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THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS
TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS

WILLIAM MORRIS
aged 61

THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Edited with Introduction
and Notes by
PHILIP HENDERSON

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'Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization . . . What shall I say concerning its mastery of and its waste of mechanical power, its commonwealth so poor, its enemies so rich, its stupendous organization—for the misery of life! Its contempt for simple pleasures which everyone could enjoy but for its folly? Its eyeless vulgarity which has destroyed art, the one certain solace of labour? . . . Think of it! Was it all to end in a counting-house on the top of a cinder-heap?'

—How I Became a Socialist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I AM indebted to the Society of Antiquaries for permission to make use of all the hitherto unpublished letters of William Morris of which they hold the copyright. I am also indebted to the Keeper of the Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum for making available to me the large collection of family letters in the May Morris Bequest and to the Borough of Walthamstow Public Library and Museum for permission to use material and letters in the Dr Robert Steele and Mrs J. W. Mackail Gifts, and to Mr Eric Leyland, the Librarian, and to Miss R. S. Rappaport, Curator of the Museum, for their assistance and kindness. I am particularly grateful to Sir Sigmund Dannreuther for generously putting at my disposal the Coronio letters; to the late Holbrook Jackson for the letters to Robert Thompson; to Miss Dorothy Walker for the letters to her father, Sir Emery Walker; to Mrs Henry Tozer for the letter to John Carruthers of 25 March, 1886; to Sir Geoffrey Mander for the letter to V. Saccardo; to Miss E. M. Simon for the letter to Sergeant Simon; to the late Miss Winifred Holiday for the letters to her parents, Mr and Mrs Henry Holiday; to Canon Jesse Berridge for the letter to himself; to Mr Leonard Smith for the letter to George Campfield and other material; to Mr Handford Parker for the letters to Charles Rowley; and to Messrs Quaritch for allowing me to take copies of the letters to Bernard Quaritch. The following have also given me assistance and replied to queries: Mr Bernard Shaw, the late Professor Harold Laski, Mr M. Buxton Forman, Mr R. Cobden-Sanderson, Mrs Helen Rossetti Angeli, Mr Frank Benger and Mr George Smith (successors in the firm of F. S. Ellis), Miss Helen Ionides, Mrs M. M. Reynolds (grand-daughter of Marie Stillman), and Mrs G. L. Thirkell on behalf of her mother, Mrs J. W. Mackail.

I have been allowed to quote from published sources by the kindness of: Messrs Seeker & Warburg (Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries,* Vol. I), Messrs Macmillan (H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life),* John Farquharson *{The Letters of Henry James,* edited by Percy Lubbock), Mrs Julia Madox Loewe (Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday),* and Messrs Basil Blackwell and Mott Ltd. (May Morris, *William Morris Writer Artist Socialist).*

In addition I have drawn upon the following published sources: J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris;* May Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris,* 24 vols., and *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist* (including Bernard Shaw's introduction to Vol. II 'Morris as I knew Him'); S. C. Cockerell, *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press Together with a Short History and Description of the Press;* G. Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Sir Edward Burne-Jones;* Helen Rossetti Angeli, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti His Friends and Enemies;* Oswald Doughty, *A Romantic Victorian: Dante Gabriel Rossetti;* William Allingham, *A Diary* and *Letters to William Allingham;* Henry Holiday, *Reminiscences of my Life;* W. Minto, *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott;* Aymer Vallance, *The Art of William Morris;* Gerald Crow, *William Morris, Designer;* T. Scott, *Bibliography of the Works of William Morris;* W. M. H. Buxton Forman, *The Books of William Morris;* J. Bruce Glasier, *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement;* Montague Weekley, *William Morris;* R. Page Arnot, *William Morris: A Vindication;* Lloyd Eric Grey, *William Morris;* Nicolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius;* F. L. Lucas, *Ten Victorian Poets;* W. R. Lethaby, *Philip Webb.*

Above all, my especial debt of gratitude is to Sir Sydney Cockerell, William Morris's sole surviving executor, for much valuable assistance in the preparation of this book, for allowing me to take copies of letters to Ruskin, Philip Webb and himself, and for his great kindness in reading the proofs. And lastly, I am indebted to Mme Tony Mayer, whose expert graphological knowledge has contributed to, and helped to confirm, my estimate of Morris's character.

P. H.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE present edition represents a selection from the published and unpublished letters of William Morris and makes no claim to completeness. Many of his letters have been destroyed by their original owners, or are now otherwise untraceable, and to certain existing collections access was denied. But every attempt has been made to include all those letters which, without repetition, most clearly reveal their writer's character and his many-sided activity as poet, craftsman and Socialist. My aim has been to assemble the materials for a rounded self-portrait. Except for unfortunately large gaps in the earlier years, the letters collected here do give, for the greater part of Morris's life, an almost year-to-year account of the development of his mind and personality.

The principal new material included is drawn from the following sources: (a) Family Letters from the May Morris Bequest in the British Museum, *(b)* the Coronio letters from the Dannreuther collection, (c) letters to Mrs William Morris senior, to Miss Emma Morris and Lady Burne-Jones from the Mrs J. W. Mackail Gift at Walthamstow Museum, *(d)* the letters to Bruce Glasier from the Dr Robert Steele Bequest at Walthamstow, *(e)* Four Letters on Socialism privately printed for T. J. Wise from the Ashley Library and the letters to Rossetti, Swinburne, Watts-Dunton and Wise himself from the same collection, (/) letters to Robert Thompson from the collection of the late Holbrook Jackson.

The originals of the Burne-Jones correspondence having been destroyed, I was forced to rely on the already edited transcripts given by Mackail in his *Life of William Morris.* Access was denied to both the Baldwin letters and the Cormell Price papers, while enquiries about "the innumerable private letters and papers" consulted by the Godwins in the preparation of their *Warrior Bard* met with no response. In each case where material already published has been included I have indicated its source.

CHRONOLOGY[1]

1834. William Morris born, 24 March, at Elm House, Walthamstow.

1840. Family moves to Woodford Hall, Walthamstow.

1847. Father dies.

1848. Family moves to Water House, Walthamstow. Morris goes to school at Marlborough.

1851. Leaves school at Christmas.

1852. Reading with Dr Guy, Forest School, Walthamstow. Matriculation in June.

1853. 5. Goes up to Oxford (January, 1853). Meets Burne-Jones. In residence at Exeter College (Michaelmas term, 1853). Meets C. J. Faulkner, Cormell Price, R. W. Dixon and Harry Macdonald. Reads Ruskin's *Stones of Venice.* Visits Belgium and northern France with Burne-Jones and Fulford, where he sees the paintings of Memling and Van Eyck, Amiens, Beauvais and Rouen cathedrals (summer, 1854).

1856. Edits *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine.* Articled to G. E. Street, an architect of the Gothic Revival, where he meets Philip Webb. Takes his B.A. degree. Moves to London—Red Lion Square with Burne-Jones. Meets Rossetti and decides to be a painter.

1857. Decorative work begins at Red Lion Square. Painting frescoes in the Oxford Union. Meets Jane Burden and paints her as Iseult.

1858. *The Defence of Guenevere* published. Rows down the Seine with Faulkner and Webb.

1859. Marries Jane Burden (April). Tour of France, Belgium and die Rhineland. Red House, Upton, Kent, being built by Webb.

1860. Moves into Red House.

1861. Firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner &: Co. founded. Writing *Troy* poem. Jane Alice ('Jenny') Morris born.

1862. Mary ('May') Morris born. Firm shows work at the Great Exhibition and is awarded two gold medals.

1864. Morris ill with rheumatic fever.

1865. Abandons idea of'Palace of Art' with Burne-Jones at Red House, which is given up and the family moves to 26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury, where Firm sets up. 'Living above his shop.' *Troy* poem being written.

[1] **Based on 'A Calendar of the Principal Events in Morris's Life', May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist.***

1866. *The Earthly Paradise* takes form and *Jason* is written. Morrises visit France again, staying in Paris for a fortnight, with Warington Taylor and Fulford.

1867. *The Life and Death of Jason* published. Decoration by the Firm of the Dining Room at South Kensington Museum.

1868. *Earthly Paradise* (Vol. I) published (April). Morris studying Icelandic with Magniisson.

1869. *The Saga of Gunnlaug Worm-tongue* published in *Fortnightly Review* (January). *The Story of Grettir the Strong.* Takes his wife to Bad-Ems.

1870. *The Story of the Volsungs and the Nibelungs* published. *Earthly Paradise* (Vols. II and III). Begins his illuminated manuscripts.

1871. Morris and Rossetti jointly take Kelmscott Manor, Lechlade, Glos. First visit to Iceland with Faulkner and Magnusson. Writes Journal of his visit.

1872. The family leave Queen Square for Horrington House, Turnham Green. *Love is Enough* published.

1873. Visit to Florence and Siena with Burne-Jones (spring). Second visit to Iceland in late summer.

1874. Rossetti leaves Kelmscott. Morris takes his family to Belgium.

1875. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. dissolved and re-started under name of Morris & Co., Morris sole manager. Takes M.A. degree at Oxford. *Three Northern Love Stories* published. Goes to Wales with Faulkner. Begins experiments in dyeing. The great Virgil MS begun. The translation of the *JEneids* published.

1876. Morris appointed Examiner (of drawings sent in for competition) at the School of Art, South Kensington. Jenny's health breaks down, epileptic attacks. Treasurer of Eastern Question Association. *Sigurd the Volsung* published. First period of political activity in the Anti-Turk campaign as a Liberal.

1877. Morris gives his first lecture, *The Decorative Arts.* Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings ('Anti-Scrape[1]) founded. Firm opens showrooms in Oxford Street. Jane and the children staying at Oneglia.

1878. Active in E.Q.A. Visits Venice, Verona, Padua with his family (spring), returns with them to England, and they move into Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. Begins tapestry weaving. Helps to launch movement of protest against restorations at St Mark's, Venice and addresses a meeting in the Sheldonian on the subject.

1880. Breaks with Liberals and end of first period of political activity. The Firm decorates Throne Room at St James's Palace. Voyage of the 'Ark* from Kelmscott House to Kelmscott Manor.

1881. Morris & Co. moves works to Merton Abbey. Mrs Morris staying at Bordighera with the George Howards.

1882. Icelandic Famine Relief Committee. His Lectures *Hopes and Fears for Art* published. Death of Rossetti (April).

1883. Made Honorary Fellow of Exeter College. Joins Social Democratic Federation (13 January). Death of Karl Marx. High-warp tapestry weaving started at Merton. Lecture on Art and Democracy for Russell Club in University Hall, Oxford, Ruskin in the Chair (November).

1884. Democratic Federation issues *Justice* (January). *Chants for Socialists.* Hammersmith Branch of S.D.F. started (June). Lecturing in London and the country on Socialism. Leaves S.D.F. (December).

1885. Formation of Socialist League. *Commonweal* started. Much open-air speaking as well as lecturing. Morris in court before Mr Saunders.

1886. Unemployed in Trafalgar Square ('Black Monday'), 8 February. Lecturing in Dublin ('50 lines of Homer on the boat'). *The Pilgrims of Hope* reprinted from *Commonweal. A Dream of John Ball* comes out in *Commonweal* (1886-87).

1887. Translation of the *Odyssey* published (April). Socialist campaign in north during miners' strike. *The Tables Turned, Or Nuphins Awakened* produced at the Hall of the Socialist League (15 October). 'Bloody Sunday' in Trafalgar Square (13 November). Morris speaks at funeral of Linnell (18 December), pall-bearer with Cunninghame Graham.

1888. *A Dream of John Ball* published (March). His lectures *Signs of Change* published (May). Delegate at Socialist Congress in Paris. Lectures on weaving to First Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (November). Lectures on Art and its Producers at National Association for Advancement of Art at Liverpool (5 December). Many other lectures on Socialism. *The House of the Wolfings* published (December).

1889. London Dock Strike (14 August-14 September). *The Roots of the Mountains* published (November) and Morris supervises its production. Second Exhibition of Arts and Crafts Society. Morris opens a series of lectures there. Art Congress at Edinburgh (November).

1890. The *Adoration of the Magi* tapestry for Exeter College Chapel finished. Morris begins designing type and preparing for Kelmscott Press. *News from Nowhere* printed in *Commonweal.* Morris leaves Socialist League and founds Hammersmith Socialist Society.

1891. Serious illness in spring. *News from Nowhere* published (March). Kelmscott Press started (January). First book published *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (May). *Poems by the Way* published (October). First volume of Saga Library published. Takes Jenny to north of France. Address on Pre-Raphaelites at Municipal Art Gallery, Birmingham (October).

1892. Death of Tennyson. Morris sounded as to whether he will accept the Laureateship and refuses. Second volume of Saga Library published. Principal Kelmscott Press books: *The Defence of Guenevere, The Golden Legend, Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye.* Morris writing *The Well at the World's End.* Elected Master of the Art Workers' Guild for the year.

1893. Joint Manifesto of English Socialists drawn up by Morris, Shaw, Hyndman and Sidney Webb. *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome* (with Belfort Bax). Principal books of Kelmscott Press: More's *Utopia, News from Nowhere,* Rossetti's *Ballads and Poems.* Third volume of Saga Library *(Heimskringla,* Vol. I) published. Ford Madox Brown dies (October).

1894. Morris's mother dies in December in her ninetieth year. Principal Kelmscott Press books: *The Wood Beyond the World,* Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon,* Keats's *Poems,* Rossetti's *Sonnets and Lyrical Poems.*

1895. Friederich Engels dies (August). Kelmscott Press publishes: *The Tale of Beowulf* in Morris's translation and *The Life and Death of Jason.* Morris purchases the *Huntingfield Psalter,* the *Tiptoft Missal,* and other medieval MSS. Speaks at Stepniak's funeral, 28 December.

1896. 31 January Morris seconds the resolution at the annual meeting of Society for the Checking of the Abuses of Public Advertising. Kelmscott Press publishes *Chaucer, The Well at the World's End,* and first vol. of *The Earthly Paradise.* Purchases the *Windmill Psalter.* Sea-voyage to Norway with Carruthers. Death of William Morris, 3 October. Burial at Kelmscott, 6 October.

1898. Burne-Jones dies.

1900. Ruskin dies.

1914. Mrs William Morris dies.

1915. Philip Webb dies.

1920. Lady Burne-Jones dies.

1935. Jane Alice ('Jenny') Morris dies.

1938. Mary ('May') Morris dies.

INTRODUCTION

I

THE mild blue eyes look out from the well-known portrait by Watts of William Morris at the age of thirty-seven with a calm assurance of power. Their regard is impersonal and remote from the world. The small mouth, with its finely moulded lips, is fringed with rather thin moustaches. It is an extremely sensitive face, epicurean and aristocratic and somewhat sanguine, framed within the abundant curling hair. It was painted, Morris tells us, when he had 'a devil of a cold in the head', and one of the eyes is red-rimmed and watering.

The day after Morris died Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who came to know him in the second half of his life, wrote in his diary under 4 October, 1896: 'He is the most wonderful man I have ever known, unique in this, that he had no thought for any thing or person, including himself, but only for the work he had in hand. He was not selfish in the sense of seeking his own advantage or pleasure or comfort, but he was too absorbed in his own thoughts to be either openly affectionate or actively kind. I suppose he had a real affection for Burne-Jones; they saw each other constantly and spent their Sunday mornings always together, and I have seen him tender to his daughter Jenny and nice with her and with his wife, but I doubt if he thought of them much when he did not see them, and his life was not arranged in reference to them. To the rest of the world he seemed quite indifferent. ... He liked to talk to me because I knew how to talk to him, and our fence of words furbished his wit, but I doubt if he would have crossed the street to speak to me. . . . The truth is he would not give an hour of his *time* to anyone, he held it to be too valuable. Thus, while all the world admired and respected him, I doubt whether he had many friends; they got too little in return to continue their affection. I should say half-a-dozen were all the friends he had. I do not count myself among the number, intimate as I was with him and much as I loved him. It will be a great grief to Jenny, a great break-up for Janey, and a great loss to the world, for he was really our greatest man.'

This account, so remarkably penetrating in some ways, has been much resented by Morris's friends, who have taken it as implying that he cared for no one but himself. But the final verdict of Mackail confirms it.

Morris, he says, moved through the world 'as in a dream, isolated, self-centred, almost empty of love or hatred* (Mackail, ii. 349). As with many reformers, Morris's indignation at suffering and injustice was not so much a personal emotion as an ideological and intellectual reaction. Sufferings of individuals often moved him to a certain impatience, whereas the sight of a mutilated tree or a badly restored Gothic church affected him as would a personal affront most other men. Certainly the letters bear witness to his kindness and affection for his family and his devotion to his friends. But the elusiveness, the impersonality remain, and in the last resort he was more interested in things than in people. It was as though he had to make an extraordinary effort to contact the world of his time. But what makes him in some ways such a satisfying figure to our uncertain and divided age is his complete certainty about what he wanted to do and a supreme ability to do it.

The best general account, as far as it goes, is still Mackail's *Life.* This noble tribute was published only three years after Morris's death, and Mackail, who married Burne-Jones's daughter, had access to much material that is now either lost or destroyed. May Morris's prefaces to her edition of the Collected Works in twenty-six volumes, together with Lady Burne-Jones's *Memorials of Sir Edward Bume-Jones,* are unsurpassed in their field, while Bruce Glasier's *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement* is the best first-hand account of that side of his activities. There are also the Letters.

For so busy a man who hated writing letters, and who invariably apologized for his inadequacy as a letter-writer, these are surprisingly numerous. Morris wrote hurriedly, without afterwards reading through what he had written, in most cases of what he was actually doing at the time, so that he has left us what amounts to an unusually detailed year-to-year autobiography. The letters to his family, in particular, are virtually diaries, for whenever he or his wife and daughters were away from home he sent them long circumstantial accounts of all his doings. But he seldom, except to a few intimate friends, discussed his feelings. In true English fashion, he preferred to describe the weather.

The earliest letters to his sister Emma, written from school at Marlborough, at once set the tone of what follows, with their clear, precise observation. As one reviewer said of *Jason,* Morris had a mind that reflected things with die clarity of water. At the age of eight he first saw the interior of Canterbury Cathedral, and he said later that it was as though the gates of heaven had been opened to him. With this passion for architecture, which persisted all his life, it might have been expected

that he would have followed it as a career, and in fact when he left Oxford he decided to do so. He soon gave it up, however, because, as he said characteristically, he 'could not get into close contact with it; it had to be done at second hand'. As a boy at school he would spend hours sitting by himself netting, continually weaving the meshes of the cord between restless fingers. This never-ceasing activity of his hands was always characteristic of him and seems to have satisfied some deep-seated restlessness. His love for the textures of wood and rough stone mellowed in colour by age and sun had something almost more personal in it than the love of a craftsman for his material, and the sight of a fine Gothic building with the surface and patina scraped off the stone by unskilful restoration struck him with the force of a sudden blow. 'Beasts! Pigs! Damn their souls!'he would shout, storming down the aisle of some ancient country church filled with yellow varnished woodwork and livid and bilious with nineteenth-century glass. Such an outburst is described by Blunt when he visited Shipley church with Morris only a few months before his death. His visits to churches and cathedrals, both in England and France, in his capacity as secretary for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings ('Anti-Scrape', as he called it), are described in many letters. A visit to Northern France as an undergraduate is described in a long and charming letter to his friend Cormell Price, with its Ruskinian reference to the 'nasty, brimstone, noisy, shrieking railway train that cares not twopence for hill or valley, poplar tree or lime tree, corn poppy or blue cornflower, or purple thistle or purple vetch, white convolvulus, white clematis, or golden S. John's wort; that cares not twopence either for tower or spire, or apse, or dome, till it will be as noisy and obtrusive under the spires of Chartres or the towers of Rouen, as it is under Versailles or the Dome of the Invalides. . . .'

Morris never reconciled himself to modern civilization, and a hatred of it is the mainspring of his work. He was, he tells us, a man 'careless of metaphysics and religion, as well as of scientific analysis, but with a deep love of the earth and the life on it, and a passion for the history of the past of mankind'. Such a man was bound to be unhappy and ill-at-ease surrounded by 'the dull squalor of civilization'. Was the place of Homer, he asked indignantly, to be taken by Huxley? On the other hand, his knowledge of the Middle Ages amounted to a kind of second sight. His delight in flowers and foliage and the flowing lines of natural growth, reflected in Gothic traceries and carving, inspired all his designs and is at the root of his hatred of the more rigid geometrical forms of classical architecture. It was as though there was something in the very nature of four-squaredness

that exasperated him. Later he found an additional reason for disliking classical architecture: it was, he said, an architecture built by slaves, whereas Gothic was the happy and spontaneous work of free men and beautiful to the extent to which it reflected that freedom and happiness. Thus can be seen at work the process of rationalizing his emotions into systems of belief.

