

Yale University Library  
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

# Guide to the William De Morgan Collection

GEN MSS 141



by Diane J. Ducharme

April 1995

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

---

## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	4
Conditions Governing Use .....	4
Preferred Citation .....	4
Processing Information .....	4
William Frend De Morgan (1839-1917) .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	4
Arrangement .....	5
Collection Contents .....	6
Series I: Letters and Documents, 1886-1913 .....	6
Series II: Writings, 1904-1913 .....	8
<i>Alice-for-Short</i> .....	8
<i>Alice-for-Short</i> .....	8
<i>Alice-for-Short</i> .....	8
<i>It Never Can Happen Again</i> .....	8
<i>Joseph Vance: an Ill-Written Autobiography</i> .....	8
<i>When Ghost Meets Ghost</i> .....	9
Selected Search Terms .....	10

---

## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** GEN MSS 141

**CREATOR:** De Morgan, William, 1839-1917

**TITLE:** William De Morgan collection

**DATES:** 1886-1913

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3.75 linear feet (9 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of letters and literary manuscripts by William De Morgan. Series I contains letters written to seven acquaintances including T. J. Cobden-Sanderson and William Mozely; some of the topics covered are De Morgan's bicycle patent and a writing project, the inventor John Worrell Keely, and Greek pottery. Series II contains autograph manuscripts and typescripts for four of De Morgan's novels: Joseph Vance (1906), Alice-for-short (1907), It never can happen again (1909), and When ghost meets ghost (1914).

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.demorgan>

---

## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.demorgan>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Collection of material acquired by gift and purchase from various sources between 1938 and 1997. For further information see Collections Contents list.

---

## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

---

## Conditions Governing Use

The William De Morgan Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

---

## Preferred Citation

William De Morgan Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

---

## Processing Information

Material formerly classified as Uncat MS Vault File, MS Vault File, and MS Vault Shelves De Morgan was added to GEN MSS 141 in December 2010, and the series arrangement modified into I. Letters and Documents. II. Writings.

Former call numbers: Uncat MS Vault File, MS Vault File, and MS Vault Shelves De Morgan

---

## William Frend De Morgan (1839-1917)

The artist and author William De Morgan was born on November 16, 1839, the son of Augustus De Morgan (1806-1871), a professor of mathematics at University College, London, and his wife Sophia Frend (1809-1892). De Morgan attended the University College School, London, and the college, after which he studied painting at the Royal Academy Schools from 1859 to 1862. During the 1860s he met the artists William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, who likely influenced him to turn to the decorative arts: by 1872 De Morgan was living near them in Chelsea and had begun his career as one of the most successful and prominent practitioners of the arts and crafts movement in Britain, known for his innovations in the design and technology of glazes for pottery and tiles. His workshop closed in 1907.

De Morgan began a second career as a novelist while in his sixties. His first book, *Joseph Vance: an Ill-Written Autobiography* (1906) was a best-seller, which encouraged him to continue writing. His other novels followed in quick succession: *Alice-for-Short* (1907), *Somehow Good* (1908), *It Never Can Happen Again* (1909), *An Affair of Dishonour* (1909), *A Likely Story* (1911), and *When Ghost Meets Ghost* (1914). Two more titles, *The Old Madhouse* (1917) and *The Old Man's Youth* (1921), were published posthumously.

In 1887 De Morgan married the painter Evelyn Pickering (1855-1919) and the couple settled in Chelsea at 1, The Vale, Kings Road, where they lived until moving to 127 Church Street in 1910. From the early 1890s through 1914 the De Morgans spent each winter in Florence, Italy, where William De Morgan wrote most of his novels. He died in his home in Chelsea on January 15, 1917.

---

## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of letters and literary manuscripts by William De Morgan. Series I contains letters written to seven acquaintances including T. J. Cobden-Sanderson and William Mozley; some of the topics covered are De Morgan's bicycle patent and a writing project, the inventor John Worrell Keely, and Greek pottery. Series II contains autograph manuscripts and typescripts for four of De Morgan's novels: *Joseph Vance* (1906), *Alice-for-Short* (1907), *It Never Can Happen Again* (1909), and *When Ghost Meets Ghost* (1914).

## **Arrangement**

Organized into two series: I. Letters and Documents, 1886-1913. II. Writings, 1904-1913.

---

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Letters and Documents, 1886-1913

#### 9 Folders

The series contains a small group of letters written by William and Evelyn De Morgan from their homes in London and Florence. Subjects are described in each entry below.

Arranged in two groups: letters filed in alphabetical order by recipient, followed by one folder of cancelled checks.

