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**Title:** Letter from Allen Tanner to Dick Fletcher

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to Dick Fletcher

Tues. Apr. 8th. '75

Dear Dick:

I am sorry to hear of all your health problems, and would have nothing to report but the same for myself, as I have been going through "Hell and Damnation" since last September, when I suddenly was stricken with severe gum infections, had to take strong anti-biotics for five months, whilst going way out to kingdom come to the Dentist to have four teeth pulled, and multiple dreadful Novocaine needles jabbed into my mouth. So that, along with other severe health problems I am what some might call: "A Basket Case" by now. Also I've been trying to work at the piano on new music etc etc for recording, but of course have not made the headway I used to do, in younger and healthier days. Therefore I cannot be of much help to you in your dilemma about your biography. Your request: "To authorize you, 'in writing' to quote me about things I may have told you about my occasional encounters with Mary Garden, rather perplexed me, I must admit. I cannot recall anything I might have told you that would even carry the slightest "threat" of "libelous statement" or place you, your Editors, Helen Garden or anyone else connected with Mary in any legally <sup>danger</sup> dangerous position! Several years ago I consented to help a friend writing a Bio. <sup>my</sup> by writing and <sup>recounting in</sup> conversation my recollections of a longtime friend. What was my dismay, when the book finally came out,

to find that the author had apparently not listened carefully enough in some instances, or had not read carefully enough my copious notes, so that this being evidently the case he had decided to use his own imagination, the result of which was considerable mistaken reportage, description and wrong statements all of which were the exact opposite of the truth, which I had so carefully and generously gone to great lengths and efforts to help him with. Since then, I was forced to decide never to "collaborate officially" with anyone, and that if I were quoted by anyone anywhere, I would expect the author to submit to me at least <sup>Copies of</sup> ~~the~~ paragraphs wherein this was done, for my approval. This I shall naturally have to apply in your case as well as others,, and I hope that, being a responsible and intelligent author, you will quite understand and accord me this right. Don't be offended, please....either.

Surely you have heard by now that poor dear Namara died last Nov. in Spain. George Hoy wrote me a sad letter saying "He would not wish her back, since from the beginning of her stroke she had not known a day without suffering and pain".

I don't see how you could "write me in" as a character in your Bio. To my great regret, I never became an intimate friend of Mary Garden. We were always in opposite parts of the world at the same time. My acquaintance with her was very routinely and conventionally begun: I, a member of the group around the LITTLE REVIEW in Chicago circa 1916-17, went to see her in "PELLEAS" and was of course overwhelmed. I went backstage and,

arrived fortunately, after all the "Gushers", Society ladies and celebrity hounds had said their pieces and departed. I remember her standing there to greet me warmly, still in Melisandes death-scene nightgown, the long blondewig on also, her eyes still made up in the bluish green sheused for that charactarazation. She seemed to like me, I felt, and was deeply touched by the things I tried to say about her immortal interpretation and singing. I recall that sshe asked me "If I would come hear her in a few weeks when she was to sing a revival of "Griselidis"...and hoped I would".... Very poor in those days, I suppose she noticed of corse with her extraordinary E.S.P. the reticence of my reply and very quickly said: "Give me your address and I'll send you two "places" ... I thanked her ecstatically of course, and departed never even dreaming that she, busy as she was would remember. But after two or three weeks, I was to have proof that she was not only very thoughtful and kind, but faithful to her word. Along came the tickets in the best part of the "Orchestra"! The same thing happened in N.Y.C., when after seeing her in Monna Vanna at the Lexington, she proposed sending me seats for "Aphrodite" in a few weeks to come, which she did, the tickets arriving promptly just before tthe date of the performance, to my Hotel (The old Grenoble, now definct) and so our "relations" continued thusly throught the years, until I went to Paris. She was then appearing very rarely at the Comique, was back in America a lot, so I did not try to see her. One day I met her in the Bvd Raspail, and

since she was spending a bit more time in Paris, we made a date for me to come see her at the rue du Bac apt. one afternoon. It was during that visit that (I believe I told you) I sensed that she was in great financial troubles, not so much by what she said but by the unusual gravity of her comportment and the unmistakable mood she was in. She showed me the little bust of Voltaire by Houdon (which she tells about in the Biancolli biography) and asked me if I thought she could get very much for it. Later on before leaving I asked her point blank "What she had done about her fabulous jewels if needing to raise money?" She replied that she was <sup>in a taxi</sup> going to the bank one day to place them in the vault, laid them on the seat and got out forgetting them." I said: For God's sake did you not notify or go to the Prefecture...!" "NO. she replied, I didn't I just decided they were gone and that was that"!! When I related that to some mutual friends in Chi. they replied unhesitatingly: "Nonsense, she just 'hocked them to pay her gambling debts and living expenses"! Her destitution came out much more apparently when she went shortly afterwards to Chi. and told some wealthy Society women she knew there that she was dead broke. They even organized a benefit concert at the Casino for her. I heard from some source I cannot now recall that in her usual profligate way, she spent most of the sum realized by the concert for a solid gold baton for the English Chef d'Orchestre Hamilton Hartly. I don't know, can not imagine why, and of course it may have been sheer gossip. I sense from your letter that maybe your Editor or Publishers are goading you to make the Bio. more erotically sensational..?? That has been what they all wanted from Mary

to see her at the Drake. We three went into a shadowy corner and she sat in middle, holding my hand all the time. I wanted them to meet, since Pavlik always had such spectacular theatrical innovative ideas and they were then talking in Chi. of reviving the Opera, and in an interview with one of the columnists of the Herald I had said that if Opera were revived on Chi. Mary Garder should be engaged as Artistic Director. She was thrilled by Pavlik and said as we parted: "Well, THIS is FATE" I attended her splendid ( but pathetic classes at the Chi.Mus.College. and she wrote me how glad she was that I came. Ganz asked me to accompany her in the Operas she was coaching with all those clodhoppers she had to teach. I declined as I had never had enough experience as a repetiteur didn't know the Operas she was doing and felt it would not be good enough for her marvellous efforte. Then she went to N.Y.C., became involved as Talent Judge in Hollywood. And finally went on to Scotland where she was to undergo all those tragic events that happened to her there. Finally, the end. Such a great great genius. You should publish Jane Heap's article they printed in the Little Review, which changed the stupid attitude New York Critics had al-

letter to  
"Dick" Fletcher  
about  
his Mary Garden  
Bio.

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any tales about French tenor lovers, etc etc. I am sure. Good luck with your health and with the book. I hope I can get back to work and accomplishment soon. Please remember: No quoting from me, until I've seen what you quote! ALLEN

ways shown against her )"No high notes, horrible French, No voice, Only 'Cabotine' in her acting, a charlatan, four-flushing her way through Operas, etc etc." Carl van Vechten bought 100 copies of the L.R. and got the critics together, read them the article, after which they all fell all over themselves to rave over her , and from that day she was understood, had her public, great success and recognition. Jane's article you'll find in M. Ahers-son's "Anth logy of the Little Review"

Now my dear Dick, I've struggled through this very prolix letter, for Mary's sake and because I believe you want to pay her a great and deserved tribute. I don't think much herein can be of much value to you, since as I said before: I never was really an intimate friend of hers, regrettably. I've had to type this for three days, since with my post-cataract operation eyes it is a struggle to type, and I become so tired if I must write long letters. So, this is all I can do, to help, in my small but good-willed way...and so I'll have to say that I will not be able to write you anything further about your Bio. But stress her goodness her real warmth and kindness, and her sterling qualities and that will astound people much more the