If happiness consists in 'the pleasurable exercise of our energies', as Morris maintained, he should by his own definition have been a very happy man. But not only does one get the impression that he was deeply frustrated in his personal life (a frustration hidden and unacknowledged) but he was perpetually wounded by the aspect of the external world, and though he had succeeded in creating his own haven among the grey gables and rook-haunted elms of Kelmscott, he was tormented by the thought that he had no right to immerse himself in this harmony while the greater part of the population of the country were condemned to lives that scarcely bore thinking about. It may be that this outraged social conscience had its roots in some deep-seated guilt-feeling, but, whatever its cause, Morris forsook his earlier position of art-for-art's-sake and forced himself into politics.

Many of the letters give vivid and slightly pathetic glimpses of this crusade of public speaking all over England and Scotland, and of the attempts of the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League, the anarchists, the Fabians and the various socialist and revolutionary bodies in the early days of the Labour Movement to achieve some sort of unity—attempts that were all defeated by the incessant wrangling, backbiting and petty jealousy that seem to be inseparable from all progressive minority movements founded on the brotherhood of man. But it was in this crusade that Morris spent his strength. At times when he should have been resting after activities that would have been more than enough for the strength of an ordinary man, he was travelling up to industrial towns, touring mining areas, speaking at street corners in the rain, attending branch meetings and working-men's clubs in stuffy little rooms in the East End, arguing with opportunists and irresponsible firebrands and fools and dunderheads with a patience quite extraordinary in a man of his explosive and irritable temperament. But with the poor and underprivileged Morris's patience was inexhaustible. His outbursts of fury were reserved for those who ought to have known better. The Personage of Importance, who visited his showrooms in Oxford Street and, after looking at some of the firm's finest fabrics and designs, remarked in bewilderment: 'But, Mr Morris, I thought your colours were subdued', brought

down on his head the retort: 'If you want dirt you can get it in the street/ W. B. Yeats records a meeting with Morris in Fleet Street at which he at once launched out in a tirade against the design of the lamp-post under which they happened to be standing.

It was not his fault that only the rich could afford the sumptuous productions of Morris & Co, though it was inevitable that he should have been attacked as a socialist employer of labour. But though Morris employed labour, he did not, like those who attacked him, exploit it. He treated his workers at Merton Abbey as men, not 'hands', and, strangely enough, they were never offended by his outbursts of temper. George Campfield, the foreman, has left it on record that conditions in the works at Merton Abbey were 'as near paradise as anything well could be\ A long and hitherto unpublished letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones of i June 1884 gives a reasoned exposition of his position as an employer, and during the Eastern Question agitation eight years earlier, when there was imminent danger of war with Russia, it was 'To the Working Men of England' that he addressed his Manifesto. It will be noticed that this extraordinary document is written in revulsion against his own class at a time when Morris was still nominally a Liberal, though it was his disillusion with party politics and the cowardice of the Liberals that finally turned him towards socialism. From this Manifesto, worthy of Cobbett at his best, one might have expected Morris to have become the great political orator he never was, though his very presence on a public platform, his manifest integrity and forthright utterance, was always impressive. It is significant that his lectures, laboriously written out beforehand, gave him more trouble than anything else he wrote, for here he was faced with the intellectual hammering out of his beliefs on art and society.

Jane Morris was one of the most beautiful women of her age and, with Fanny Cornforth and Marie Stillman, largely determined what is usually called, inaccurately, the type of Pre-Raphaelite womanhood. But Janey's health began to fail as early as 1865, for we find Mrs Burne-Jones writing of her at this time as being 'now so much out of health' that she could not enjoy the jolly dinners given at Queen Square to members of the Firm. Morris's more intimate letters, in which he deals at length with his hopes and fears, his moods of despair or insidious melancholy, are not written to his wife, but to his closest women friends, Mrs Burne-Jones and Mrs Aglaia Coronio. This by no means implies that he was 'in love' with either of these women: his attitude to women seems to have been in any case rather cool. But, self-sufficient as he appeared, he always needed their sympathy and encouragement and sought their intellectual com-

panionship. Blunt, himself so knowledgeable in this respect, gives it as his opinion that: 'One thing only, I think, he did not know, much as he had written about it, the love of women, and that he never cared to discuss.' Janey Morris, for all her natural high-spirits and girlish sense of fun, seems to have been cast for the part of *afemmefatale.* In his visits to Kelmscott and Hammersmith, Bernard Shaw records that he never heard her speak—except on one occasion when he had just finished his pudding and she remarked that it would do him good because it had suet in it. She was, nevertheless, a highly decorative and even majestic figure, with her heavy mane of black hair, long neck and Pre-Raphaelite droop, draped in the splendid fabrics designed by her husband, though it is difficult to say what this enigmatical exterior really concealed—perhaps only unutterable boredom, perhaps tragedy.

Morris was brought up as an Evangelical, and when a child was only allowed to play with Quaker children, and throughout his life sensuality remained for him tainted with sin. The sensuousness of his nature expended itself on the textures of fabrics, fine wood and stone. This tended to a certain emotional under-development. He was bored by the analysis of adult human relationships in the great novels of his age, as can be seen by the effort he had to put into reading *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace.* His taste lay nearer to the boisterous humour of Dickens, Mark Twain and Surtees and the historical romances of Dumas. On the other hand, he was perfectly capable of enjoying the subtler philosophical humour of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon,* and he had a fellow-feeling for the downrightness and passionate love of the English countryside in Cobbett. Much as he loved Chaucer, one suspects that, in common with his age, he found many of the *Canterbury Tales* 'coarse'. He remarks, for instance, that there is no coarseness in the Icelandic sagas. At any rate, it was the Prioress's and Knight's Tales that the Pre-Raphaelites chose as subjects for their paintings, rather than the Wife of Bath's, the Reeve's or Merchant's Tales. Morris's own Medea in *Jason* is as unreal and idealized as any of Burne-Jones's maidens drooping on the golden stairs of the Temple of Love, or standing withdrawn in some dream-landscape by a twilit stream. 'We should think it foolish, or if you will, criminal, to exaggerate these matters of sentiment and sensibility,' says old Hammond in *News from Nowhere;* 'we are no more inclined to eke out our sentimental sorrows than to cherish our bodily pains; and we recognise that there are other pleasures besides love-making.' Doubtless, our interest in the subject to-day would have seemed to Morris morbid and exaggerated. To us it is the attitude revealed in the paintings of Burne-Jones and Rossetti that

appears morbid, whereas the frank approach of Renoir seems natural and right. It should be remarked, however, that Morris's attitude in *News from Nowhere* to free-love and trial marriage is essentially sane and healthy, and in advance of his age, and very different from the attitude implied in his early romantic poems. But one cannot escape the feeling that he was attracted to the rigours of Iceland partly on account of some failure in his own emotional life.

From the existing photographs of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Morris family one would think them to have been remarkably melancholy people. That this was far from being the case is shown by the amount of sheer boisterous horseplay and innocent humour they indulged in. During riotous week-ends at the Red House Morris was constantly the victim of the practical jokes of his friends. Piles of heavy books would descend on his head as he came into the room, and the whole family would become helpless with laughter when he was sent to Coventry at his own dinner-table, or when a well-directed apple gave him a black eye. Even quite late in life, on their river expeditions to Kelmscott, De Morgan would mischievously hide the chicken and, pretending that there was nothing for lunch but bread and cheese, eagerly await the expected explosion from Topsy. Or he would provoke Morris to one of his diatribes against the Thames Conservancy and involve him in swearing matches with the bargees. But Morris's rages were always short-lived as they were sudden, and the next moment he would be joining in the general laughter at his own expense.

'Just because I string a few rhymes together, they call me dreamy and unpractical/ he said. 'I can't help writing verses, I must do it, but I'm just as much a business man as any of them.' This was perfectly true, as can be seen from his management of Morris & Co, an original and unlikely undertaking that he made into a financial success. Morris rebelled against the society that bred him and rejected his own age largely because it was a scientific age and not an age of art, but he was nevertheless a thorough Victorian. He belonged to an era of British supremacy and expansion, and shared its belief in progress and the upward trend of things. It was from this environment that he drew his vitality and boldness.

To-day, caught in the apparent ebb of Western civilization, we can only look back in amazement at our Victorian ancestors, borne forward on the flow of this great wave of energy and confidence. It is partly in this that the fascination of William Morris lies. For it was the energy of the empire-builders and captains of industry that he drew upon in his bitter fight against the world of ugliness and poverty they had created as a setting for their wealth. It was due to the impetus of his age, in some re-

spects another renaissance, though an industrial and scientific one, that enabled Morris to be creative in so many different fields. But in weaving his tapestry and composing his poetry, he wove also his own cocoon as a protection against the outside world.

II

The Morrises were originally of Welsh descent, and their native country was the valley of the Severn and its tributaries. Morris's grandfather, who settled in business in Worcester in the latter part of the eighteenth century, is said to have been the first of the family to have dropped the Welsh Ap from his surname. His son, also William Morris, entered as a clerk in a firm of discount-brokers in the City; at the age of thirty he became a partner in the firm and married Emma Shelton. The Sheltons were also a Worcestershire family of merchants and landed proprietors. Thus Morris inherited his business capacity from both sides of his family, though some of the Sheltons had distinguished themselves as members of the Church and Bar. The Morrises set up house in Lombard Street, where the two eldest children, both daughters, were born. They moved to Elm House, Clay Hill, Walthamstow, in 1833, and here, on 24 March 1834, William Morris, the poet, was born. There were six younger children, four boys and two girls. In 1840 the family moved again, to Woodford Hall, a spacious Georgian mansion standing in its own park, with 100 acres of farmland attached to the estate, for Mr Morris's holdings in the recently formed company of Devon Great Consols began to rise rapidly in value and he suddenly found himself a rich man. ' Copper was then worth a hundred and sixty pounds a ton,' says Mackail, 'and it could be turned out for a trifling expense in apparently inexhaustible quantities.'

But the efforts of those who turned out the copper, the coal and the iron-ore, to raise their own standard of living were still brutally suppressed. In the year in which Morris was born certain farm labourers of Tolpuddle in Dorsetshire had objected to their weekly wage being reduced from ten shillings to six, and their attempt to form a trade union to establish a living wage was punished by transportation. The affair of these ' Tolpuddle Martyrs' resulted in a vast campaign of protest among working men and women throughout the country, culminating in a demonstration in London of between a hundred and two hundred thousand people. Thus William Morris's childhood coincided with a period of growing revolutionary struggle, of strikes, riots and widespread protest

against the appalling conditions in the mines and factories, with their eighteen-hour day and the child-labour, upon which the wealth and high moral tone of the new middle classes were based.

Meanwhile William Morris continued to ride about his father's park and through the beech glades and hornbeam thickets of Epping Forest on a Shetland pony, dressed in a miniature suit of armour. By the age of six he had read all the Waverley Novels, and in 1843 Mr Morris applied to the College of Heralds for a coat-of-arms. Four years later he was dead, though his wife lived on, a sturdy old lady, until 1894. Morris went to school at Marlborough in 1848, the year of the foundation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto,* of revolutions on the Continent and Chartism in England. But no more than a rumour of the storm reached the big Georgian house standing in its fifty acres of parkland. At Marlborough, Morris tells us, he learnt next to nothing, 'for next to nothing was taught', so that he had to be coached before he could matriculate to Oxford. The only thing about Marlborough he liked was the beautiful Wiltshire country surrounding it. Instead of playing games, he wandered through Savernake Forest and visited Stonehenge and Avebury. He was rather a solitary boy. At first frail and delicate, he grew rapidly in strength, and soon became a formidable opponent at single-stick. After Mr Morris's death the family moved to Water House, Walthamstow, a spacious yellow-brick late eighteenth-century house which is still standing in a recreation ground, beside the stream of buses and trams in Walthamstow High Street. A public lavatory has been built in the middle of its front garden, though efforts are now being made to reclaim it as a Morris Museum and Memorial House.

Morris went up to Exeter College in 1853. 'One night,' writes Canon Dixon, 'Crom Price and I went to Exeter, and found him with Burne-Jones. As soon as we entered the room, Burne-Jones exclaimed wildly, "He's a big poet." "Who is?" asked we. "Why, Topsy!" the name which he had given him. We sat down and heard Morris read his first poem, the first that he had ever written in his life.[1] It was called 'The Willow and the Red Cliff'. As he read it, I felt that it was something the like of which had never been heard before. It was a thing entirely new: founded on nothing previous: perfectly original, whatever its value, and sounding truly striking and beautiful, extremely decisive and powerful in execution. It must be remembered that it was the first piece of verse that he had ever written: there was no novitiate: and not a trace of influence;

[1] This statement is repeated by Mackail and others, whereas Morris began writing poetry quite early in his childhood. His Juvenilia have a peculiar simplicity and sweetness, and anticipate many of the themes of his later work.

and then it will be acknowledged that this was an unprecedented thing. He reached his perfection at once; nothing could have been altered in 'The Willow and the Red Cliff'; and in my judgement, he can scarcely be said to have much exceeded it afterwards in anything that he did. I cannot recollect what took place afterwards, but I expressed my admiration in some way, as we all did, and I remember his remark, "Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write." From that time onward, for a term or two, he came to my rooms almost every day with a new poem ' (Mackail, i. 51-2).

Very few of the poems written at this time survive; they were nearly all destroyed by Morris himself after he had made a final selection from them for his first book, *The Defence of Guenevere,* in 1858. *The Defence,* which is dedicated to Rossetti, is indeed an altogether extraordinary book, with its startlingly concrete vision *of* the Middle Ages, its passionate dramatic intensity. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King,* published a year later, is a pale and anaemic thing in comparison, and suggests a historical painting by Lord Leigh ton beside the glowing colours and vigour of thirteenth-century stained glass. Reading it again to-day, the enthusiasm of his Oxford friends is understandable. One is struck by the fierce vigour, the harsh and passionate quality which is only emphasized by the occasional roughness and clumsiness of the verse. All these blood feuds, foul deeds and anguish are far from the visions of a sentimental dreamer: it is like stepping back into another age. At the time of writing Morris's nerves and senses seem to have been strained to breaking point, like 'an over-winded harp', a state of tension that appears clearly enough in the daguerreotype taken at the age of twenty-three in 1857.

After *The Defence* it was inevitable that he should relax into the broad, calm harmonies of *Jason,* and indeed he never recaptured that early intensity. *Jason* is a formalized, tapestry world, though still enchanting in the very completeness and perfection of its realization. But the rhythms have become drowsy, the figures cool and remote, as in some impersonal frieze, from which the urgency of human emotion has been banished. In *The Earthly Paradise,* again, the prevailing mood is one of melancholy languor and nostalgic regret, and all passion is lulled to sleep in its endless honied narratives. Its diffuseness and languor are the result of pursuing aesthetic beauty for its own sake, for no man can live consistently on an aesthetic-intellectual level and retain his humanity. Compare Morris with Chaucer, his master, and one is struck at once by the lack of humour, that essentially human quality in which Chaucer excels even in a romantic work like *Troilus and Criseyde.* One explanation of this failure in inspiration seems to be that Morris came to regard poetry as a mere matter of

craftsmanship. 'That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense,' he said, 'I may tell you that flat, there is no such thing'. Again: 'If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry, he had better shut up, he'll never do any good at all.' Unfortunately this craftsmanship was not so much that of poetry as of all the other crafts he practised, and the diffuseness of his poetry is paralleled by the repeating patterns of his chintzes and wallpapers. As Chesterton has said, in his *Victorian Age in Literature*, 'If his poems were too like wallpapers, it was because he really could make wallpapers.'

There may be some other more personal reason for this failure in inspiration of which we know little; the failure he refers to in his letter to Aglaia Coronio of 25 November 1872, when he says: 'One thing wanting ought not to go for so much: nor indeed does it spoil my enjoyment of life always, as I have often told you: to have real friends and some sort of an aim in life is so much, that I ought still to think myself lucky: and often in my better moods I wonder what it is in me that throws me into such rage and despair at other times. I suspect, do you know, that some such moods would have come upon me at times even without this failure of mine.' But what is 'this failure', for which he felt that friends and an aim in life were compensations, in the case of a man so obviously successful in everything he undertook? Mackail tells us that 'in the verses that frame the stories of *The Earthly Paradise* there is an autobiography so delicate and so outspoken that it must be left to speak for itself.' Thus in the verses to 'April' we read:

> Ah! life of all the year, why yet do I
> Amid thy snowy blossoms' fragrant drift,
> Still long for that which never draweth nigh,
> Striving my pleasure from my pain to sift,
> Some weight from off my fluttering mirth to lift?
> —Now, when far bells are ringing, 'Come again,
> Come back, past years! why will ye pass in vain?'

Again, in 'September', more explicitly:

> Look long, O longing eyes, and look in vain!
> Strain idly, aching heart, and yet be wise
> And hope no more for things to come again
> That thou beheldest once with careless eyes!
> Like a new-wakened man thou art, who tries
> To dream again the dream that made him glad
> When in his arms his loving love he had.

'Like a new-wakened man . . .' It would seem that about this time, in 1867-8, Morris awoke to a very unpleasant reality in his personal life.

Meanwhile, at Oxford, in the enthusiastic companionship of his friends, reading Ruskin, Carlyle, Froissart, Chaucer, Tennyson and Browning, and working off his superfluous energy in fencing, single-stick, boating and bear-fights, he was enjoying what he was always to look back upon as the happiest days of his life. Blunt tells us that one reason why he so much enjoyed boating at Kelmscott in later years was because it reminded him of his Oxford days. Moreover, it still seemed permissible to Morris to devote himself entirely to poetry and art. He became a Puseyite, deeply affected by the High-Church movement which later developed into Anglo-Catholicism. At this period he still thought of himself as destined for the Church. His friends noticed 'how decisive he was: how accurate, without any effort or formality: what an extraordinary power of observation lay at the base of many of his casual or incidental remarks, and how many things he knew that were quite out of our way All his life Morris's friends were to continue to be astonished at the extent of his knowledge. Hyndman records that during a visit to Oxford, when Morris took the chair at his address on Socialism at the Russell Club, the librarian of the Bodleian asked Morris if he would identify a quantity of illuminated manuscripts that had been recently acquired by the library. 'We went into an inner room', writes Hyndman, 'where a great pile of illuminated missals lay on the table. Morris seated himself by them, and, taking them up one by one, looked, very quickly but very closely and carefully at each in turn, pushing it aside after inspection with "Monastery So and So, date Such and Such", "Abbey this in such a year", until he had finished the whole number; his decision being written down as he gave it. There seemed not to be the slightest doubt in the librarian's mind that Morris's judgement was correct and final, and though Morris hesitated here and there, and devoted more time to some of the missals than to others, eventually his verdict was given with the utmost certainty'(H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life,* p. 355).

Oxford is still, perhaps, the most beautiful city in England, but in Morris's undergraduate days it had not become the shopping centre and high road to Cowley with lorries and buses thundering through its streets; the hideous outcrop of suburbs, with the proliferating red brickwork of North Oxford, did not exist. 'On all sides except where it touched the railway', writes Burne-Jones, 'the city came to an end abruptly as if a wall had been about it, and you came suddenly upon the meadows. There was little brick in the city; it was either grey with stone, or yellow with the wash of the pebble-cast in the poorer streets, where there were still many old houses with wood carving, and a little sculpture here and there.' Oxford when

Morris was at Exeter was still, in all essentials, mediaeval, an ancient university city, and it was one of the sorrows of his life to watch its gradual desecration as the century 'progressed'.

