notes

- The periodical that Kingsford was briefly editor and proprietor of was the *Lady's Own Paper*. She ran the paper for a total of 12 issues between October and December 1872.
- For Miller's obituary of Maitland, see: *The Woman's Signal* (14 October 1897), 248.
- "The Vegetable Boot", *Fun*, June 28, 1882, 263.
- Kingsford on ostrich feathers: "There are, however, certain feathers which are obtainable without slaughter, and, I am assured, without cruelty – ostrich feathers, the plumes being cut yearly from the birds, which are kept in large numbers on farms for the purpose and well treated." Letter to the Pall Mall Gazette, 17 September, 1887.

Call for Papers and Upcoming Opportunities

- CfP: VPFA 16th Annual Conference - 'Places and Spaces in Victorian Popular Literature and Culture'. We invite a broad, imaginative and interdisciplinary interpretation on the topic of 'Place and Space' and its relation to any aspect of Victorian popular literature and culture that addresses literal or metaphorical representations of the theme. Please send proposals of no more than 300 words, a 50-word biography, twitter handle (if you have one), your availability/time zones over the conference dates, and if you are thinking of attending in person or online, in Word format to Prof. Carolyn Oulton and Dr Susan Civale at: VPFAconference@gmail.com. **Deadline for proposals: 29 February 2024.** For more, see: https://victorianpopularfiction.org/vpfa-annual-conference/.

- CfP: 'Sex, Scandal, and Sensation' - taking place Tuesday 2 July 2024 to Thursday 4 July 2024 at Falmouth University, UK, in partnership with City University, Hong Kong. We welcome submissions for individual twenty-minute papers as well as for full panels exploring sex, scandal, and sensation. Proposals should include a title, an abstract of 250–300 words, a brief biographical note (up to 100 words), and contact details. Panel proposals are very welcome. Please submit your proposals to sensationconference@gmail.com by **14th February 2024**. We encourage submissions from scholars at all stages of their careers, including early career researchers and postgraduate students. Interdisciplinary approaches and innovative methodologies are welcome.

- CFP: 'Victorian Pedagogy', with Victorian Network. "Victorian Pedagogy" aims to explore scholarly, multidisciplinary narratives about the history of Victorian education and the contemporary teaching of Victorian Studies. We invite submissions of approximately 7,000 words on any aspect of the theme. All submissions should conform to MHRA house style and the in-house submission guidelines. Submissions should be received by **3 March 2024** through our website. Contact: victoriannetwork@gmail.com.

If you have a CfP or an event that you'd like us to advertise, please get in touch!