

26, Briar Road
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POLLARDS 4849

September 12th. '67

Edward Ransay,
37, Carnegie Court,
EDINBURGH 8.

Dear Mr. Ramsay:-

I will clear up the mystery of those books for you right away. I am Edwy's wife, and my poor darling died quite suddenly---it was sudden to me---in December, '65. I knew and loved him from the age of 16 years old, and we always worked together---before marriage, and after. He never had a day's illness and was never in hospital---we always knew him to be "a braw laddie" as you say in your parts. He never had any pain, but after writing his last novel CURTAINS FOR CONQUEST? he went off his food, and particularly tea, which was his favourite beverage. I was very worried, but he refused to let me call a doctor---he didn't believe in them!---but, in the end I called the doctor secretly. The doctor ordered him to hospital, and they found he had prostrate trouble. Even then, had he been sent to St. Thomas's, in London--the hospital famous for treating this illness---I am sure they would have done something for him. But the local Croydon Hospital, to my mind, was the last place he should have gone to. They didn't seem to do a thing, and he just lay there until he died ten days later. I was all for a post mortem, and the result was that he had a heart of a man under 40, and he was immensely strong, but for the prostrate. I was in such a state of absolute shock, as you can imagine, that I developed a very bad coronary thrombosis, and I was in hospital for weeks--but not in the same hospital!! We had never been parted, all our married life, and we were so close that we almost knew what was in each other's mind. He and I always discussed the plot together, and he dictated the stories to me, while I typed. They say time heals all wounds, but I will never get over the loss of his dear presence. But here, in the study, where we spent so many, many happy hours working, I feel his sweet spirit all round me, so that is something.

So many of you, his readers have written me such wonderful letters, and I have answered as many as I could, for I feel that now that his earthly presence is no more, we are all drawn closer together in the great appreciation of his wonderful writings, and I feel that I am taking his place for him. There never was a writer like him, and there never will be, for he could write anything, and his school stories are still evergreen

His Berkeley Gray and Victor Gunn novels will always be evergreen, too. Do you know that they are still selling in Germany, Spain, India, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland. And they have been published in France. I have had letters from readers all over the world. But it seems that a prophet is never honoured in his own country. So many, many readers have been asking why Collins don't publish an omnibus volume of my husband's stories, and when I queried this with Collins, they said that they had published omnibus volumes of other authors including Julian Symons and Nicholas Blake, and they had not done as well as they had expected. But I'm sure that Edwy's stories are so popular that they would have done well---far more popular than the two names above, I vow. They need a little more courage and enterprise, to my mind. But then, I am the author's wife, from their point of view, and probably prejudiced!

When the solicitors sent your letter to Collins, the latter forwarded it to me, and I immediately got busy and searched out the copies you needed and sent them on to you, but put our agent's name and address on the back, as I was not sure whether you knew that Berkeley Gray was Edwy Searles Brooks. But, now that I have had your second letter---sent on to me by Mr. Walker---everything is clear. By the way, have you read any of the Victor Gunn books---you'd love them---the last one he wrote was THE PETTICOAT LANE MURDERS---absolutely marvellous---and there are as many as the Berkeley Gray books.

At forty-five, you are a youngster compared to many other of his readers. There is a gentleman, living in Cornwall, who has every one of Edwy's novels in a special place in his house---he treasures them almost more than gold. He often 'phoned up from Cornwall, to see how I am, and he was always 'phoning Edwy to know when the next book would come out---and he is over eighty! And there are many, many more like him.

In New Zealand there is one particular fan of Edwy's---Jimmy Cook, who is a grandfather---and he thinks so much of all Edwy's stories that he has fixed up what he calls his "Edwy Searles Brooks' Den", and in it are all the books he used to read as a young boy, and all the others since published. I was so overcome by this devotion that I sent him some very personal things of Edwy's, also one of the old manuscripts. He has written me three air-mail letters this year, already, and I am ashamed to say that I have not answered them to date, as my heart keeps playing me up. Now I have to see a specialist next week, and I hope he can prescribe something for me. I'm afraid a lot of it is due to inner grief. So, under the circumstances, young Edward, (as my dear one would have said!) you are lucky in getting this missive from me.

Please let me know how you fare with obtaining Edwy's books, and if I can help you, I certainly will. It's no good writing to our agent, as he is only interested in the business side of things. I haven't one "CONVICT" "1066" in hand, ~~only~~ ~~the~~ not even the master copy, and I had to borrow this from the gentleman in Cornwall, just to see what it was like. If you are having a photo-copy made, I should be greatly obliged if you would include one for me.

I don't know whether you are aware of the fact, but there is, situated in London, a club called THE LONDON OLD BOYS' BOOK CLUB. I am enclosing an old newsletter for you to peruse. They have made me an honorary member for life. Bob Blythe is the head of the Brooks part of the club, but I can't find his address at the moment. But Leonard Packman is also one of the chief chaps concerned with the Club, and his address is 27, Archdale Road, London, ~~Sx~~ S.E.22. He is a tremendous enthusiast of all Edwy's writings, including all the Berkeley Gray's and the Victor Gunn's, and he and Bob Blythe came here and had a nice talk with Edwy and myself about a year before my dear one died. If you'd like to write to him, he will give you all details.

Well, I must stop now, as all the other readers will be jolly jealous if they know I've written you in such detail, and I have still so many letters to answer.

I wish it were possible to take a petition round to all the readers to sign, asking Collins to re-publish all his books from the first one. I have had to write so many letters to eager and enthusiastic readers, saying that the numbers they want are out of print. I still have a lot of copies here, which I found, to my great joy, on a trip to the attic over a year ago, when my heart was not quite as bad.

If there is anything I can do to help any of you dear readers, you may be sure I will.

Now, take care of yourself, and keep well and happy.
With kindest regards,

Very sincerely,

Frances Brooks

P. S. Several years ago Edwy and I and my son, Lionel, travelled by car all through Scotland, and the result was "CONQUEST IN SCOTLAND". What a lovely country it is, to be sure---if only the weather could be relied upon---but then, we could say that about Great Britain, in general. I particularly loved the great pine forests and the mountains.

J.B.