Summer vacations were spent on walking tours in Northern France, visiting the early Gothic Cathedrals, or visiting the remains of mediaeval art in south-eastern England. For Morris still lived the most important part of his life in the Middle Ages, and gave the impression of having strayed into the nineteenth century by accident. Much of the anguish of spirit he suffered throughout his life had its roots in this mal-adjustment. The modern world, however, had its uses, for on coming of age in 1855 he inherited £900 a year. He now decided to renounce all idea of going into the Church and to take up architecture, and with this end in view articled himself to George Edmund Street of Oxford, one of the prominent architects of the Gothic Revival. In Street's office he first met another life-long friend, Philip Webb, who later became a partner in the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co, for whom he designed furniture, and some of the houses built by Webb in later years were decorated throughout by Morris & Co. Morris had not been very long in Street's office when Burne-Jones introduced him to Rossetti, under whose influence he decided to renounce architecture as a career and become a painter. This change in plan troubled him a good deal, for Morris was not the sort of man to change his mind easily about anything.

Rossetti at twenty-eight appeared as the embodiment of everything an artist should be, all the more as he had the delightful habit of treating these young men as his equals. If Morris could not yet paint pictures, he could at least buy them, and under Rossetti's direction he acquired Arthur Hughes's *April Love* and Madox Brown's *Haystack*. By 1857, he was working on the frescoes in the Oxford Union, whose Arthurian subjects faded within a year to mere ghosts of themselves, due to the fact that the paint was applied, without any other preparation, direct to the damp plaster of the walls. Of Morris's painting William Bell Scott reported in June 1858 that little remained but Tristram's head over a row of sunflowers. A year earlier Coventry Patmore had spoken of their colour as 'sweet, bright and pure as that of the frailest waif of cloud in sunrise' and 'so brilliant as to make the walls look like the margin of a highly-illuminated manuscript'.[1]

Morris and his friends leap into sudden life in a conversation piece recorded by Val Prinsep, who had come up to Oxford to work on the frescoes and had been invited to dine at Rossetti's rooms. 'There', he

[1] **They have since been restored by Professor Tristram.**

says, 'I found Rossetti in a plum-coloured frock-coat, and a short square man with spectacles and a vast mop of dark hair. I was cordially received. "Top", cried Rossetti, "let me introduce Val Prinsep." "Glad, I'm sure," answered the man in spectacles, nodding his head, and then he resumed his reading of a large quarto. This was William Morris. Soon after, the door opened, and before it was half opened, in glided Burne-Jones. "Ned," said Rossetti, who had been humming to himself, "I think you know Prinsep." The shy figure darted forward, the shy face lit up, and I was received with the kindly effusion which was natural to him.

'When dinner was over, Rossetti humming to himself as was his wont, rose from the table and proceeded *to* curl himself up on the sofa. "Top", he said, "read us one of your grinds." " No, Gabriel," answered Morris, "you have heard them all." "Never mind," said Rossetti, "here's Prinsep who has never heard them, and beside they are devilish good." " Very well, old chap," growled Morris, and having got his book began to read in a sing-song chant some of the poems afterwards published in his first volume. All the time he was jigging about nervously with his watch-chain. I was then a very young man and my experience of life was therefore limited, but the effect produced on my mind was so strong that to this day, forty years after, I can still recall the scene: Rossetti on the sofa with large melancholy eyes fixed on Morris, the poet at the table reading and ever fidgetting with his watch-chain, and Burne-Jones working at a pen-and-ink drawing:

"Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet,
Ah qu'elle est belle, La Marguerite,"

still seems to haunt me, and this other stanza:

"Swerve to the left, son Roger, he said,
When you catch his eyes through the helmet slit,
Swerve to the left, then out at his head,
And the Lord God give you joy of it!"

I confess I returned to the Mitre with my brain in a whirl/

While he was engaged in painting a subject from the *Morte d' Arthur* on the walls of the Union with the prophetic title, 'How Sir Palomydes loved La Belle Iseult with exceeding great love out of measure, and how she loved him not again, but rather Sir Tristram', two strangely symbolic events occurred. Morris had ordered a mediaeval casque to be made to his own specification by a local blacksmith, but when he put it on something went wrong, and he discovered that he could not get it off. So

he was left dancing about and swearing with rage, almost literally imprisoned in the Middle Ages. And then at the theatre one evening with Burne-Jones, Rossetti noticed, sitting in the row behind them, a girl of the most remarkable beauty. He spoke to her and invited her to sit for him and his friends. This was Jane Burden, the daughter of a Holywell Street groom. When Morris met her he realized that he was confronted with La Belle Iseult in the flesh, and while painting her as such he fell in love and soon after they became engaged.[1] But his idea of courtship, according to Prinsep, was to read to her for hours from *Barnaby Rudge.*

Morris now divided his time between his Oxford rooms, at 17 George Street, and the Bloomsbury studio, which he took with Burne-Jones.[2] When he came to furnish this he discovered that there was no furniture to be had simple and solid enough to suit his taste, so he set about making his own. This was the germ of Morris & Company. Beerbohm's caricature of 'Topsy and Ned settled on the settle at Red Lion Square' shows the thick-set Prussian blue figure of Morris seated with legs spread wide apart on an enormous settle, whose panels are painted with very Pre-Raphaelite-looking damsels, one of whom is playing on a lute, while an angel with blue wings behind the poet's head appears to be stretching out an arm and pulling at his bristling hair. Morris is writing with fierce concentration. Tucked away into a corner of the settle is the pale, wraith-like figure of Burne-Jones, seeming to be folded up upon itself, Morris's opposite in everything. The floorboards are bare and uncarpeted; on a kitchen table stand a bottle of beer and a loaf of farmhouse bread, and in one corner leans a broom.

Morris appears to have been in no hurry to get married. He went to France again, rowing down the Seine from Paris with Charles Faulkner and Philip Webb. It was not till next year that he returned to Oxford and married Jane Burden in April 1859, and they at once set off on a tour of France, Belgium and the Rhineland. She was then just twenty.

III

Sir George Gilbert Scott, the most successful architect of Queen Victoria's reign, defined architecture as 'decoration of construction'. His successive plans for the new government offices in Whitehall were being pre-

[1] **Mrs Morris was the only really remarkable-looking member of her family and it has been thought that she must have had southern blood. The poem 'Praise of my Lady', in *The Defence,* is Morris's portrait of her in words.**

[2] **No. 17 Red Lion Square, Rossetti's old studio, which still stands, at present. Morris and Burne-Jones took the first floor, whose central windows had been heightened to admit a downward light.**

pared and submitted to Palmerston some years after Philip Webb had designed and built the Red House for William Morris in 1860. Palmerston put his foot down at Scott's original plan for gables, high-pitched roofs and dormers, and said that the buildings must be in the Palladian style. Scott then agreed to produce Italian designs, but still hoped to avoid Renaissance. His next plans were 'in the Byzantine of the early Venetian palaces . . . toned to a more modern and usable form'. But the Prime Minister wanted 'the ordinary Italian' and said that Scott's plans were 'neither one thing nor t'other—a regular mongrel affair' and threatened to cancel's Scott's appointment. Scott thereupon 'bought some costly books on Italian architecture and set vigorously to work' to insert an Italian facade 'beautifully got up in outline' (Sir G. G. Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections,* 1879, pp. 177 *et seq.).* It was against this kind of dishonesty that Morris's life-work was directed.

The Red House, into which the Morrises moved on their return to England in 1860, is a landmark in the history of English domestic architecture. Though superficially Gothic, with the untidiness of its fifteenth-century design, it was in all essentials a modern, functional building. Not only was the outside of the house an expression of its inside requirements, but the plainness of its red brick was quite revolutionary in 1860. 'Morris', says Pevsner, 'laid the foundations of the modern style; with Gropius its character was ultimately determined.' A contemporary account, quoted by Aymer Vallance in *The Art of William Morris,* describes 'the deep red colour, the great sloping, tiled roofs; the small-paned windows; the low, wide porch and massive door; the surrounding garden, divided into many squares, hedged with sweet briar or wild rose, each enclosure with its own particular show of flowers; on this side a green alley with its bowling green, on that orchard walks amid gnarled old fruit-trees; all this struck me as vividly picturesque and uniquely original.' It was the originality, not the mediaeval flavour, of the house that struck contemporaries. 'Upon entering the porch the hall appeared to one accustomed to the narrow ugliness of the usual middle-class dwelling of those days as being grand and severely simple. A solid oak table with trestle-like legs stood in the middle of a red-tiled floor, while a fireplace gave a hospitable look to the hall space.' The brick fireplaces were designed without mantelshelves, the chimney-breast going straight up to within a short distance of the ceiling, where it finished off with a coved top.

In furnishing the Red House, Morris made a clean sweep of Victorian upholstery and knick-knacks. 'To my mind,' he said in one of his lectures, 'it is only here and there (out of the kitchen) that you can find in a well-to-

do house things that are of any use at all.' In his own house, therefore, Morris used nothing that was not both useful and pleasant to look at. At a time when table-legs were covered up because they were thought to be indecent, he made no attempt to disguise their utility. He revived the Sussex rush-seated chair, which had gone out of fashion as not being sufficiently ornate. The walls of the Red House were distempered and the ceilings, which were of open timber and lofty, were painted coarsely in bands of wild foliage. In some cases the brick of the interior walls was left quite plain and unplastered.

Morris let into the stuffy, overcrowded Victorian interior fresh air and a feeling for the natural growing things of the earth. It was a house in which one could breathe again and be at ease. Thus in all ways the Red House was an extension of himself. 'Morris did whatever seemed good to him,' says William Bell Scott, 'and it was very good.' The furniture was massive, and included the great painted settle from Red Lion Square. The cabinet in the drawing-room was so enormous that one could climb up on top of it by a ladder stairway, and from there another ladder led up to the storage loft in the roof. In the bedroom, hung with embroidered serge, was another cupboard painted all over with gilding and colour by Burne-Jones and panels illustrating the Prioress's Tale from Chaucer. Burne-Jones also did paintings in tempera on the drawing-room walls of the story of Sire Degrevaunt. In one panel William and Jane sat side by side in robes of state, crowned with coronets, in the characters of Sire Degrevaunt and his bride. Later, Rossetti also did panels of the Garden of Eden, the last meeting of Dante and Beatrice and an allegorical figure of Love.

Because Morris approached his age as an artist his outlook was practical and his grasp deep and sure. He habitually refers to 'sensible people like artists' as distinct from business men, who make nothing themselves, but only make use of the labour *of* others. The artist, he affirmed, was simply a workman, and every workman a different sort of artist. He had no use for what are known as the fine arts. Art to him was not something inhabiting a rarefied sphere of culture, accessible only to a privileged few: it included everything we use in our daily lives and look at every time we go into the street. This was a revolutionary outlook in the nineteenth century, for since the Middle Ages the artist-as-workman had gradually been superseded by a conception of the artist as a different sort of person from the ordinary run of humanity, till in the nineteenth century he had become a producer of exotic and sentimental works for the houses of the rich. In theory, at any rate, Morris had no use for this sort of thing. 'What business have we with art at all,' he asked, 'unless all can share it?'

But while unsuccessful artists—commercially unsuccessful, that is—were relegated to Bohemia, though often by their own choice, successful artists like Lord Leighton and Sir Edward Poynter, the President of the Academy, graduated to the upper strata of society by painting glossy costume pictures that had no bearing on contemporary life at all. Morris returned to the mediaeval conception of the artist as craftsman as the only way of saving the arts from extinction in an industrial age. But when he went on to assert that there was no reason why the ordinary workman should not enjoy his work, just as the artist enjoys his, by making things that were not only useful but beautiful, and that in fact they could only be beautiful in so far as they were an expression of his pride in his work, it was widely assumed that he was merely being paradoxical and eccentric. For the Victorians regarded work as a sort of punishment, and morally beneficent in proportion to its unpleasantness. In their view work not only had to be unpleasant, but it had to be done in unpleasant surroundings, which permanently degraded those engaged in it.

Utopian as Morris's conclusions appeared to his contemporaries, they went to the root of the matter, for they involved the corollary that a regeneration of the arts could not come in the sphere of aesthetics alone, but that it must have its roots in a basic change in the whole structure of society: production, he said, must be for use instead of for profit. Like Ruskin, whose writings had come to him at Oxford with the force of a revelation, Morris approached Socialism through aesthetics, and his approach continued to be that of an artist all his life. He revived the methods of mediaeval craftsmanship not only because they seemed to him natural and right, but because they were the only methods he could set up in opposition to the commercialism that had debased not only the lives of those enslaved by it, as well as of those who profited by it, but all good workmanship and design.

The importance of Morris's contribution to design, apart from its sociological implications, was that, though he was naturally affected to some extent by the taste of his age, he returned essentially to functional simplicity as a way out from fussy Victorian eclecticism. In this he anticipated the whole direction of the modern movement in architecture and design. Modern decorative schemes at their best undoubtedly produce the harmony he desired. Their effect is different, but they arise from principles with which he could have sympathized, for they are conditioned by an architecture which has adopted his principle of suiting design to material and method of construction. He showed the depth of his grasp of the whole problem when he said: 'In Europe the existence of the other

arts is bound up with that of architecture.' Architecture remained for him the mistress art to which all other manifestations must be subordinated. His view of function is one that has been developed by Eric Gill in his well-known thesis that if we concentrate on making anything well, then Beauty will look after herself.

On the other hand, with his rejection of industrialism and its products, it is not to be expected that Morris should have seen anything to admire in the frequently splendid feats of Victorian engineering, in which, if he could have brought himself to look at them objectively, he would have found much of the functionalism he advocated. It was here that the craftsman expressed himself at his best in the nineteenth century, not in the arts. But the present being abhorrent to him, he could only look to the past for his models. By nature he was, for all his Socialism, conservative, hating change, and to a great extent the mediaeval past was to him like a golden mask hiding the face of reality. Fortunately, perhaps, the dead cannot return from the past to shatter the dreams of the living: the past is a safe world, set within certain boundaries. Significantly, it is into the mouth of John Ball, the fourteenth-century revolutionary, that he puts his vision of the future, just as in *News from Nowhere* it is the outward conditions of Chaucer's England that he projects into the future. But it is, after all, only the finest minds in any age that write their Utopias, the minds most deeply concerned with the lot of humanity in their time. And if it is not the function of Utopia ever to be realized, 'Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant.' So it was with William Morris.

He was, we are told, an unpractical dreamer because he objected to industrialism and machinery, because he was against progress. Oddly enough, Morris did object to our cities being made into infernos of noise and dirt; he did object to the progressive ruination of the countryside by the creeping fungus of suburban growth; he did object to the fact that it was only necessary for a building to be beautiful and old and to have historical associations for it to be pulled down and some monstrosity put up in its place; he did object to the mass of shoddy 'goods' that had debased all genuinely good workmanship. He also objected to the filthy conditions in which the majority of men and women had to work and spend their lives, and he spent his own life in fighting against these things. In his view, none of this represented progress. He objected to machinery because of what it had made of England and of those employed to work it. And who shall say that he, or Samuel Butler, who also conceived of a

world without machinery, were wrong, at a time when the progress of technology has brought us within sight of the utter destruction of our world? Morris did not see why we should take such pains to make our lives a hell on earth. However, the rest of us have thought differently, as the nineteenth and the first half of this century have amply shown.

Morris hated vagueness in both art and life. 'No man', he once said, 'can draw armour properly unless he can draw a knight with his feet on the hob toasting a herring on the point of his sword.' It is, of course, legitimate to ask why artists living in the middle of the nineteenth century should want to draw armour and knights at all. But then we should have to ask why the Pre-Raphaelites read so much Froissart and Mallory and painted mediaeval ladies in moated granges instead of ladies bathing at Brighton, or the Blessed Damosel leaning out from the gold bar of heaven instead of women of flesh and blood leaning on the bar at the Empire or Cremorne Gardens, as their contemporaries did in France: why, in fact, they went back to the Middle Ages for their colours and to literature for their subjects instead of looking at the world about them. The curious thing is that, with all their technicolour, their unnatural naturalism and their photographic unreality, they slavishly copied fragments of Nature and yet missed Nature herself altogether. Looking at their paintings, Constable and Turner might have never lived. So when Morris in poetry went back beyond the rhetoric of the Elizabethans in an effort to recapture the direct simplicity of Chaucer, he inevitably missed the whole spirit of Chaucer, because in this instance his approach, usually so direct, was not direct enough. Chaucer was, after all, writing about people as he knew them to be, even in *Troilus and Criseyde,* because *amour courtois* was in his time still a living tradition, whereas it was no use pretending that it was anything of the sort in the nineteenth century. In grafting classical tales on to mediaeval settings, like Chaucer, Morris was writing at a treble remove from his subject, hence the wanness of the figures in *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise.* Hence, too, the dreaminess of Burne-Jones, for it was not to be expected that either of them could achieve more than a sentimental approximation to the original vision. Morris was too realistic not to be aware of this himself, and he never thought very highly of his poetry, however much he enjoyed writing it. It was for this reason that after *The Earthly Paradise* he gave up this particular kind of poetry and fell under the influence of the northern sagas, where poetry is stripped to essentials. This Icelandic influence may be seen at work already in 'The Lovers of Gudrun', and in it he found, as he said, a 'corrective to the more maundering side of medievalism'. *Sigurd* he considered to be his finest

achievement in poetry. It is certainly a remarkable achievement, in bulk alone, but it does make one regret the terse vigour of the sagas.

In 1865 Morris was considering building an additional wing to the Red House to accommodate the Burne-Jones family, moving the firm's workshops from Red Lion Square to Upton and setting up a Palace of Art. When this scheme had to be abandoned as impracticable, he was so disappointed that he cried, and instead of the apple orchards and green bowling-alleys of Upton, had to content himself with 'the bugsof Bloomsbury After a severe attack of rheumatic fever, he abandoned the Red House, into which he had put so much love and care, and moved up to 26 Queen Square, a spacious Queen Anne house which was later pulled down to make room for the extension of the Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic. Originally Queen Square had been open on the north side to give a view of the heights of Hampstead, but when the Morrises moved there, the adjoining streets, except for Great Ormond Street, where they had lived for a time on their return from abroad in 1859, were already slums. The ground floor at Queen Square was now turned into the office and show-room and the large ballroom became the principal workshop of the firm. Other workshops were accommodated in the small court at the back of the house, and later a silk-weaving loom was set up in Ormond Yard, just round the corner. More and more the firm came under Morris's direct control, because it was he who did most of the work for it. Burne-Jones and Madox Brown continued to supply designs for stained glass and Webb for furniture. But nearly all the production and the whole of the design were now in Morris's hands. Before Warington Taylor took over the business management in 1865, it was here that Morris was to be seen in his blue worker's blouse, showing wall-paper patterns to customers and making out the bills.

Oblivious to Victorian convention, he would walk straight from his workshop to call on friends, whose maids were sometimes in two minds whether or not to show him round to the tradesmen's entrance. 'You see, one can't go about London in a top hat,' he remarked; 'it looks so devilish odd.' Later, when he took up dyeing, not only his hands but his beard and hair became subdued to what they worked in. His capacity for work was always extraordinary. Rossetti used to say that there was a cupboard at Queen Square stacked from top to bottom with his manuscripts. On one occasion he began work on *Jason* at four in the morning and wrote seven hundred and fifty lines at a sitting. Another memorandum at the foot of the same manuscript records '350 lines after 10 p.m.'. The mere bulk of his poetry is staggering, considering all his other activities, and his Collected

Works run to twenty-six large volumes. In all, he did fifty different patterns for wallpapers, worked out in two hundred and thirty-seven different colours; forty-two designs for printed cottons in a hundred and fifty-nine variations of colour; thirty-two designs for woven materials set out in a hundred and sixty-four colourings; a large number of elaborate patterns for carpets and rugs of different textures and sizes, as well as the initials, borders and ornaments for the Kelmscott books. Of these he did six hundred and forty-four in the last seven years of his life, and designed two new founts of type. From 1884 to 1890 he delivered two hundred and sixty lectures, apart from addressing open-air meetings and presiding at branch meetings and giving informal talks at clubs. When he took up tapestry weaving he had a loom installed in his bedroom at Kelmscott House, and he was frequently at work at it before sunrise on a summer morning; in his later years, he often woke in the small hours to write his prose romances, after which he would proceed with what was for him the usual business of the day. When he died at the comparatively early age of sixty-two, one doctor diagnosed his disease as 'simply being William Morris and having done more work than most ten men'. Unfortunately there would seem to have been a more tragic side to this incessant application, accompanied as it was by outbursts of uncontrollable fury. His rages were such that he was known to drive his head against the wall so as to make a deep dent in the plaster. At other times he would bite almost through the woodwork of the window-frame. On one occasion at the works he hurled a vast fifteenth-century folio at the head of a workman. It missed the workman, but drove a panel out of the workshop door. His friends speak of his 'tempestuous and exacting company' which had something of the quality of an overwhelming natural force. One of them describes him, at their first meeting in 1871, as pacing up and down the room like a caged lion. In his blue serge suit and soft felt hat, he had, says Mackail, something of the look of a working-engineer or sailor. He was walking down Kensington High Street one day when a fireman from the local brigade stopped him and said, 'Beg pardon, sir, but were you ever Captain of "The Sea Swallow"?' Morris was fond of repeating the story, and rather fancied himself in this character. But how he looked to other people was a matter of utter indifference to him, and he never looked at himself, hating mirrors. Luckily he had a capacity for deep, dreamless sleep, taken, as he said, in solid bars, and within ten minutes of waking in the morning he was dressed and ready for the work of the day.