b. 1, f. 1	<p>Letters to Charles A. Aiken</p> <p>Purchased from David J. Holmes on the Library Associates Fund, 1994. Bequest of Harry T. Mercer, Yale 1924 Grad., and Dorothy N. Mercer, for use of the Tinker Library.</p> <p>Two autograph letters signed, concerning De Morgan's bicycle patent and possible new bicycle designs; written from Via Lorenzo Magnifico 39, Florence.</p> <p>With: autograph letter signed from Evelyn De Morgan to Miss Aiken, 1901 Feb 15</p>	1901
b. 1, f. 2	<p><a href="#">Letter to T. J. Cobden-Sanderson</a></p> <p>Purchased from Stonehill on the Frank Altschul Fund, 1963.</p> <p>Autograph letter signed, concerning mutual friends; written from Chelsea.</p>	1906 Oct 8
b. 1, f. 3	<p>Letter to Mr. Ewing</p> <p>Purchased from David J. Holmes on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 1997.</p> <p>Autograph letter signed, in answer to a request for autographs; written from Florence.</p>	1909 Jan 10
b. 1, f. 4	<p><a href="#">Letter to Miss Halsey</a></p> <p>Gift of Halsted B. VanderPoel, 1938.</p> <p>Autograph letter signed, concerning John Worrell Keely and his motor; written from 1, The Vale, Kings Road, Chelsea. Removed from William De Morgan, <i>It Never Can Happen Again</i> (London: 1909).</p>	1891 Jun 14
b. 1, f. 5	<p>Letters to William E. Mozley</p> <p>Purchased from David J. Holmes on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 1997.</p> <p>Three autograph letters signed and two autograph postcards signed, concerning questions about English law "for fiction purposes"; written from Chelsea and Florence.</p> <p>With: passport of William E. Mozley, dated 1886 Aug 23.</p>	1886-1911
b. 1, f. 6	<p>Letter to Miss Sington</p> <p>Purchased from David J. Holmes on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund, 1994.</p> <p>Autograph letter signed, concerning Miss Sington's request for an autograph; written from 1, The Vale, Kings Road, Chelsea.</p> <p>With: autograph note signed, to Miss Moschiler, undated.</p>	1909 Oct 20

b. 1, f. 7	<a href="#">Letter to "Dear Madam"</a> Purchased from David J. Holmes on the Library Associates Fund, 1994. Bequest of Harry T. Mercer, Yale 1924 Grad., and Dorothy N. Mercer, for use of the Tinker Library.  Autograph letter signed, concerning Greek pottery and glazes; written from Lungo il Mugnone 15, Florence.	1898 Feb 13
b. 1, f. 8	Cancelled checks (23) Gift of Fred Bates Johnson, 1954.	1913 Apr-Jun

**Series II: Writings, 1904-1913***3.75 linear feet (9 boxes)*

The series contains manuscripts and typescripts for four of De Morgan's novels, including his first and most famous work, *Joseph Vance*. Any additional information in the entry was taken from catalogue cards prepared when the material was acquired.

Arranged in alphabetical order by title.

*Alice-for-Short*

Purchased from Gabriel Wells on the Library Associates Fund, 1948.

b. 1, f. 9-12	Chapters 1-26, autograph manuscript	circa 1906
b. 1, f. 13	Chapter 22, autograph manuscript	circa 1906
b. 2, f. 14-16	Volume 2, chapters 1-21, autograph manuscript	circa 1906

*Alice-for-Short*

Purchased from Maggs Brothers on the Library Associates Fund, 1949.

b. 2, f. 17	Chapter headings, autograph manuscript	circa 1906
b. 2, f. 18	Chapter 8, autograph manuscript Apparently written after the final manuscript was completed; in the first printed edition of the novel (London, 1907) it was inserted as Chapter 35, which would place it in between chapters 7 and 8 of volume 2 in the manuscript above.	circa 1906
b. 2, f. 19	Various pages and fragments of pages, with manuscript corrections, additions, and cancellations	circa 1906

*Alice-for-Short*

Gift of Halsted B. VanderPoel, 1951.

b. 2, f. 20-21	Typescript with autograph manuscript corrections and additions	circa 1906
b. 3, f. 22-28	Typescript with autograph manuscript corrections and additions	circa 1906

*It Never Can Happen Again*

Purchased from William Reese Co. (Christie's sale, 1995 April 25, Lot 112) on the Chauncey Brewster Tinker Prize Fund, 1995.

Ex libris Philip M. Neufeld.

b. 4, f. 29	Chapter outlines, autograph manuscript and typescripts, corrected	circa 1908
b. 4, f. 30-34	Chapters 1-27, autograph manuscript, corrected	circa 1908
b. 5, f. 35-39	Chapters 28 to end, autograph manuscript, corrected	circa 1908

*Joseph Vance: an Ill-Written Autobiography*

Purchased from Isaac Mendoza Book Company on the Albert H. Childs Fund, 1957.

Formerly owned by Mrs. Milton E. Getz.

b. 6, f. 40	<a href="#">Preface, autograph manuscript</a>	circa 1904
-------------	---	------------



## Joseph Vance: an Ill-Written Autobiography (continued)

b. 6, f. 41-47	<a href="#">Chapters 1-41, autograph manuscript</a>	circa 1904
b. 7, f. 48-49	Chapter 42-Postscript, autograph manuscript	circa 1904
b. 7, f. 50-53	Chapters 1-38, typescript with manuscript corrections	circa 1904
b. 8, f. 54	Chapter 39 to end, typescript with manuscript corrections	circa 1904
b. 8, f. 55	Wrapper from manuscript	circa 1904
<i>When Ghost Meets Ghost</i>		
Purchased on the Starling W. Childs Library Fund and Library Associates Funds.		
b. 8, f. 56-59	Chapters 1-29, autograph manuscript	circa 1913
b. 9, f. 60-64	Chapter 30 to end, autograph manuscript	circa 1913
b. 9, f. 65	Pages withdrawn, autograph manuscript and typescript, corrected	circa 1913

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Authors, English -- 20th Century -- Archives  
English literature -- 20th Century

### **Names**

Cobden-Sanderson, T. J. (Thomas James),  
1840-1922  
De Morgan, William, 1839-1917  
Keely, John Ernest Worrell, 1827-1898  
Mozley, William E.