IV

Morris never felt any affection for the Bloomsbury house, and it remained to him all the time he lived there little more than a convenient lodging-place above his works. When Henry James came to England in 1869, one of the first visits he paid was to Queen Square. 'Morris,' he wrote in a letter to his sister of 10 March of that year, 'lives on the same premises as his shop, in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, an antiquated ex-fashionable region, smelling strong of the last century, with a hoary effigy of Queen Anne in the middle. Morris's poetry, you see, is only his sub-trade. To begin with, he is a manufacturer of stained glass windows, tiles, ecclesiastical and mediaeval tapestry, altar-cloths, and in fine everything quaint, archaic, Pre-Raphaelite—and, I may add, exquisite. Of course his business is small and may be carried on in his house: the things he makes are so handsome, rich and expensive (besides being articles of the very last luxury) that his *fabrique* can't be on a very large scale. But everything he has and does is superb and beautiful. But more curious than anything is himself. He designs with his own head and hands all the figures and patterns used in his glass and tapestry,[1] and furthermore works the latter, stitch by stitch, with his own fingers—aided by those of his wife and little girls. Oh, *ma chere,* such a wife! *Je nen revienspas*—she haunts me still. A figure cut out of a missal—out of one of Rossetti's or Hunt's pictures—to say this gives but a faint idea of her, because when such an image puts on flesh and blood, it is an apparition of fearful and wonderful intensity. It's hard to say whether she's a grand synthesis of all the Pre-Raphaelite pictures ever made—or they a "keen analysis" of her—whether she's an original or a copy. In either case she is a wonder. Imagine a tall lean woman in a long dress of some dead purple stuff, guiltless of hoops (or of anything else, I should say), with a mass of crisp black hair heaped into great wavy projections on each side of her temples, a thin pale face, a pair of strange, sad, deep, dark Swinburnian eyes, with great thick black oblique brows, joined in the middle and tucking themselves away under her hair, a mouth like the "Oriana" in our illustrated Tennyson, a long neck, without any collar, and in lieu thereof some dozen strings of outlandish beads—in fine complete. On the wall was a large nearly full-length portrait of her by Rossetti, so strange and unreal that if you hadn't seen her you'd pronounce it a distempered vision, but in fact an extremely good likeness. After dinner, Morris read us one of his unpublished poems, from the second series of his un-"Earthly Paradise", and his wife, having a bad toothache, lay on the sofa, with her handkerchief over her face.

[1] **These were, of course, actually designed by Burne-Jones and Madox Brown.**

There was something very quaint and remote from actual life, it seemed to me, in the whole scene: Morris reading in his flowing antique numbers a legend of prodigies and terrors (the story of Bellerophon, it was), around us all the picturesque bric-a-brac of the apartment (every article of furniture literally a "specimen" of something or other) and in the corner this dark silent medieval woman with her medieval toothache. Morris himself is extremely pleasant and quite different from his wife. He impressed me most agreeably. He is short, burly, corpulent, very careless and unfinished in his dress, and looks a little like B. G. Hosmer, if you can imagine B.G. infinitely magnified and fortified. He has a very loud voice and a nervous restless manner and a perfectly unaffected and businesslike address. His talk indeed is wonderfully to the point and remarkable for clear good sense. He said no one thing that I remember, but I was struck with the very good judgement shown in everything he uttered. He's an extraordinary example, in short, of a delicate sensitive genius and taste, saved by a perfectly healthy body and temper.'

Morris said that he dreamed of Kelmscott Manor before he saw it in 1871. Like the Red House, it became once more an extension of and a part of himself, and when he came to write *News from Nowhere* he could think of no better setting for the culminating scene of his Utopia. In an article he contributed in the last year of his life to a magazine conducted by members of the Birmingham Guild of Handcraft he has left a detailed account of it.

[4] Through a door in the high unpointed stone wall you go up a flagged path through the front garden to the porch. The house from this side is a lowish three storied one with mullioned windows, and at right angles to this another block whose bigger lower windows and pedimented gable-lights indicate a later date. The house is built of well-laid rubble stone of the district, the wall of the latter part being buttered over, so to say, with thin plaster which has now weathered to the same colour as the stone of the walls; the roofs are covered with the beautiful stone slates of the district, the most lovely covering which a roof can have, especially when, as here and in all the traditional old houses of the countryside, they are "sized down"; the smaller ones to the top and the bigger towards the eaves, which gives one the same sort of pleasure in their orderly beauty as a fish's scales or a bird's feathers.

'The farm buildings stand to the south of the house: a very handsome barn of quite beautiful proportions, and several other sheds, including a good dove-cot, all built in the same way as the house, and grouping delightfully with it.

'The garden, divided by old clipped yew hedges, is quite unaffected and very pleasant, and looks in fact as if it were, if not a part of the house, yet at least the clothes of it: which I think ought to be the aim of the layer out of a garden.

'Going under an arched opening in the yew hedge which makes a little garth about a low door in the middle of the north wall, one comes into a curious passage or lobby, a part of which is screened into a kind of pantry by wooden mullions which have once been glazed. The said lobby leads into what was once the great parlour (the house is not great at all, remember) and is now panelled with pleasing George I panelling painted white; the chimney-piece is no doubt of the date of the building, and is of rude but rather amusing country work; the windows in this room are large and transomed, and it is as pleasant as possible; and I have many a memory of hot summer mornings passed in its coolness amidst the green reflections of the garden.

'The tapestry room is over the big panelled parlour. The walls of it are hung with tapestry of about 1600, representing the story of Samson; they were never great works of art, and now when all the bright colours are faded out, and nothing is left but the indigo blues, the grays and the warm yellowy browns, they look better, I think, than they were meant to look: at any rate they make the walls a very pleasant background for the living people who haunt the room; and, in spite of the designer, they give an air of romance to the room which nothing else would quite do.

'Another charm this room has, that through its south window you can not only catch a glimpse of the Thames clover meadows and the pretty little elm-crowned hill over in Berkshire, but if you sit in the proper place, you can see not only the barn aforesaid with its beautiful sharp gable, the grey stone sheds, and the dove-cot, but also the flank of the earlier house and its little gables and grey scaled roofs, and this is a beautiful outlook indeed.

'A house that I love with a reasonable love I think: for though my words may give you no idea of any special charm about it, yet I assure you that the charm is there; so much has the old house grown up out of the soil and the lives of those that lived on it: some thin thread of tradition, a half-anxious sense of the delight of meadow and acre and wood and river; a certain amount (not too much let us hope) of common sense, a liking for making materials serve one's turn, and perhaps at bottom some little grain of sentiment: this I think was what went to the making of the old house.'

Kelmscott Manor lies at the very end of the village 'on a road', the

account continues, 'which, brought up shortly by a backwater of the Thames, becomes a mere cart-track leading into the meadows along the river'. The whole village, with its barns and the dry walls of its fields, are all alike built of the golden-grey limestone of the district, and the surrounding country is still some of the sleepiest and loneliest in England. Morris took Kelmscott Manor in the summer of 1871 in joint-tenancy with Rossetti. This plan was not a success from the first, but Rossetti, who was already a very sick man, was only at Kelmscott for three years on and off. He finally left the house in the summer of 1874, 'not a little to Morris's relief for many reasons,' says Mackail. After settling his family there, Morris went off on his first voyage to Iceland with Charley Faulkner, Eirikr Magniisson, with whom he had already been studying Icelandic for some years, and W. H. Evans, leaving Rossetti in possession at Kelmscott.

Rossetti, to say the least, was never a countryman. Though he describes Morris's children in his letters to Bell Scott as 'the most darling little self-amusing machines that ever existed' and 'indefatigable readers' who 'read about a volume of the Waverley Novels a day', and though he made numerous paintings and drawings of Jane, which he continually and feverishly re-worked, *Pandora, The Water Willow, Dante's Dream,* and many which became the subjects of the paintings of his decadence, *The Daydream, Veronica Veronese, Mnemosyne, La Donna della Finestra,* in which the original image becomes more and more romantically distorted, Rossetti was ill at ease at Kelmscott. He found the draughts of the old house unbearable, and the tapestries, he wrote, 'constantly obtruded on one in a bright light become a persecution', and, waving about on all sides in the draughts, made his room 'like a house attacked by vertigo'. His series of studies of Jane culminated in the *Proserpine,* of which there exist several versions.

Rossetti's habits were utterly out of keeping with Morris's way of life. Tortured by insomnia, he did not go to bed until daybreak, and then he slept, drugged with chloral, till midday, when he rose, sour and disgruntled, and consumed quantities of the greasy ham and bleeding eggs described by Meredith. Having dug up the manuscripts of his poems from his wife's grave, where with a fine romantic gesture he had buried them seven and a half years earlier, he had published them in 1870. Morris, at his request, wrote a long and very appreciative review in *The Academy,* which was followed by a rhapsodic notice by Swinburne in *The Fortnightly.* It was said on all hands that a great new poet had arisen. But after Buchanan's attack on 'The Fleshly School of Poetry' in 1871,

Rossetti's persecution mania intensified to such an extent that he heard voices insulting him at night in his room and, meeting a caravan of gypsies in Roehampton Lane, he was convinced that it was a demonstration got up by his enemies to insult him. His laudanum doses increased, and by the summer of 1872 he was once more very ill indeed. He was persuaded to go to Scotland, in the hope that he might be restored by a change of scene. But it was at Penkill that strange things had first begun to happen to Rossetti. On a previous visit in 1869, the great bell of the castle gateway had rung violently of its own accord and a wild bird had flown and nestled in his hands. Rossetti interpreted this as a sign that the soul of his wife had returned to him, and after this he broke open her grave and retrieved his poems, the leaves of which were already mouldy, worm-eaten and matted with her hair. But this visit restored him, and by the end of 1872 he was almost well again and back at Kelmscott. 'Rossetti has set himself down at Kelmscott as if he never meant to go away/ Morris complains in a letter to Aglaia Coronio of November of that year, 'and not only does he keep me from that harbour of refuge (because it is really a farce our meeting when we can help it) but also he has all sorts of ways so unsympathetic with the sweet simple old place, that I feel his presence there as a kind of a slur on it: this is very unreasonable though, when one thinks why one took the place, and how this year it has really answered that purpose; nor do I think I should feel this about it had he not been so unromantically discontented with it and the whole thing, which made me very angry and disappointed/

In 1874 the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. was wound up and the other partners required to retire. Morris's handling of the affair seems to have been somewhat arrogant and high-handed, and caused a good deal of resentment. Originally each partner had contributed no more than £20 towards the capital, the bulk of which came from Morris's mother, and though Burne-Jones, Faulkner and Webb now waived their claims altogether, Rossetti, Madox Brown and Marshall claimed compensation for loss of interest.[1] Meanwhile at Kelmscott things were going from bad to worse. A chance remark about his appearance overheard from a company of anglers persuaded Rossetti that he had been insulted again, and he at once turned and began to abuse them. Gordon Hake, who was with him, managed to get him away, and explained to the astonished fishermen that his friend was only a little eccentric. But the

[1] Mackail puts their claim at £1000 each; Mrs Helen Rossetti Angeli in her recent *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* puts it at 'about £300'. Whatever the sum, Rossetti set it aside, Mrs Angeli writes, 'in the interest of "a member of the Morris family". This was certainly Mrs Morris.'

episode caused some bad feeling in the neighbourhood, and it was generally agreed that the time had come for Rossetti to go. The breach between Morris and Rossetti now became irreparable, and after that they seldom if ever met, though we find Jane staying with Rossetti near Bognor two years later, where she sat for the *Venus Astarte*, and she continued to visit him at Cheyne Walk until his final decline.

There may be no positive evidence for it, but it is fairly obvious that Rossetti was deeply in love with Jane Morris.[1] Apart from his many paintings of her, which in themselves testify to the extent to which she dominated his imagination, and such a poem as *The Streams Secret* and much of *The House of Life* (continued at Kelmscott), there is the story of the tragic revelation made to Hall Caine a few months before his death —of how he had married Lizzie 'out of a mistaken sense of loyalty and fear of giving pain' when he was already in love with another woman. Mrs Angeli thinks that there can be little doubt that this woman was Jane Morris, and that Rossetti's attachment to her dated back to the Oxford days before she married Morris. If so—and many things in the lives of Rossetti, Morris and Jane Morris point to it—it has been a well-kept secret, and it would explain much that has hitherto puzzled students of Morris. If this love was reciprocated, as it would seem to have been, it would also account for Jane Morris's ever-recurrent nervous prostration and invalidism—though being the wife of William Morris would account for a good deal of that—but, as Mrs Angeli remarks, 'it affords a reasonable clue to the tragedy of Rossetti's life'. It affords no less a clue to the tragedy of Morris's life and to many cryptic references in the letters to Mrs Coronio, though references to it in the other letters—in those to Mrs Burne-Jones, for instance—have already been expunged. One might hesitate to pry into such personal matters had it not been felt for so long that there was something mysterious and unexplained about the personality of Morris, and that Mackail is sometimes concerned to hide more than he reveals. At the date at which his biography was written he could, of course, have done no less. At any rate, after 1874 there is scarcely a mention of Rossetti in any of Morris's existing letters, not even of his death in 1882.[2] It is significant, perhaps, that the abandoned novel at which he was working in the early 1870s had, unlike his other work, a contemporary setting and dealt with the love of two brothers for one woman. He gave it up because he could not resolve the problem he had

[1] In the British Museum there is a collection of letters between Rossetti and Jane Morris, which under the terms of May Morris's bequest may not be consulted for fifty years from the date of the bequest (1939). The positive evidence may be here.

[2] Nevertheless, at the Kelmscott Press, Morris printed three volumes of Rossetti's poems.

posed himself.[1] 'I know clearer now perhaps than then what a blessing and help last year's journey was to me,' he writes to Mrs Coronio in November 1872 of his visit to Iceland the previous year, 'what horrors it saved me from'.

Apart from whatever personal reasons there may have been for the trip, the impression of Iceland upon Morris was little short of cataclysmic. 'Strange you would think it,' he wrote to Jane, 'if you had been sailing along the coast of Iceland, as I have, and seen the end of the world rising out of the sea.' The journey into the desert interior was a hard one, undertaken with guides and pack-horses; all day was spent in the saddle and all night sleeping in the open. The diary Morris kept of his two visits contains some of his finest descriptive prose. 'I confess I shuddered at my first sight of a really northern land in the grey of a coldish morning,' he writes. '(The Faroes seemed to me such a gentle sweet place when we saw them again after Iceland.) The hills were not high, especially on one side, as they slope beachless into the clear but grey water; the grass was grey between greyer ledges of stone that divided the hills in regular steps; it was not savage, but mournfully empty and barren, the grey clouds, dragging over the hill-tops or lying in the hollows, being the only thing that varied the grass, stone and sea. . . .' From Lithend, the site of Gunnar's hall, they went up the terrible valley down which the Markfleet comes roaring from the glaciers. 'Past this the cliffs were much higher, and most unimaginably strange': the Journal continues, 'they overhung in some places much more than seemed possible; they had caves in them just like the hell-mouths in thirteenth-century illuminations; or great straight pillars were rent from them with flat tops of grass and a sheep or two feeding on it, however the devil they got there: two or three tail-ends of glacier too dribbled over them hereabouts, and we turned out of our way to go up to one: it seemed to fill up a kind of cleft in the rock wall, which indeed I suppose it had broken down; one could see its spiky white waves against the blue sky as we came up with it. . . . The great mountain-wall which closes up the valley with its jagged outlying teeth was right before us: often the wall would be cleft, and you would see a horrible winding street, with stupendous straight rocks for houses on either side: the bottom of the cleft quite level, but with a white glacier stream running out of it, and the whole blocked up at the end by the straight line of the master-mountain.' They visited the boiling mud and quivering earth of the

[1] Variations on this theme continued to haunt Morris. It is the subject of the most passionate of the stories in *The Earthly Paradise* 'The Lovers of Gudrun'; it recurs again, at the end of his life, in *The Pilgrims of Hope*, where the hero shows great magnanimity and forbearance towards his best friend, who had secretly become his wife's lover.

Geysirs, and Morris admitted to his terror at the prospect. There followed six cold days of rain and bitter wind among the 'horrible black mountains of the waste'. They crossed a dismal hinterland of bogs and pools on the watershed between the northern and western seas, where Grettir lived as an outlaw, and at Ernewater, where he slew Thorir Red-Beard, a swan rose trumpeting from the lakeside. 'Just think, though, what a mournful place this is—Iceland, I mean . . . how every place and name marks the death of its short-lived eagerness and glory. . .. But Lord! what littleness and helplessness has taken the place of the old passion and violence that had place here once. ... Set aside the hope that the unseen sea gives you here, and the strange threatening changes of the blue spiky mountains beyond the firth, and the rest seems emptiness and nothing else: a piece of turf under your feet, and the sky overhead, that's all: whatever solace your life is to have here must come out of yourself or these old stories, not over hopeful themselves,'

On his return from Iceland, Morris began a new poem, *Love is Enough, or the Freeing of Pharamond, A Morality.* The story, taken from The Mabinogion, concerns King Pharamond, a wise ruler and brave soldier, who becomes a listless dreamer, wrapt away in visions of ideal love. He leaves his kingdom and wanders over land and sea until he finds the fulfilment of his dreams in a humble maiden. He returns to find his throne usurped and his subjects disaffected, yet he is content to lose everything for the sake of his new-found love. 'Morris has been here twice since his return,' writes Rossetti to William Bell Scott on 2 October, 'for a few days at first and just now for a week again. He is now back in London, and this place will be empty of all inmates by the end of the week, I think. Morris has set to work with a will on a sort of masque called "Love is Enough", which he means to print as a moderate quarto, with woodcuts by Ned Jones and borders by himself, some of which he has done really very beautifully. The poem is, I think, at a higher point of execution perhaps than anything that he has done, having a passionate lyric quality such as one found in his earliest work, and of course much more mature balance in carrying out.' As a matter of fact, the poem is so sick with heartache that the title can only be ironic. 'Yea, Love were enough,' cries Pharamond, 'if thy lips were not lacking.' Love enters with a bitter drink and bloody hands—'A dream and a lie,' says Pharamond,'—and my death.'[1]

Writing to Mrs Coronio in October next year, he says: 'I have been backwards & forwards to Kelmscott a good deal this summer *8c* autumn;

[1] **In reality the whole work, with its quest for an ideal dream-mistress, is an example of sublimation. 'Because for Love's sake, love he cast aside.'**

but shall not go there so often now as Gabriel is come there, and talks of staying there permanently: of course he won't do that, but I suppose he will stay some time: he is quite well and seems very happy. ... As to my mental health—I have had ups and downs as you may easily imagine: but on the whole I suppose I am getting less restless and worried, if at the same time less hopeful, still there is life in me yet I hope.' In November he writes: 'I am so glad to have Janey back again: her company is always pleasant and she is very kind & good to me—furthermore my intercourse with G. [Georgiana Burne-Jones] has been a good deal interrupted; not from any coldness of hers, or violence of mine; but from many untoward nothings: then you have been away so that I have had nobody to talk to about things that bothered me. . . . O how I long to keep the world from narrowing on me, and to look at things bigly and kindly!'

For some time past Morris had been looking for another London house, and at the end of 1872 the family left Queen Square and moved to Horrington House, Turnham Green, about twenty minutes walk from Hammersmith station. Mackail describes Turnham Green as still being in the '70s, before the building of the District Railway, 'a pleasant, if somewhat remote suburb' set among orchards and market gardens. 'We have cleared out of Queen Sq., as far as domesticity is concerned,' Moiris writes to Mrs Coronio from Bloomsbury on 23 January 1873, 'I keep my study and little bedroom here, and I daresay as time goes on shall live here a good deal. ... It [Horrington House] is a *very* little house with a pretty garden, and I think will suit Janey and the children: it is some hour's walk from the Grange [the Burne-Jones's house in North End Lane, Fulham] which makes it quite a little way for me: on the other hand I can always see anyone I want at Queen Sq: quite safe from interruption: so in all ways it seems an advantage—does it not?' In February he writes again: 'The little Turnham Green house is really a pleasure to me; may that be a good omen! ... I have really had a hard time of it: but I hope things have taken a long turn now, and that I shall be something worth as a companion when I see you again.' Two years later he is writing to Mrs Coronio: 'I am ashamed of myself for these strange waves of unreasonable passion: it seems so unmanly: yet indeed I have a good deal to bear considering how hopeful my earlier youth was, *8c* what overweening ideas I had of the joys of life.'

While working on his epic *Sigurd the Volsung,* Morris began his experiments in vegetable dyes. ' He was confronted,' says Mackail, 'by the double barrier of material that would not take good colour, and colour

which in its own substance was uniformly bad,' The choice lay between the bright anilines or colours that were quiet but muddy and without character. In his researches he went back to French books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even to Philemon Holland's Pliny. Gerard's *Herbal* supplied him with useful information about certain disused vegetable dyes, and he consulted other herbals, such as those of Matthiolus (Venice, 1590) and Fuchsius (Basle, 1543). 'I was at Kelmscott the other day,' he writes, 'and betwixt the fishing I cut a handful of poplar twigs and boiled them, and dyed a lock of wool a very good yellow.' At Queen Square he turned the scullery, with its copper, into a dye-house and dried the results in the kitchen. In order to gain a thorough first-hand knowledge of the craft, Morris apprenticed himself to the greatest expert of his time, Thomas Wardle of Leek, a man of varied gifts, author and musician and famous for his researches into the silk-weaving industry, especially in India. Morris paid regular visits to Leek over a period of two years from the summer of 1875. Kermes (a dye used in the time of Moses, he was delighted to discover) yielded, he found, a more permanent and beautiful red than cochineal and his brown he got from the roots of the walnut-tree. 'As soon as he was able to set up his own dye-house,' George Wardle, his manager, tells us, 'he turned at once to the frank full hues of the permanent dye-stuffs—indigo blue, madder red, weld yellow—and with these he produced the beautiful Hammersmith carpets and Merton tapestries and chintzes.' Following the best traditions of Oriental art, Morris used but few colours, and gained his effects by skilfully varied juxtaposition and contrast. These researches were to such good effect that to-day the colours of some Morris fabrics are as good as when they first emerged from the dye-vat. In most cases they have actually improved with washing and the passage of time. In going back to the past for his models Morris was once again proved right.

At the same time the great illuminated manuscript of the *Æneids* was under way. This was planned as a vellum folio with designs by Burne-Jones and illumination by Fairfax Murray, while Morris himself laboriously wrote out the text. He completed six books before laying it aside owing to pressure of other work. But 'in beauty of handwriting and splendour of ornament,' says Mackail, 'it takes first place among all his manuscripts.' The translation was published separately in 1875. 'Meanwhile,' he writes, 'I am up to the neck in turning out designs for papers, chintzes, and carpets and trying to get the manufacturers to do them.' In 1876 *Sigurd* was published, and got a tepid reception from the critics. Morris also became Treasurer of the Eastern Question Association. Next

year he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which involved much anxiety and hard work with weekly committee meetings, long letters to the press, and visits to remote country churches. The activities of the Society were not confined to England. When there was a question of pulling down and rebuilding part of St Mark's, Venice, a nation-wide campaign was set going by his energy, and representations were made to the Italian Government.

Morris threw himself heart and soul into the movement to prevent war with Russia in face of Disraeli's policy of supporting Turkey, as the letters to his wife and daughters at Oneglia show. The war was prevented, but by 1878 he had become disgusted with the Liberals and thoroughly disillusioned with party politics. The letters to his wife of March that year give an elaborate description of Kelmscott House, Hammersmith (then known as 'The Retreat'), into which the family moved on their return from Italy in the autumn. This house was to remain Morris's London home for the rest of his life. Though he was never reconciled to living so near London, he realized that it was essential to his work and derived some comfort from the thought that the same river flowed past the doors of both his houses. A year later the whole family made the first of their trips by water from Hammersmith to Kelmscott.

In 1881 the firm moved its works from Queen Square to Merton Abbey. The works at Merton had originally been a silk-weaving factory, started early in the eighteenth century by Huguenot refugees. Somewhat earlier Morris had had hopes of setting up his workshops at Blockley, near Chipping Campden, which had been one of the principal centres of the woollen industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the plan had to be abandoned owing to the remoteness of the district from London. At Merton he had the advantage of the river Wandle, a clear and beautiful stream supplying water of the special quality required for madder-dyeing. The river-side and the mill-pond were thickly set with willows and large poplars, and the workshops themselves were for the most part long wooden two-storied sheds, red-tiled and weather-boarded, and grouped round the mill lade. The whole thing was, in fact, the realization of a Ruskinian dream.

At Merton Abbey Morris could put all his theories and convictions into practice at last. Here work could be done with enjoyment in pleasant and healthy surroundings; it could be honest original work, not mechanical imitation done by routine; it could be properly rewarded, not sweated; and everything could be of the best possible material and workmanship. Such conditions, he thought, existed under the mediaeval guild system

and were responsible for the incomparable beauty of its art; they could now all be reproduced at Merton Abbey. And the products of Merton, the Compton and Evenlode chintzes, the fresh loveliness of the Jasmine and Blackthorn and Willow pattern wall-papers, the bold and easy designs of the 'Hammersmith' rugs and carpets, are a triumphant justification of these theories.

Work at Merton included the production of painted glass windows, Arras tapestry woven on the high-warp loom, carpets, embroidery, tiles, furniture, general house decorations, besides chintzes, paper hangings, furniture velvets, cloths and upholstery. Morris never designed any furniture himself; those articles made by the firm were nearly all designed by Webb. In the same way, the figures of the tapestries were done by Burne-Jones and Walter Crane, Morris being responsible for the flowered foregrounds and the details of the background. The actual craft of tapestry-weaving he learned from one of the books in the series *Arts et Metiers* published by the French Government before the Revolution. He visited the Gobelins factory, where the ancient loom was still in use; but he was disgusted to find that they were only making servile copies of oil paintings. In tapestry Morris set himself to recapture 'the force, purity and elegance of the silhouette of the objects represented . . . and that crispness and abundance of beautiful detail which was the special characteristic of fully developed mediaeval art'. By this he meant the great French and Flemish work of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As was to be expected, Morris abominated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gobelins work, as also the more recent work of Aubusson and Beauvais. 'The style of even the best period of the Renaissance is wholly unfitted to tapestry,' he said; 'accordingly we find that tapestry retained its Gothic character longer than any of the pictorial arts.' The couplets he wrote to be woven into the Merton tapestries are of a singular charm:

> I draw the blood from out the earth;
> I store the sun for winter mirth.

is the legend for the Vine, and for the Orange Tree:

> Amidst the greenness of my night,
> My odorous lamps hang round and bright.

Morris clearly defined the principles he worked on in his designs. Design, he said, must fill the eye and satisfy the mind. It must, therefore, be understandable, though not immediately, so as to interest the mind. Accordingly it must have a kind of intricate mystery, and to be comprehensible it must follow hard on already familiar material. He conceived of

beauty in art as a constant principle, intimately connected with unchanging natural beauty. Restless himself, he tested design by its quieting of restlessness, its ability to exert the benign influence of Nature herself upon the feeling, thinking, acting man.[1] There can be no doubt that his designs do exert such a benign influence, in spite of a certain heaviness of nineteenth century over-elaboration. But standards of taste are unreliable and ever-changing and perhaps we have had in recent years too much bareness and 'functionalism.' In Morris's designs there is a boldness and freedom of line, a sumptuousness of colour refreshing to our starved senses, and a wonderful fertility of invention.

To reach Merton from Hammersmith, Morris had to go by underground railway to Farringdon Street, cross the City, and then get another train from Ludgate Hill, a journey which took about two hours, and which he loathed. Alternatively, he could walk along the Upper Richmond Road, across Barnes Common and up Roehampton Lane. This also took a good two hours. Sometimes he walked, sometimes he took a cab home, but when pressure of work at Merton was at its height he slept there, having fitted up a couple of rooms for his own use as at Queen Square. As he came home, laden with spring flowers, he would wonder why the people he met laughed at him, as though there was something funny in a man carrying flowers instead of the usual umbrella and newspaper, just as later he was startled to hear the driver of a greengrocer's van hail him at Hammersmith with 'Hey, Morris-Socialist!' In the East End they were ruder still. When they met him with his beard, curly hair, grey cloak and soft felt hat, 'Shakespeare—yah!' they yelled. A comrade in a cloak, one cannot help agreeing, is an incongruous figure, and the unerring instinct of the Cockney was only too quick to detect it.

V

In politics Morris called himself a Communist, but it is clear that the word as he used it bears little relation to the military Communism of our own time. Of all things Morris most abhorred what he called Bismarckian State-Socialism. In the manifesto of the aims of the Socialist League, which he wrote with Belfort Bax, he called for 'frankness and fraternal trust in each other and single-hearted devotion to the religion of Socialism'—sentiments which have, to say the least, an old-fashioned ring today, and seem part of the disarming willow-leafage which twined itself round the lettering of the title-block of *Commonweal,* symbolic of the

[1] **Gerald H. Crow, *William Morris Designer* (1934).**

freshness of the original hope. *News from Nowhere,* one of the noblest and sanest Utopias ever written, was conceived as an alternative to the super-socialist state, with its glorification of machinery, forecast in Edward Bellamy's American Utopia *Looking Backward.* At the same time, much as he disliked the idea of it, Morris is quite definite in his letters of the '80s that he accepted the necessity of some form of State socialism—'and pretty stiff at that'—as a transitional stage on the road to complete Socialism, or Communism, when the state power is supposed to 'wither away'. But, he added, he himself had little interest in this phase and even less in parliamentary Socialism, or Vestry business'.

Morris was, in fact, not a politician and made no pretence of being one.[1] 'For politics as politics, i.e. not regarded as a necessary, cumbersome and disgustful means to an end, would never have attracted me,' he tells us in *How I Became a Socialist.* He was, as he said when he had to give an account of himself before a police-court magistrate, 'an artist and a literary man, pretty well-known, I think, throughout Europe'. This is how Morris thought of himself, even while giving so much of his time to politics. He, therefore, judged any society mainly by how it affected the creative work of artists and literary men. He makes this quite plain in his letter to C. E. Maurice of 1 July 1883, but he adds: 'Furthermore, in looking into matters social and political, I have but one rule, that in thinking of the condition of any body of men I should ask myself, 'How could you bear it yourself? What would you feel if you were poor against the system under which you live?' I have always been uneasy when I have had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often that I have seldom had it out of my mind: and the answer to it has made me more and more ashamed of my position. . . . Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me.' The Christian-ethical approach to social questions, the nonconformist conscience, was very strong in Morris. Of course, we have outgrown all such sentimentality long ago, and the handling of our fellows has now become a science, a matter of statistics, not a question of fellowship at all. But for Morris 'fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death'. That emotion, not political science and economics, was at the root of his socialism.

When he first joined the Democratic Federation in 1883, Morris took a good deal of moral bullying from Andreas Scheu, the Austrian socialist refugee. In one letter we even find him writing: 'I want statistics terribly: you see, I am but a poet and artist, good for nothing but sentiment!' For

[1] **That is, he hated all that went to make up politics—the lying, the intrigue, the 'tactics'.**

Scheu, in the proper Marxist tradition, had evidently made him feel thoroughly ashamed of himself for being 'but a poet and artist', and had accused him of having no backbone. However, Scheu promptly took offence when Morris advised *him* to put his private troubles out of his mind for the sake of the cause. Then, of course, Morris was not a 'worker', and this let him in for a good deal of inverted snobbery. He seems to have submitted to this sort of thing for some time till he finally lost patience with it and returned to his true *metier.* For, after all, it was modern civilization itself that he hated. Most of his contentions about the evils of industrialism have since been confirmed by the findings of industrial psychology in its researches into the effect of the machine on human beings and the reduction of work for the vast majority of people to a deadening, soul-destroying routine.

Morris's unique contribution to the thought of his age lay in the fact that he looked upon art, in the wide application he gave to that word, as 'the fundamental test of man's real freedom, of democracy, and of civilization itself. If art is shackled, he said in effect, then men are everywhere in chains, because that means that even their imagination is imprisoned. Morris would not, in that case, have been very willing to accept political direction as to how he should write his poems or weave his tapestry. It was, Burne-Jones tells us, largely the persecution of intellectuals in Russia, where the opposition came chiefly from intellectuals, as shown in Stepniak's *Underground Russia,* that was 'one of the inciting causes of his Socialism. Marx he read later, to enable him to meet arguments'. Morris himself says: 'I put some conscience into trying to learn the economical side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of *Capital,* I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work.' He also worked hard and dutifully with Bax at *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome.* He did it because he felt impelled to do it, not because he liked it or was interested in politics as such. The other 'inciting cause' was some articles by Mill in the *Fortnightly* against Socialism. There was, too, 'the continuous conversation with such friends as Bax, Hyndman and Scheu, and the brisk course of propagandist meetings which were going on at the time, and in which I took my share'.

Once he had taken the plunge into politics, Morris was as practical in his Socialism as in everything else he did. He was quick to see the danger and futility of the violent talk of revolution indulged in by some members of the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist League and the dynamiting tactics of the anarchists, though he became very friendly with

Prince Kropotkin, most mild and gentle of anarchists. He realized that the only practical course was, in the first place, to make socialists by educating people and 'organizing them to deal with politics in the end'. Further than that he would not go. So that it comes as a surprise to find that many of his letters, particularly the carefully reasoned series to the Rev. George Bainton of 1888, are pure Marxism. He did not regard Ruskin as a socialist—'that is,' he writes in a letter to Robert Thompson of 24 July 1884, 'not a *practical* one. He does not expect to see any general scheme even begun: he mingles with certain sound ideas which he seems to have acquired instinctively, a great deal of mere whims.' If Morris objected to the authoritarian methods of Hyndman, it is pretty clear that he would have objected to those of Marx and his followers, and the 'flexibility' and docility demanded of the members of the Communist Party to-day would doubtless have been beyond him. But his letters on Socialism should dispose of the idea once and for all that he was an unpractical dreamer. His intellectual grasp of the situation was exceptionally clear and strong.

It is not by chance, as Page Arnot has pointed out in his *William Morris: A Vindication,* that *The Dream of John Ball* is set in the year of the Peasants' Revolt and that the five hundred years of future history unrolled in the talk of the dreamer and John Ball is so close in its account of the growth and development of capitalist society, and its final overthrow by the workers, to the historical sections of Marx's *Capital News from Nowhere* even prefigures Fascism. 'A great part of the upper and middle classes were determined to set on foot a counter-revolution; for the Communism which now loomed ahead seemed quite unendurable to them. Bands of young men, like the marauders in the great strike of whom I told you just now, armed themselves and drilled, and began on any opportunity or pretence to skirmish with the people in the streets. The government neither helped them nor put them down, but stood by, hoping that something might come out of it. These "Friends of Order", as they were called, had some success at first, and grew bolder. A sort of irregular war was carried on with varied success all over the country; and at last the government, which at first pretended to ignore the struggle, or to treat it as mere rioting, definitely declared itself for the "Friends of Order".' But Morris warned his audience in his lecture on *Communism* that in handling the machinery and forms of Socialism 'the ultimate good in it, the amount of progressive force that might be in such things, would, I think, depend on *how* such reforms were done; in what spirit; or rather what else was being done, while these were going on.' He also showed his extraordinary perspicacity and grasp of possible future developments

when in the same lecture he asked his audience to consider 'whether the Society of Inequality might not accept the quasi-socialist machinery above mentioned, and work it for the purpose of upholding that society in a somewhat shorn condition, may be, but a safe one . . . instead of the useless classes being swept away by the useful, the useless classes gaining some of the usefulness of the workers, and so safeguarding their privilege. The workers better treated, better organized, helping to govern themselves, but with no more pretence to equality with the rich, no more hope for it than they have now. But if this be possible it will only be so on the grounds that the working people have ceased to desire real Socialism, and are contented with some outside show of it joined to an increase in prosperity enough to satisfy the cravings of men who do not know what the pleasures of life might be if they treated their own capacities and the resources of nature reasonably with the intention and expectation of being happy.' But, on the other hand, 'if the working people refuse to take any interest in Socialism, if they practically reject it, we must accept that as a sign that the necessity for an essential change in society is so far-distant, that we need scarcely trouble ourselves about it'.

Unfortunately, the various left-wing bodies of that time, the Radicals, the Morris Socialists, the Fabians, the Marxist sectarians and the anarchists, hated one another far more than they hated their common enemy, the entrenched and organized capitalism they were supposed to be fighting, and they wasted much time bickering and fighting each other. Morris could never understand why men and women with ultimately the same aim in view could not come to some working arrangement and leave off backbiting and blackening one another's characters. Perfectly disinterested himself, he expected the same purity of motive in others. But then, as now, the revolutionary movement attracted a large number of neurotics who were merely projecting their own aggressions on to the 'system' and on to each other, or rebelling against all constituted authority, people who would be maladjusted in any society.

Hyndman, in his *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, gives, as one might expect, a rather different account of the disagreement that led to the famous split, when Morris, Bax, Scheu and the Avelings walked out of the Social Democratic Federation and founded the Socialist League. It arose, he says, on a purely domestic question, and this was the real reason of Morris's extreme bitterness at the time.[1] 'This most deplorable result of

[1] The 'domestic question' was the quarrel over Hyndman's annoyance that Dr Edward Aveling and Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor, refused to get married, on principle, but continued to live together openly.

slander and lying set the movement back fully twenty years, and gave the opportunity for the commencement of that very course of compromise and political intrigue in the Socialist movement which Morris himself was most anxious to avoid. It was the saddest episode in my entire political career; and during the whole of the eight years that the League and its organ lasted I refrained from attacking Morris or replying *injustice* to the virulent diatribes against us which appeared in the *Commonweal,* feeling sure that one day he would see that he had been quite mistaken; yet writing now, seven-and-twenty years after the original dispute and with the coolness which such passing of time brings with it, I cannot exonerate Morris and his group from the responsibility of having done more to hinder the progress of genuine Socialism in England than any people who have ever opposed it or been connected with it' (p. 360). Later, according to Hyndman, Morris publicly admitted his mistake. 'In 1884 Hyndman and I had a great quarrel,' he reports him as saying at a public meeting, 'and I have to say this: that he was quite right and I was quite wrong ' (p. 362). How much reliance can be placed on this plausible account it is difficult to say.

After the breakdown of the Socialist League, Hyndman continues, Morris was very anxious to bring about Socialist Unity, and arranged a series of gatherings to that end of the delegates of the S.D.F., the Fabian Society and his own followers of the Hammersmith Socialist Society at Kelmscott House. After prolonged discussion, agreement was reached and a joint manifesto drawn up and signed by all concerned. But 'hardly was the ink dry on the Manifesto', than the Fabians broke away, upset the whole agreement and carried on with their policy of permeation. 'It is not too much to say', adds Hyndman, 'that this to him most exasperating failure to bring about a fusion of Socialists, coming on top of the collapse of the Socialist League, shortened Morris's life.'

When the S.D.F.'s organ *Justice* was launched on funds supplied by Edward Carpenter (and continued on funds supplied by Morris), the first number was sold by the members of the Federation themselves in Fleet Street and the Strand. 'It was a curious scene,' writes Hyndman, 'Morris in his soft hat and blue suit, Champion, Frost and Joynes in the morning garments of the well-to-do, several working-men comrades, and I myself wearing the new frock-coat in which Shaw said I was born, with a tall hat and good gloves, all earnestly engaged in selling a penny Socialist paper during the busiest time of the day in London's busiest thoroughfare.' *Justice,* like most Socialist organs, was always desperately short of funds, because, as Hyndman says, it was 'a propaganda sheet dealing with ques-

tions that the mass of mankind did not want to have thrust upon them'. When Morris joined the S.D.F. he was 'even too eager to take his full share in the unpleasant part of our public work and speedily showed that he meant to work in grim earnest on the same level as the rank and file of our party. ... He was never satisfied unless he was doing things which, to say the truth, he was little fitted for, and others of coarser fibre could do much better than he.' But as a speaker, Hyndman adds, 'his imposing forehead and clear grey eyes, with the powerful nose and slightly florid cheeks, impressed you with the truth and importance of what he was saying, every hair of his head and in his rough shaggy beard appearing to enter into the subject as a living part of himself.

All Morris really wanted was to restore to the ordinary man his dignity; he was not interested in making him into an efficient social-economic unit, a cog in the industrial machine. He said, in effect, as May Morris reminds us, over and over again *that people must know what they want and must know what they are; they must search out the meaning of the world and learn how to live in it> and how to deal with each other.* He really saw no way out of the hideous complication of industrial society except a return to small semi-agricultural communities. 'The phrase about labour-saving machinery is elliptical,' he says in *Art Under Plutocracy,* 'and means machinery which saves the cost of labour, not the labour itself, which will be expended when saved on tending the machines.' He delighted in *Erewhon,* not only because it turned every Victorian ideal upside down, making ill-health a crime and crime ill-health, but because it pictured a community that had abolished machines from a fear that they would eventually develop an independent life of their own and supersede mankind—which is only an extreme way of saying that mankind will become more and more like machines the more they depend on them.

After all, it was not the cruelty and injustice of modern industrial urban society that worried Morris so much as its meanness and ugliness, its deficiency in heroic qualities and romance. He was never noticeably worried by the most fiendish cruelties in Froissart and the Icelandic sagas. Men and women might be burnt or boiled alive in the Middle Ages, or cut up into pieces, but it was somehow justified in his eyes because it was done with passion and faith and provided colourful violence to set against the drabness of the Victorian suburb and slum. Besides, the burning or boiling might take place outside a cathedral or other building of noble dimensions, and most likely those standing round enjoying the spectacle would be dressed in extravagant clothes of beautiful colours. He would have been the first to condemn such a scene had it been enacted in his own

time at Clapham Junction. G. K. Chesterton adopted much the same point of view, though he reduced it to glorious farce in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill.*

Morris often hoped for some great disaster or cataclysm to shake up the complacency and dullness of Victorian society and awaken people to some sense of the glory and grandeur of life again. 'I have [no] more faith than a grain of mustard seed in the future history of "civilization", which I *know* now is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies. ... I used really to despair once because I thought what the idiots of our day call progress would go on perfecting itself: happily I know now that all that will have a sudden check—sudden in appearance I mean—"as it was in the days of Noe"'. (To Mrs Burne-Jones, 13 May 1885). It would need this, he felt, before a rebirth of art could come about. Had he lived on into the twentieth century, he might have found the spectacle of barbarism flooding the world less consoling. Nevertheless one sometimes feels that Morris would have been more at home in our eagerly experimental age. Sometimes he was overcome with a sense of the futility of even his own work. 'Am I doing nothing but make-believe then, something like Louis XVI's lock-making?'

The first number of *Commonweal,* the journal of the Socialist League, edited and financed by Morris, appeared in February 1885, with the Manifesto signed by the Provisional Council of the League. It also contained a poem by Morris called 'The March of the Workers'. The second number, which appeared a month later, was a remarkable one. Besides the editorial, which commented on and backed up Bax's article on 'Gordon and the Soudan', it contained: Stepniak on 'The Actual Position in Russia', Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue on 'The Political Game of the Police in France,' a long article by Engels on 'England in 1845 and in 1885', an account by Bernard Shaw of the 'Industrial Remuneration Conference' and Morris's poem 'Message of the March Wind'—most of it, of course, being far above the heads of the majority of the workers to whom it was ostensibly addressed and who were expected to support it. In the next number Morris's poem continued as 'The Pilgrims of Hope', with a note to the effect that 'it is the intention of the author to follow the fortunes of the lovers who, in the "Message of the March Wind", were already touched by sympathy with the cause of the people'. But the cause of the people was a continual drain on Morris's pocket, and when, after a

year, *Commonweal* came out as a weekly, this meant that his work was more than doubled. 'The next six years', May Morris writes, 'are a long story of lecturing, travelling, office and editorial work, and that most difficult of all tasks, keeping the peace among people of different temperaments: people eager and impetuous and most of them honest in their aims, but possessing a positive genius for misunderstanding each other. The patience exercised throughout those years by a man himself of impetuous and nervous temperament is the best answer to those people who spread absurd legends about Morris's uncontrollable violence. To see him with a pernickety comrade who is wasting the valuable time he gave without stint to Socialist affairs was in itself an object-lesson in self-control and patience' (May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* ii. 172-3).

The disruptive tactics employed by the various progressive organizations against each other at this time read like the antics of mischievous small boys. Ford Madox Ford in his autobiography, *Return to Yesterday* (1931), records that at least one meeting of the Hammersmith Socialist Society was brought to an end by someone putting red pepper on the stove. 'Poor William Morris with his enormous mop of white hair, luxuriant white beard and nautical pea-jacket, used to preside at these meetings of his group. I never heard him speak. But he walked up and down the aisle between the rows of chairs, his hands in his jacket-pockets with the air of a rather melancholy sea-captain on the quarter-deck. He disliked the violence that was creeping into his beloved meetings. He had founded them solely with the idea of promoting human kindness and peopling the earth with large-bosomed women dressed in Walter Crane gowns and bearing great sheaves of full-eared corn. On this occasion his air was most extraordinary as he fled uttering passionate sneezes that jerked his white hairs backwards and forwards like the waves of the sea' (p. no).

Apart from such incidents, Morris was becoming disillusioned. 'Politically he is in much the same position as I am,' notes Wilfrid Blunt in September 1891. 'He has found his Socialism impossible and uncongenial, and has thrown it up wholly for art and poetry, his earlier loves' *(My Diaries,* i. 70). Even earlier, Blunt remarks, in the summer of 1889, when he was staying at Kelmscott, 'Morris was at that time in a mood of reaction from his socialistic fervour. He had quarrelled with Hyndman, and was disgusted at the personal jealousies of his fellow-workers in the cause and at their cowardice in action. He never got over the pusillanimity they had shown at the Trafalgar Square meeting two years before, when a few hundred policemen had dealt with thousands of them as though they had

been schoolboys.[1] Morris was too loyal and obstinate to abjure his creed, but the heart of his devotion to the cause of the proletariat had gone. In some ways our two positions were the same. We had both of us sacrificed much socially to our principles, and our principles had failed to justify themselves by results, and we were both driven back on earlier loves, art, poetry and romance' (W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, i. 28).

Describing his visit to Kelmscott Manor this summer, Blunt remarks that though it was a romantic house, life there was extremely primitive. 'The rooms below and also on the upper floor were all passage rooms opening one into another, and in order to reach the tapestried chamber in which we sat in the evenings, it was necessary to pass to and fro through Morris's own bedroom, in which he lay all night in a great square Elizabethan four-post bed, an arrangement which would have been of extreme discomfort to anyone less tolerant of such things than he, and less indifferent to his personal convenience. It was the same thing in the day. He worked at the designs he was making for his carpets, and at his drawings, and the corrections of his proofs in a room where he was liable every minute to disturbance. Such discomforts had been submitted to by our forefathers, and why not, he thought, by us. It was this insensitiveness to his surroundings that enabled him to deal with the prodigious volume of work which he daily assigned himself, both manual and intellectual' *(My Diaries*, i. 29).

It was at this period that Morris began writing his long prose romances, *The House of the Wolfings, The Roots of the Mountains, The Story of the Glittering Plain, The Waters of the Wondrous Isles, The Well at the World's End.* Of all his voluminous works, these, with their artificially archaic prose, set in vaguely defined periods of the early Middle or Dark Ages, are very nearly unreadable to-day. But they provided Morris, as he confessed, with a much-needed escape from reality.

VI

The last great activity of William Morris's life was the founding of the Kelmscott Press in 1891. He had always taken a keen interest in book production, and twenty years earlier had abandoned a scheme for an illustrated folio edition of *The Earthly Paradise*, after Burne-Jones had made more than a hundred designs for the blocks, thirty-five of which had been cut by Morris himself, and the remainder by George Wardle, Camp-

[1] Blunt forgets, apparently, that on 'Bloody Sunday', 13 November 1887, the police were supported by Life Guards and a battalion of foot guards with fixed bayonets and twenty rounds of ammunition.

field, Faulkner and Elizabeth Burden. Later the ornamented edition of *Love is Enough* had also been abandoned; in 1888 Morris, in consultation with Emery Walker, had supervised the production of *The House of the Wolfings* and, the following year, *The Roots of the Mountains.* His difficulty at the Kelmscott Press lay in the fact that printing was an art born on the threshold of the Renaissance, an age which, in his view, was the root of all evils. He was bound, therefore, to regard book production as an extension of manuscript. 'I have always been a great admirer of the calligraphy of the Middle Ages, and of the earlier printing which took its place,' he says in his note describing his aims in founding the Kelmscott Press. 'There was only one source from which to take examples of the perfected Roman type, to wit, the works of the great Venetian printers of the fifteenth century of whom Nicholas Jenson produced the completest and most Roman characters from 1470 to 1476,' So when he came to design his 'Golden' type he took Jenson's letters as his model and then proceeded to modify them. For his Gothic fount, the 'Troy' type, of which the 'Chaucer' is a smaller variant, he went back to the first two decades of printing for his models, to Schoeffer of Mainz, Mentelin of Strasburg and Gunther Zainer of Augsburg. It is characteristic that Morris preferred his more purely Gothic fount to his Roman. For his paper he took as his model a Bolognese make of about 1473. He began to collect mediaeval books for the purpose of studying their type and general layout and acquired at the same time a library of superb manuscripts, for some of which he paid as much as £900 and £1000. Among these were the twelfth-century Huntingfield Psalter and the Tiptoft Missal, a work of the early fourteenth century. The bulk of his library went the way of most good things—that is, to America. The carved vines in the porches of Beauvais Cathedral inspired many of the backgrounds of grapes and vine-leaves he designed for his initials. The Kelmscott Press books were bound in vellum and half holland. Most of the vellum used was white or nearly so, but Sir Sydney Cockerell writes in his history of the Press that Morris himself 'much preferred it dark, and the skins showing brown hair-marks were reserved for the binding of his own copies. ... It is scarcely necessary to add that only hand presses have been used, of the type known as 'Albion".' But the sight of even a hand press at work, with 'the sticky printer's ink', was at first distasteful to Morris and, as he confessed in a letter of May 1891, 'I could not help lamenting the simplicity of the scribe and his desk, and his black ink and blue and red ink, and I almost felt ashamed of my press after all.' William Bowden, a retired master-printer, was engaged as compositor and press-man, and the press itself

was housed first in a cottage at 16 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, and later in a small house at 21 Upper Mall, since turned into a granary. This house, says Sir Sydney Cockerell, overlooked the river, 'which acted as a reflector, so that there was an excellent light for printing'.

The productions of the Kelmscott Press have been severely criticized in more recent years. Morris's page has been judged too black and his decoration overwhelmingly exuberant. Typography, as defined by Stanley Morison, is 'the efficient means to an essentially utilitarian and only accidentally aesthetic aim. . . . The good type-designer knows that for a fount to be successful, it has got to be so good that only very few recognise its novelty. If readers do not notice the consummate reticence and rare discipline of a new type it is probably a good letter.' For a letter to be 'beautiful' in itself, therefore, is a disadvantage, for it will arrest our attention, and not contribute to ease of reading. According to this definition, the weakness of Morris's founts as compared with those of Eric Gill, another artist-typographer who agreed with him in so much else, is apparent. But then typography did not appeal to Morris as an independent art. He regarded book-production as a kind of architecture in which the quality of the paper, vellum, silk ties and binding must be of the best, and he sometimes designed a page very much as he designed a chintz.

On the other hand, provided it be 'architecturally good,' he said, 'a book quite unornamented can look actually and positively un-ugly . . . Let us see what this architectural arrangement claims of us. First, the pages must be clear and easy to read; which they can hardly be unless: Secondly, the type is well designed; and thirdly, whether the margins be small or big, they must be in due proportion to the page of letters.' The main thing, he insisted, was that the page should be properly put on the paper. Of the paper itself, whether hand-made or machine-made, 'it should not profess fineness or luxury; but should show itself for what it is.' Though his own taste was for decorated books that carried on the tradition of illuminated manuscript—that is, books at their very finest—he was quite ready to admit the value of'books whose only ornament is the necessary and essential beauty which arises out of the fitness of a piece of craftmanship for the use for which it is made.' He therefore stressed the principle of Fitness for Use in books as well as in everything else. Naturally, he did not think that all books should be like the Kelmscott Chaucer, though he showed there, as in the other productions of the Kelmscott Press, that 'a book ornamented with pictures that are suitable for that book, and that book only, may become a work of art second to none, save a fine building duly

ornamented, or a fine piece of literature,' Before his death Morris projected a *Froissart* which would have outstripped even the Chaucer in magnificence.

It is sometimes asserted that Morris was insensitive to music. But this is far from being the case. Though he abominated Wagner, he had a great love of mediaeval music (as far as it was known in his day) and of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century masters, and when Dolmetsch came to play Byrd to him on the virginals during his last illness, he broke into tears of joy at the opening phrase of a pavane. Mackail suggests that his attitude to music was largely defensive and that he feared its power to arouse his emotions—emotions, doubtless, that he had schooled himself to ignore. Of all the Arthurian legends, that of Tristram and Iseult moved him the most deeply. It is a pity, therefore, that his feelings about Wagner's macabre masterpiece, *Tristan,* are unrecorded, as they would most likely have been even more forcibly expressed than his opinion of *The Ring.* The Burne-Joneses attended the concerts given by Wagner at the Albert Hall in 1877 and came to know Cosima Wagner, who visited them at the Grange, but it is unlikely that Morris accompanied them. He also missed the opportunity of acquainting himself with the work of another great contemporary—Hector Berlioz, the nervous fire of whose superb *Les Troyens* has been supplanted in popular favour by the comparative vulgarity of *The Ring.*

Apart from his work at the Kelmscott Press, the composition of the long prose romances and the translation of *Beowulf* with A. J. Wyatt, Morris spent his last years in building up his collection of mediaeval manuscripts and early printed books, with occasional country visits to report on the condition of old churches for 'Anti-Scrape' and in a final burst of letters to the Press, the most passionate of which protest against the projected alterations to Westminster Abbey. The year before he died he visited Epping Forest ('this strange, unexampled and most romantic wood') to report on the damage that was being done by the wholesale felling of its trees. One of the last churches he visited for 'Anti-Scrape' was Blythburgh, the great flint church whose tremendous tower commands the lonely isolation of the Suffolk marshes. There was something symbolic in his visit to this desolate and romantic area, once a thriving mediaeval town, where little remains now save the church dominating the empty stretches of sad-coloured heath—an area which the sea is gradually wearing away, like the action of time itself. Writing to Lady Burne-Jones in August 1895, he says: 'I was thinking just now, how I have wasted the many times when I have been "hurt" and (especially of late years) have

made no sign, but swallowed down my sorrow and anger, and nothing done. Whereas if I had but gone to bed and stayed there for a month or two and declined taking part in any life, as indeed on such occasions I have felt very much inclined to do, I can't help thinking that it might have been very effective. Perhaps you remember that this game was tried by some of my Icelandic heroes, and seemingly with great success. It was a lovely afternoon when I came down here, and I was prepared to enjoy the journey from Oxford to Lechlade very much: and so I did: but woe's me! when we passed by that once lovely little garth near Black Bourton, I saw all my worst fears realized: for there was the little barn we saw being mended, the wall cut down and finished with a zinked iron roof. It quite sickened me when I saw it. That's the way all things are going now. In twenty years everything will be gone in the countryside, which twenty years ago was so rich in beautiful building: and we can do nothing to help it or mend it. The world had better say "Let us be through with it and see what will come after it!" . . . Now that I am grown old and see that nothing can be done, I half wish that I had not been born with a sense of romance and beauty in this accursed age.'

The last time Morris spoke in public was when he seconded the resolution passed at the Society of Arts on 31 January 1895 against the scourge of public advertising. The previous month he had also spoken to the little gathering outside Waterloo station at Stepniak's funeral. Stepniak had tried to outrun a train and had been caught by it. In the summer of 1896 Morris went on a sea-voyage with John Carruthers to Norway in a last effort to regain his failing strength. 'Leaning on my arm, he walked with me round the garden at the back of his house,' says Hyndman, 'and I well remember him saying: "Of course if this is to be a temporary illness and I am to get the better of it and be able to take part in active life again I shouldn't mind so much being laid up for a few months. But if this is the end of all things I shouldn't like it a bit. This has been a jolly good world to me when all is said and I don't wish to leave it yet awhile.' (Op. cit., pp. 364-5). Just before he died he had occasion to go upstairs. 'The effort was too much,' writes Blunt, 'and he broke a blood vessel and lay after that for the most part insensible. Almost his last words were: "I want to get mumbo-jumbo out of the world".' It was 3 October 1896 and Morris was only sixty-two.

He was carried to his grave in Kelmscott churchyard on a farm cart with a yellow body and bright red wheels, wreathed with vine leaves and flowers and strewn with willow boughs and a carpeting of moss. It was a day of storm and south-westerly gales and there was a noise of waters

everywhere. 'Clumps of michaelmas daisies were in flower in the drenched cottage gardens,' writes Mackail, 'and the thinning willows had turned, not to the brilliance of their common October colouring, but to a dull tarnished gold. The rooks were silent in the elms about the Manor House.'

PHILIP HENDERSON

PART ONE
1849-56

Marlborough and Oxford
The Brotherhood

Marlboro College
19 March 1849

To Emma Morris[1]

My dearest Emma

On Friday I received your letter and I thought that it had been rather long in coming but I suppose it was just too late for the delivery on Thursday and at the college there is only one delivery and that is at 7 am. however it signifies very little indeed though I expect a letter to-morrow. I should think you would like to know all about the Confirmation so I will tell you as much as I can about it: the Bishop came into the town on Friday afternoon he stayed at Mr Williamsons all the evening and slept there we went into Chapel at 8 a.m. all the candidates for confirmation sitting together near the altar the Bishop's charge was received by us all standing it was about 20 minutes long, the Bishop himself is very tall and thin and does not [look] very old though bald at the top of his head his name is Dennison and he is of a high family: the Holy Communion was administered the next day (Sunday). It was administered to every one singly. I think respecting a *certain thing* that it would [do] to get a plain copy of the communion plate (which is but half as much as the other) and make up the difference with smaller plates different views about, do not you know?

The new Surgeon is I think very generally liked I myself like him very much, so far as I know of him he comes regularly every morning and evening to Chapel. I knew Hayley very well last half and the half before he was captain of my dormitory I asked him about Mr Capel and he knows him but it happens to be neither his *father* or *unc,'e$_y$* but his *brother* that lives with Mr Capel. I hope very soon to get a *tremendous* long letter from you dear Emma but in the meantime I must say goodbye for the present with my best love to all.

I remain dear Emma Your most affectionate Brother
W. Morris

P.S. March 20th. Have just received your letter with 10s. and I want to ask you something James before I went gave me a rabbit

[1] **Walthamstow Public Library.**

and I asked him to sell the young ones for me which he said he would do for me do you think there was anything wrong in it will you write and tell me if you think it so; (you need not tell anyone of it) the reason I did it was to get a nice fishing rod I did not like to ask Mamma to give me one and what with other things I did not think I should have enough to buy one otherwise; will you let this part of my letter be private and confidential dear Emma and again

Believe me Your most affectionate Brother
W. Morris

Marlboro College
13 April 1849

To Emma Morris [1]

My dearest Emma

I received your dear letter yesterday and I am glad you liked the anthem on Easter Tuesday, we here had the same anthem on Monday and Tuesday as on Sunday it was the three first verses of the 72nd Psalm, In Jewry is God known, his name is great in Israel. At Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling at Sion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the sword, the shield, and the battle. I certainly thought it was very beautiful though I have never heard it in Cathedral and like you could not tell how they would sing it there; but a gentleman (one of the boy's fathers) said on the whole our choir sang better than at Salisbury Cathedral; anyhow I thought it very beautiful the first verse was sung by the whole the second began by one treble voice till at last the base took it up again gradually getting deeper and deeper then again the treble voice again and then again the base the third verse was sung entirely by base not very loud but with that kind of emphasis which you would think befitting to such a subject I almost think I liked it better than either of the other two the only fault in the anthem seemed to be to me that it was too short. On Monday I went to Silbury Hill which I think I have told you before is an artificial hill made by the Britons but first I went to a place called Abury where there is a Druidical circle and a Roman entrenchment both which encircle the town originally it is supposed that the stones were in this shape first one large circle then a smaller one inside this and then one in the middle for an altar but a great many in fact most of the stones have been removed so I could [not] tell this. On Tuesday morning I was told of this so I thought I

Walthamstow Public Library. Printed in Mackail i. 22-4.

would go there again, I did and then I was able to understand how they had been fixed; I think the biggest stone I could see had about 16 feet out of the ground in height and about 10 feet thick and 12 feet broad the circle and entrenchment altogether is about half a mile; at Abury I also saw a very old church the tower was very pretty indeed it had four little spires on it of the decorated order, and there was a little Porch and inside the porch a beautiful Norman doorway loaded with mouldings and the chancel was new and was paved with tesselated pavement this I saw through the Window for I did not know where the sexton's house was so of course I could not get the key, there was a pretty little Parsonage house close by the church. After we had done looking at the lions of Abury which took us about an hour we went through a mud lane down one or two fields and last but not least through what they call here a water meadow up to our knees in water, now perhaps you do not know what a water meadow is as there are none of them in your part of the world, so for your edification I will tell you what a delectable affair a water meadow is to go through; in the first place you must fancy a field cut through with an infinity of small streams say about four feet wide each the people to whom the meadow belongs can turn these streams on and off when they like and at this time of the year they are on just before they put the fields up for mowing the grass being very long you cannot see the water till you are in the water and floundering in it except you are above the field luckily the water had not been long when we went through it else we should have been up to our middles in mud, however perhaps now you can imagine a water meadow: after we had scrambled through this meadow we ascended Silbury Hill it is not very high but yet I should think it must have taken an immense long time to have got it together I brought away a little white snail shell as a momento of the place and have got it in my pocket book I came back at | past 5 the distance was altogether about 14 miles I had been out 3 hours of course Monday and Tuesday were whole holidays. As [you] are going to send me the cheese perhaps you would get Sarah to make me a good large cake and I should also like some biscuits and will you also send me some paper and postage stamps also my silk-worms eggs and if you could get it an Italian pen box for that big box is too big for school. I am very sorry I was not at home with you at Easter but of course that was not to be and it is no good either to you or to me to say any horrid stale arguments about being

obliged to go to school for of course we know all about that. Give my best love dearest Emma to all,

And believe me Your most affectionate brother
William Morris

Clay Street
Walthamstow, Essex
To Cormell Price[1] Tuesday in Holy Week [1855]

My dearest Crom

Yes, it's quite true, I ought to be ashamed of myself, I am ashamed of myself: I won't make any excuses: please forgive me. As the train went away from the station, I saw you standing in your scholar's gown, and looking for me. If I hadn't been on the other side, I think I should have got out of the window to say good-bye again. . . . Ted[2] will show something to criticise, or stop, I may as well write it for you; it is exceedingly seedy. Here it is.

'Twas in Church on Palm Sunday,
Listening what the priest did say
Of the kiss that did betray,

That the thought did come to me,
How the olives used to be
Growing in Gethsemane.

That the thoughts upon me came
Of the lantern's steady flame,
Of the softly whispered name.

Of how kiss and words did sound
While the olives stood around,
While the robe lay on the ground.

Then the words the Lord did speak
And that kiss in Holy Week
Dreams of many a kiss did make:

Lover's kiss beneath the moon,
With it sorrow cometh soon:
Juliet's within the tomb:

Angelico's in quiet light
'Mid the aureoles very bright
God is looking from the height.

[1] From Mackail, i. 53-6. [2] Edward Burne-Jones. Afterwards referred to as 'Ned

There the monk his love doth meet:
Once he fell before her feet
Ere within the Abbey sweet

He, while music rose alway
From the Church, to God did pray
That his life might pass away.

There between the angel rows
With the light flame on his brows,
With his friend, the deacon goes:

Hand in hand they go together,
Loving hearts they go together
Where the Presence shineth ever.

Kiss upon the death-bed given,
Kiss on dying forehead given
When the soul goes up to Heaven.

Many thoughts beneath the sun
Thought together; Life is done,
Yet for ever love doth run.

Willow standing 'gainst the blue,
Where the light clouds come and go,
Mindeth me of kiss untrue.

Christ, thine awful cross is thrown
Round the whole world, and thy Sun
Woful kisses looks upon.

. • . . •

Eastward slope the shadows now,
Very light the wind does blow,
Scarce it lifts the laurels low;

I cannot say the things I would,
I cannot think the things I would,
How the Cross at evening stood.

Very blue the sky above,
Very sweet the faint clouds move,
Yet I cannot think of love.[1]

There, dear, perhaps I ought to be ashamed of it, don't spare me. I have begun a good many other things, I don't know if I shall ever finish them, I shall have to show them to Ted and to you first: you know my failing. I have been in a terrible state of mind about my writing; for I seem to get more and more imbecile as I go on. Do

[1] **This poem is interesting as being one of the few surviving examples of Morris's earlier poetry before the publication of *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858).**

you know, I don't know what to write to you about; there are no facts here to write about; I have no one to talk to, except to ask for things to eat and drink and clothe myself withal; I have read no new books since I saw you, in fact no books at all.

The other day I went 'a-brassing' near the Thames on the Essex side; I got two remarkable brasses and three or four others that were not remarkable: one was a Flemish brass of a knight, date 1370, very small; another a brass (very small, with the legend gone) of a priest in his shroud; I think there are only two other shrouded brasses in England. The Church that this last brass came from was I think one of the prettiest Churches (for a small village Church) that I have ever seen; the consecration crosses (some of them) were visible, red in a red circle; and there was some very pretty colouring on a corbel, in very good preservation: the parson of the parish shewed us over this Church; he was very civil and very, very dirty and snuffy, inexpressibly so, I can't give you an idea of his dirt and snuffiness. . . .

Clay Street
Walthamstow

To Cormell Price [1] April 1855

It was not at sermon-time that I thought of the ' Kisses', but as the second lesson was being read: you know the second lesson for Palm Sunday has in it the history of the Betrayal. I say, isn't *tomb* a very fair rhyme for *soon* by the way? the rhymes you call shady, I should like to be able to defend: I think I could do it *viva voce* but can't by letter. . . . It is very foolish, but I have a tenderness for the thing, I was so happy writing it, which I did on Good Friday: it was a lovely day, with a soft warm wind instead of the bitter north east wind we had had for so long. For those bad rhymes, I don't like them, though perhaps I don't feel them hurt me so much as they seem to do you; they are makeshifts, dear Crom: it *is* incompetency; you see [if] I must lose the thought, or sacrifice the rhyme to it, I had rather do the latter and take my chance about the music of it; perhaps I may be able in the course of time to rhyme better, if my stock of thoughts are not exhausted, and I sometimes think they mayn't all be gone for some time.

I have read a little Shelley since I saw you last; I like it very much what I have read; 'The Skylark' was one: W H A T a gorgeous thing

[1] From Mackail, i. 56-7.

it is! utterly different to anything else I ever read: it makes one feel so different from anything else: I hope I shall be able to make you understand what I mean, for I am a sad muddle-head: I mean that most beautiful poetry, and indeed almost all beautiful writing makes one feel sad, or indignant, or—do you understand, for I can't make it any clearer; but 'The Skylark' makes one feel happy only; I suppose because it is nearly all music, and that it doesn't bring up any thoughts of humanity: but I don't know either.

I am going a-brassing again some time soon: to Rochester and thereabouts, also to Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey. . . .

Friday morning
Walthamstow
[1855]

To Cormell Price [1]

Dearest Crom

What am I to say about your letter? for I was very glad to get a letter from you even though it brought such bad news; and you should not have said what you did say about Fulford, for though I like him very much, and though he will without doubt be a very pleasant travelling companion, yet to me he is a very poor substitute for you. . . . Please write as often as you can. I am so awfully glad to hear that you are writing something, do let me see anything you do, I am not at all afraid of it; I should think Trench's 'Study of Words' would do very well, but that as it's a little bit old, it would perhaps be better to put it in the second or third number, rather than the first, but by all means write it; I have finished the tale I began last term and failed signally therein, I'm afraid that it won't do for the 'Brotherhood' [which became *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine];* I am going to send it to Dixon and Ted to look at, and see if it is altogether hopeless, will you look at it too? . . . If you remember, you were to review 'North and South';[2] are you thinking of it?

As to Cambridge, it is rather a hole of a place, and can't compare for a moment with Oxford; it is such a very different kind of place too, that one feels inclined to laugh, at least I do, when I think of it. I suppose by this time, Ted has told you all about it, and how we went to Ely, which disappointed me somewhat, it is so horribly spoilt with very well meant restorations, as they facetiously term them; the bit of a hill that the Cathedral stands on is very jolly how-

[1] From Mackail, i. 69-71. [2] By Mrs Gaskell.

ever, green fields and gardens and many trees, all dotted about with quaint old houses, and bits of the old conventual buildings; there are several gorgeous bits about the Church too, and outside happily it has been hardly touched, which makes the exterior much more beautiful and interesting than the interior.

I saw the Exhibition [at the Royal Academy] the other day and liked the Procession of Cimabue [i.e. Leighton's] better than I thought I should have done, as I said to Ted, I wish I hadn't seen Ruskin's Pamphlet before seeing the picture, for I don't know now what effect his commendation may have had upon me. Millais's picture [i.e. 'Rescue'] is indeed grand, how gorgeously the dawning is painted! I had been sitting up late the night before, and saw the dawn break, through the window in our hall, just as it might have been there, minus the smoke. There was a very sweet little picture by Collins in the Octagon room, called 'The Good Harvest of '54', did you notice it? I think Maclise's picture [of the wrestling scene from 'As You Like It'] about as bad as possible, fancy the brute spoiling one of the best scenes in your favourite comedy, don't you hate him therefore? I saw Dyce's 'Christabel' and thought the face very sweet; but Ruskin says the face is a copy; certainly it doesn't help me at all to the understanding of Coleridge's Poem.

I saw that same day an impression of Albert Durer's S. Hubert, and very nearly bought it but couldn't afford it, the same being 6 guineas; I think I should have done so though if I wasn't living in hope of getting a photograph of it; the photographs represent the engravings much better than I thought they did, looking very much like impressions whose paper is yellow by age, only somewhat darker: what a splendid engraving that S. Hubert is! O my word! so very, very gorgeous.

I bought some engravings from Fra Angelico's picture in the Louvre, I am afraid only pretty good; will you have them? they represent the picture fairly I think on the whole, only the loss of colour makes of course a most enormous difference, where the colour is so utterly lovely as in the original—well, I hope you will like them. I have just been doing them up into a parcel whose clumsiness is something absolutely glorious, it is so clumsy. O this steel pen!—tell me if they reach you safely. Well, good-bye. I have forgotten what else I had to say to you, though I know I had plenty.

Yours most lovingly
Topsy

Avranches, Normandy
To Cormell Price [1] 10 August 1855

Dearest Crom

I haven't quite forgotten you yet, though I have been so long writing, but the fact is, I am quite uncomfortable even now about writing a letter to you, for I don't know what to say: I suppose you won't be satisfied with the names merely of the places we have been to; and I scarcely think I can give you anything else. Why couldn't you come, Crom? O! the glories of the Churches we have seen! for we have seen the last of them now, we finished up with Mont S. Michel yesterday and are waiting here (which is a very beautiful place however) till Saturday evening or Sunday morning when we shall go back to Granville and take steamer for Jersey and Southampton. Crom, we have seen nine Cathedrals, and let me see how many non-Cathedral Churches; I must count them on my fingers; there, I think I have missed some but I have made out 24 splendid Churches some of them surpassing first-rate English Cathedrals.

I am glad that Fulford has lightened my load a little bit, by telling you what we did as far as Chartres: so I won't begin till after we left that place: Well, Crom, you must know that we had thought that we should be forced to go back to Paris to get to Rouen and that we should be obliged to go by railway all the way, which grew so distasteful to us after a bit, that we made efforts, and found that we could get across the country with very little railway indeed; so we went; I enjoyed the journey very much, and so did the others I think, though Ted's eyes were bad, as they have been all the time whenever the sun has been out: we went the greater part of the way in a queer little contrivance with one horse the greater part of the way. Behold our itinerary. We started from Chartres quite early (six o'clock) with drizzling rain that almost hid the spires of the Cathedral, how splendid they looked in the midst of it! but we were obliged to leave them, and the beautiful statues, and the stained glass, and the great, cliff-like buttresses, for quite a long time I'm afraid—so we went for about 20 miles by railroad to a place called Maintenon, where we mounted the quaint little conveyance and went off, with the rain still falling a little, through the beautiful country to Dreux, for a distance of about 17 miles; there was plenty to look at by the road, I almost think I like that part of the country better than any

[1] From Mackail, i. 73-8.

other part of the lovely country we have seen in France; so gloriously the trees are grouped, all manner of trees, but more especially the graceful poplars and aspens, of all kinds; and the hedgeless fields of grain, and beautiful herbs that they grow for forage whose names I don't know, the most beautiful fields I ever saw yet, looking as if they belonged to no man, as they were planted not to be cut down in the end, and to be stored in barns and eaten by the cattle, but that rather they were planted for their beauty only, that they might grow always among the trees, mingled with the flowers, purple thistles, and blue corn-flowers, and red poppies, growing together with the corn round the roots of the fruit trees, in their shadows, and sweeping up to the brows of the long low hills till they reached the sky, changing sometimes into long fields of vines, or delicate, lush green forage; and they all looked as if they would grow there for ever, as if they had always grown there, without change of seasons, knowing no other time than the early August. So we went on through this kind of country till we came to Dreux, and the rain had cleared up long before we reached it, and it was a bright sunny day. Some distance from Dreux the country changed very much into what I will tell you afterwards, but a great part of Picardy and the Isle of France seemed to be a good deal the same kind of country, and the land between Rouen and Caudebec, along the Seine, was much like this, so much so, that I think I had it in my mind a good deal just now; perhaps it is even lovelier than this, the hills are much higher, but I scarcely think the flowers are so rich, or perhaps, when we went through it, the flowers had gone off a good deal. Well, we had to stop at Dreux about an hour and we saw the church there, a very-good one, flamboyant mostly, but with the earlier apse very evilly used, and with a transept front very elaborately carved once, now very forlorn and battered, but (Deo gratias) not yet restored: there is a delightful old secular tower at Dreux too, and that is flamboyant also, with a roof like the side of a cliff, it is so steep. So we left Dreux, and set our faces as though we would go to Evreux; we were obliged to undergo about half an hour's ride in the railway before we got there, to my intense indignation. We had only a very short time to stay at Evreux, and even that short time we had to divide (alas! for our Lower Nature) between eating our dinner and gazing on the gorgeous Cathedral: it is an exceedingly lovely one, though not nearly so large as most of the Cathedrals we saw, the aisles are very rich flamboyant, with a great deal of light canopy work about

them: the rest of the Church is earlier, the nave being Norman, and the choir fully developed early Gothic; though the transepts and lantern are flamboyant also by the way: there is a great deal of good stained glass about the Church. When we left Evreux we found that the country had changed altogether, getting much more hilly, almost as glorious in its way as the other land perhaps, but very different; for it is a succession of quite flat valleys surrounded on all sides by hills of very decent height with openings in them to let out the river, the valleys are very well wooded, and the fields a good deal like the other ones I have described, quite without hedges, and with fruit-trees growing all about them; so we kept going on, first winding up a long hill, then on a table land for a greater or less time, then down into the glorious lake-like valley, till at last we got to Louviers: there is a splendid church there, though it is not a large one; the outside has a kind of mask of the most gorgeous flamboyant (though late) thrown over it, with such parapets and windows, it is so gorgeous and light, that I was utterly unprepared for the inside, and almost startled by it; so solemn it looked and calm after the fierce flamboyant of the outside; for all the interior, except the Chapels, is quite early Gothic and very beautiful; I have never, either before or since, been so much struck with the difference between the early and late Gothic, and by the greater nobleness of the former. So after we had looked at the Church for a little time we mounted the omnibus to go to the railway station where we were to take train to Rouen—it was about 5 miles I should think from Louviers to the station. What a glorious ride that was, with the sun, which was getting low by that time, striking all across the valley that Louviers lies in; I think that valley was the most glorious of all we saw that day, there was not much grain there, it was nearly all grass land and the trees, O! the trees! it was all like the country in a beautiful poem, in a beautiful Romance such as might make a background to Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite; how we could see the valley winding away along the side of the Eure a long way, under the hills: but we had to leave it and go to Rouen by a nasty, brimstone, noisy, shrieking railway train that cares not twopence for hill or valley, poplar tree or lime tree, corn poppy, or blue cornflower, or purple thistle and purple vetch, white convolvulus, white clematis, or golden S. John's wort: that cares not twopence either for tower, or spire, or apse, or dome, till it will be as noisy and obtrusive under the spires of Chartres or the towers of Rouen, as it is under Versailles or the

Dome of the Invalides; verily railways are A B O M I N A T I O N S; and I think I have never fairly realised this fact till this our tour: fancy, Crom, all the roads (or nearly all) that come into Rouen dip down into the valley where it lies, from gorgeous hills which command the most splendid views of Rouen, but we, coming into Rouen by railway, crept into it in the most seedy way, seeing actually nothing at all of it till we were driving through the town in an omnibus.

I had some kind of misgivings that I might be disappointed with Rouen, after my remembrances of it from last year; but I wasn't a bit. O! what a place it is. I think Ted liked the Cathedral, on the whole, better than any other church we saw. We were disappointed in one thing, however, we had expected Vespers every afternoon, we found they were only sung in that diocese on Saturday and Sunday. And weren't they sung, just. O! my word! on the Sunday especially, when a great deal of the psalms were sung to the Peregrine tone, and then, didn't they sing the hymns!

I bought *The Newcomes* at Rouen, Tauchnitz edition, it is a splendid book. Well Crom, I can't write any more, I am fairly run down; I am tired too, and have got to pack up as well, which is always somewhat of a bore; when I see you (which I hope will be soon) I will tell you about the rest. Ah me! if only you had been here, how I have longed for you! so very, very much. This is a seedy letter to send to such a fellow as you are, Crom, please forgive me, and be jolly when I see you. Shall I see you at Birmingham?

Your most loving
Topsy

To Cormell Price [1]

Walthamstow
October 1855

Thank you very much for taking so much interest in me—but make your mind easy about my coming back next term, I am certainly coming back, though I should not have done so if it had not been for my Mother; I don't think even if I get through Greats that I shall take my B.A., because they won't allow you not to sign the 39 Articles unless you declare that you are 'extra Ecclesiam Anglicanam' which I'm not, and don't intend to be, and I won't sign the 39 Articles.[2] Of course I should like to stay up at Oxford for a much longer time, but (I told you, didn't I) I am going, if I can, to be an

[1] From Mackail, i. 82-3.

He took his B.A. next year.

architect, and I am too old already and there is no time to lose, I MUST make haste, it would not do for me, dear Crom, even for the sake of being with you, to be a lazy, aimless, useless, dreaming body all my life long, I have wasted enough time already, God knows; not that I regret having gone to Oxford, how could I? for I should be a very poor helpless kind of thing without Ted and you. Didn't I tell you that I meant to ask Street [1] of Oxford if he would take me? I intended to tell you, if I didn't; if that could happen, it would be glorious, for then I need not leave Oxford at all. Ah well, may it be so!

Ex. Coll: Oxon

To Mrs Emma Morris [2] 11 November 1855

My dear Mother

I am almost afraid you thought me scarcely in earnest when I told you a month or two ago that I did not intend taking Holy Orders; if this is the case I am afraid also that my letter now may vex you; but if you have really made up your mind that I was in earnest I should hope you will be pleased with my resolution. You said then, you remember, and said very truly, that it was an evil thing to be an idle objectless man; I am fully determined not to incur this reproach, I was so then, though I did not tell you at the time all I thought of, partly because I wished to give you time to become reconciled to the idea of my continuing a lay person. I wish now to be an architect, an occupation I have often had hankerings after, even during the time when I intended taking Holy Orders; the signs of which hankerings you yourself have doubtless often seen. I think I can imagine some of your objections, reasonable ones too, to this profession—I hope I shall be able to relieve them. First I suppose you think that you have as it were thrown away money on my kind of apprenticeship for the Ministry; let your mind be easy on this score; for, in the first place, an University education fits a man about as much for being a ship-captain as a Pastor of souls: besides your money has by no means been thrown away, if the love of friends faithful and true, friends first seen and loved here, if this love is something priceless, and not to be bought again anywhere and by any means: if moreover by living here and seeing evil and sin in its foulest

[1] **G. E. Street (1824-81), a leading architect of the Gothic Revival. His office was in Beaumont Street, Oxford.**

[2] **Walthamstow Public Library. Printed by Mackail, i. 83-6.**

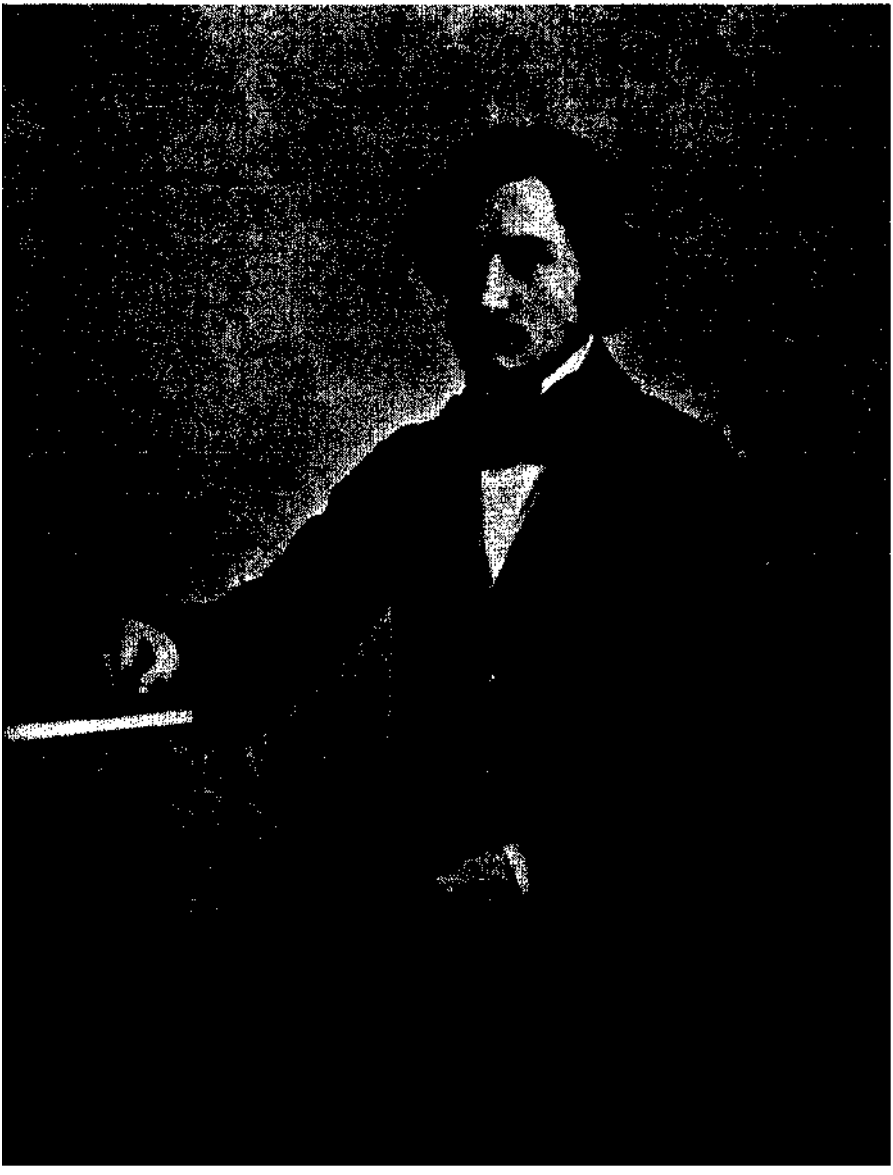
and coarsest forms, as one does day by day, I have learned to hate any form of sin, and to wish to fight against it, is not this well too? Think, I pray you, Mother, that all this is for the best: moreover, if any fresh burden were to be laid upon you, it would be different, but as I am able to provide myself [he had inherited £900 a year on coming of age] for my new course of life, the new money to be paid matters nothing. If I were not to follow this occupation I in truth know not what I should follow with any chance of success, or hope of happiness in my work; in this I am pretty confident I shall succeed, and make I hope a decent architect sooner or later: and you know too that in any work that one delights in, even the merest drudgery connected with it is delightful too. I shall be master too of a useful trade; one by which I should hope to earn money, not altogether precariously, if other things fail. I myself have had to overcome many things in making up my mind to this; it will be rather grievous to my pride and selfwill to have to do just as I am told for three long years, but good for it too, I think; rather grievous to my love of idleness and leisure to have to go through all the drudgery of learning a new trade, but good for that also. Perhaps you think that people will laugh at me, and call me purposeless and changeable; I have no doubt they will, but I in my turn will try to shame them, God being my helper, by steadiness and hard work. Will you tell Henrietta that I can quite sympathise with her disappointment, that I think I understand it, but I hope it will change to something else before long, if she sees me making myself useful; for that I will by no means give up things I have thought of for the bettering of the world in so far as lies in me.

You see I do not hope to be great at all in anything, but perhaps I may reasonably hope to be happy in my work, and sometimes when I am idle and doing nothing, pleasant visions go past me of the things that may be. You may perhaps think this a long silly letter about a simple matter, but it seems to me to be kindest to tell you what I was thinking of somewhat at length, and to try, if ever so unsuccessfully, to make you understand my feelings a little: moreover I remember speaking somewhat roughly to you when we had conversation last on this matter, speaking indeed far off from my heart because of my awkwardness, and I thought I would try to mend this a little now: have I done so at all?

To come to details on this matter. I purpose asking Mr Street of Oxford to take me as his pupil: he is a good architect, as things go

JANE MORRIS

aged about 18



WILLIAM MORRIS

aged 23

now, and has a great deal of business, and always goes for an honourable man; I should learn what I want of him if of anybody, but if I fail there (as I may, for I don't know at all if he would take a pupil) I should apply to some London architect, in which case I should have the advantage of living with you if you continue to live near London, and the sooner the better, I think, for I am already old for this kind of work. Of course I should pay myself the premium and all that.

My best love to yourself, and Henrietta, and Aunt, and all of them:

Your most affectionate son
William

P.S. May I ask you to show this letter to no one else but Henrietta.

To Cormell Price [?] [1]

Oxford
July 1856

I have seen Rossetti twice since I saw the last of you; spent almost a whole day with him the last time, last Monday, that was. Hunt [2] came in while we were there, a tallish, slim man with a beautiful red beard, somewhat of a turn-up nose, and deep set dark eyes: a beautiful man. . . . Rossetti says I ought to paint, he says I shall be able; now as he is a very great man, and speaks with authority and not as the scribes, I *must* try. I don't hope much, I must say, yet will try my best—he gave me practical advice on the subject. ... So I am going to try, not giving up the architecture, but trying if it is possible to get six hours a day for drawing besides office work. One won't get much enjoyment out of life at this rate, I know well, but that don't matter: I have no right to ask for it at all events—love and work, these two things only. ... I can't enter into politico-social subjects with any interest, for on the whole I see that things are in a muddle, and I have no power or vocation to set them right in ever so little a degree. My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another. . . .

Yet I shall have enough to do, if I actually master this art of painting: I dare scarcely think failure possible at times, and yet I know in my mind that my chances are slender; I am glad that I am compelled to try anyhow; I was slipping off into a kind of small (very small)

[1] From Mackail, i. 106-7.
[2] W. Holman Hunt (1827-1910), Pre-Raphaelite painter.

Palace of Art. . . . Ned and I are going to live together. I go to London early in August.[1]

[1] **In the autumn of this year Morris visited the Low Countries with Street. The visit fired his enthusiasm for painting, particularly for the works of Memling and Van Eyck, who remained for him ever after the absolute and unapproached masters of painting. It was after this visit that he modified for his own use Van Eyck's motto, 'Als ich Kanne', which became Morris's 'Si je puis'. Apart from *La Belle Iseult,* now in the Tate Gallery, Morris was next year at work on his first commission, *The Recognition of Sir Tristram by Iseult's Dog,* which remained unfinished. Studies for another picture, *Tristram and Iseult on the Ship,* exist, while at the time of his meeting with Jane Burden he painted his only recorded water-colour, *The Soldans Daughter in the Palace of Glass.* At this time he was also working at sculpture in wood and stone, and at illumination, besides writing poems and stories and working in Street's office.**

PART TWO

1861-70

Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.;
Red House; Queen Square; *Jason;*
The Earthly Paradise

Red House
Upton, Kent

To Ford Madox Brown [1] 18 January 1861

My dear Brown

Kid having appeared, Mrs Brown kindly says she will stay till Monday, when you are to come to fetch her, please. I send a list of trains in evening to Abbey Wood met by bus, viz., from London Bridge, 2.20 p.m., 6.0 p.m., and 7.15 p.m. Janey and kid (girl) are b oth very well.

8 Red Lion Square

To the Rev. F. G. Guy[2] 19 April 1861

My dear Guy

By reading the enclosed you will see that I have started as a decorator which I have long meant to do when I could get men of reputation to join me, and to this end mainly I have built my fine house [i.e. Red House, Upton]. You see we are, or consider ourselves to be, the only really artistic firm of the kind, the others being only glass painters in point of fact, (like Clayton & Bell) or else that curious nondescript mixture of clerical tailor and decorator that flourishes in Southampton Street, Strand; whereas we shall do—most things. However, what we are most anxious to get at present is wall-decoration, and I want to know if you could be so kind as to send me (without troubling yourself) a list of clergymen and others, to whom it *might* be any use to send a circular. In about a month we shall have some things to show in these rooms, painted cabinets, embroidery and all the rest of it, and perhaps you could look us up then: I suppose till the holidays you couldn't come down to Red

[1] **From Mackail i. 160-1. This letter announces the birth of Morris's eldest daughter, Jane Alice ('Jenny'). Among those at the christening were Rossetti, Madox Brown and Swinburne.**

[2] **From Mackail, i. 149-50. Morris's old tutor who coached him for matriculation to Oxford after leaving Marlborough. Guy was then headmaster of Bradfield College, for whose chapel Burne-Jones had designed three windows in 1857. Subsequently he was appointed Canon of St Albans. The prospectus referred to in this letter announces the inception of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., 'Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals'. See Appendix I.**

House: I was very much disappointed that you called when I was out before.

With kind regards to Mrs Guy, Believe me Yours very truly
William Morris

In bed, Red House
To Edward Burne-Jones[1] [November, 1865]

As to our palace of art, I confess your letter was a blow to me at first, though hardly an unexpected one: in short I cried, but I have got over it now; of course I see it from your point of view but I like the idea of not giving it up for good even if it is delusive. But now I am only thirty years old; I shan't always have the rheumatism, and we shall have lots of jolly years of invention and lustre plates together I hope. I have been resting and thinking of what you are to do: I really think you must take some sort of house in London—unless indeed you might think of living a little way out and sharing a studio in town: Stanhope and I might join in this you know. There is only one other thing I can think of, which is when you come back from 1 fastings come and stay with me for a month or two, there is plenty of room for everybody and everything: you can do your work quietly and uninterruptedly; I shall have a good horse by then and Georgie [2] and J. [Jane Morris] will be able to drive about, meantime you need not be hurried in taking your new crib. I would give £5 to see you old chap; wouldn't it be safe for you to come down here one day before you go to Hastings?

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To George Campjie,'d[3] 22 March 1866

My dear Campfield

We send money £5. I think I shall be coming on Monday, but if any of the fellows ask when, say you don't know; you must

[1] **From Mackail, i. 164-5. Morns was at this time recovering from an attack of rheumatic fever. The letter refers to the plan to build an additional wing to Red House for the Burne-Jones family and to remove the works of Morns, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. to Upton. By die end of the year, however, Red House was sold and Morns had mo ed to 26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury.**

[1] **Georgians Burne-Jones. Ruskin, writing to Charles Eliot Norton on 2 June 1861, says 'Jones is married too —he has got a little country violet with blue eyes & long eyelashes, & as good & sweet as can be.'**

[5] **Foreman of Morns, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. 'Mr Campfield was a glass-painter who came under Morris's notice as a pupil at the evening classes of the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street.' Mackail, i. 148-9.**

manage to finish next week, Leach and all of us. The escapades of our men have enraged the dons and they want to get rid of you. I send the two last cartoons and with them a cartoon of an angel piping for the triangular space below the crossing arch. You must draw the wings (gold) yourself as I don't quite know what would show, they must be something like this [drawing] make the figure white on a vermilion ground quite bright and don't put in all the lines the cartoon shows.—It will be Monday pretty certainly only don't say anything about it to dons: and burn this letter. Yours very truly

W. Morris

26 Queen Square

To the Rev. F. G. Guy[1] 25 November 1867

My dear Guy

The plan I think perfectly applicable to mosaic, but of course the designs want making out—avoid anything *spiky* in mosaic, it is too easy, and looks so. I don't think it is worth while using the material unless the work is very elaborate; and there ought to be a great deal of gold in it; the part between the bands ought also to be at least of marble or alabaster. I don't want to discourage any reasonable plan, but I should think panelling the proper thing for your east end, picked out with colour and gold if you please; the next best I should think would be hangings. I scarcely fancy mosaics on such a small scale, and they are the proper decorations of curved surfaces, domes, and are the concomitants of a round-arched style and great magnificence of decoration in general. But on the whole panelling is the thing; couldn't your friend paint some figures and things on the panels? Anyhow, I will help if you wish it, with the designs, whatever you settle on.

I have to thank you very much for your friendliness with reference to Jason—it makes me laugh to be in the position of nuisance to schoolboys. Yours very truly

W. Morris

[1] **From Mackail, i. 191-2. The decorative scheme referred to in this letter was the projected decoration of the chapel in the I[4] o rest School at Walthamstow.**

26 Queen Square

To D. G. Rossetti[1] Wednesday [1860s?]

My dear Gabriel

Thanks for letter: I have no objections to make, but we must settle how the thing can be done, as the money must be vested in trustees.

For the rest, your views of the meeting I think are not likely to be correct in any one point (except that Marshall will certainly be drunk) for I don't think *he* will venture to face the indignant members, I will tell you why to-morrow, which will be worth at least one grin to you, I flatter myself: Webb, Ned and Faulkner have all promised to come: and though Brown refuses, I have asked Watts[2] to attend (which he has promised to do) so as to report what we have to say to Brown. In short I consider it an important meeting, even if Brown don't come. Watts said he would press him to do so. I expect to see Watts to-day, & he *may* bring me news of Brown's being a little more reasonable though I confess I don't expect it.

We will talk the matter over to-morrow if you don't object.

Yours ever
William Morris

16, Cheyne Walk
Chelsea
3 December [1868]

My dear Sir[3]

I have read your poems several times and this is what I think about it—To begin with disagreeables it seems to me to lack the strong individuality and devotion to the subject which one looks for in works that are to last: and though I can't accuse you of plagiarism I see a reflection of the poets of the day in it; on this however I don't dwell, because it could hardly be otherwise in a man so young as you: but in fact it doesn't leave impression enough upon one, either in style or ideas: of minor faults (connected with this I think) I

[1] **Ashley Library 3688.**

[2] **Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914), who was a solicitor as well as a man of letters.**

[3] **Theodore, what's Dunton?' asked William De Morgan one day at Kelmscott, when, later in life, Watts assumed this name—a remark inaccurately ascribed to Whistler.**

[4] **From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* i. 639-41. This letter to a young poet who had asked Morris's opinion of his work was written from Rossetti's house.**

notice too much of the machinery of the Classic works, and too great length of metaphor: but let this pass till I can talk to you by word of mouth. On the other side the verse is good, and there are indications of feeling throughout, and of pleasure in the subject, (which is a very fine one) there is a great deal of care and thoughtfulness in it, and it is both pleasant and easy to read. This perhaps seems to you scant praise and liberal blame, but remember that I am criticising the poem entirely on its own merits; and that you have the inestimable advantage of being very young, and that you have (as I judge from your letters and position) a very close acquaintance with the Classics which may be rather overpowering in its influence at least on your *style*—I repeat that I want to see more *weight* in your work both of style and matter. But you must remember too that I was to say all I thought of this work, and I assure you that I think it quite good enough considering the circumstances (which must be considered in such cases) for me to have said nothing but praise of it; and I should very much regret if your experiment with me resulted in your being discouraged by having the opinion of one man who for aught you know may be a very bad critic; for I have no doubt you will do better things, (though this is good, I repeat) if you look at matters steadily and seriously, and do nothing but what you like very much yourself, finally you are yourself the best judge of what you are likely to turn out and your letters to me were full of such good sense and modesty that I have no doubt that you will give your insight of yourself full play.

I am anxious to see more of your work and should rather it were rhymed, I think blank verse a snare to young poets.

When you come to see me at Queen Sq: please let me know the day and time when you purpose a visit a day or two beforehand, so that we may not clash.

Again I must excuse myself for lecturing you, but as you have made me your schoolmaster I can't help it; but I am afraid it isn't at all in my line.

I thank you very much for your expressions of sympathy with me, and wish you the utmost success and remain Yours truly

William Morris

P.S. My old address in Queen Square will always find me: I keep your copy of the poem till I see you.

Fortuna, Bad-Ems

To Philip Webb[1] Saturday 31 July [1869]

Dearest Friend

That is really my address though it looks like chaff, and I am not likely to move now during the time of our captivity: I am so jolly glad to have got over the journey on no worse terms, once or twice I felt quite inclined to give in, but here we are. ... I paddled her[2] about the river in a machine like a butter-boat with a knife & fork for oars; this they call a gondola here; it is all very well for a mile or two while the river artificially deepened and widened is without stream (there is a weir and lock about a mile below our lodgings, but none above as far as Nassau at any rate, which is six miles above us) all very well without stream but presently the unlocked river was like a mill-race; I tried it the first day, and made about twenty yards in half an hour and then began to get back way; so I gave it up with hands blistered: however there is a nice green bank in shadow after 5 p.m., just this side of the rapids, and I suppose I shall paddle Janey there pretty often; till she gets better it is like to be her principal enjoyment as this carriage business shakes her up too much; if ('when' I hope) she gets better there are splendid mokes & mules here, whereon she may climb the hills: bating the company, which is not to my taste, though I've no doubt better than I am, the place is well enough, and a mile out of Ems is quite unsophisticate, except for the woods which look suspiciously like preserves: it is in fact a very lovely valley, though I think not the kind of place I should like to live in, one is so boxed in; it is rather like some of the Lake country but without the sour grow-nothing air of that soaking land. The valley is very narrow; first the river a ragged affair, with gravel banks and all perhaps as wide as the Thames at Clifton Hampden, then narrow green 'eres' sometimes on this side, sometimes on that, then the road on a sort of terrace, and then the hills, sometimes wall-sided cliffs, sometimes roundish well-cultivated downs wooded at the top; the roads have jolly fruit-trees each side of them and every good exposure has a vineyard looking very neat and shipshape, for they are just pruning them: everything seems to grow beautifully here, the apricots are stunning. ... At the top of

[1] **Architect (1831-1915) and partner in the Firm. Webb designed Morris's first and last houses—the Red House, Upton, and his grave-stone at Kelmscott.**

[1] **'The state of my mother's nealth was so disquieting that it was thought necessary for her to try the cure at Ems.'—May Morris, *Collected Works*, Vol. V., where the three letters from Ems appear.**

the gorge-side you come upon bold uplands of the Rhine country, all covered with grain and oilseed crops; but it is a strong pull to the top and till J. is better I am not like to be able to get fairly up; I had a try yesterday morning and was a sight for a tallow-boiler, but could scarcely get a glimpse and then was not fairly up: however, as I say, the country is a fine one in spite of my teeth. On our drive on Thursday we went through a funny ragged walled village; so German! and so precious precious ragged! not dirty hardly and scarcely squalid, but good Lord, how you and I and Charley would hare enjoyed a tramp up, or pull down this Lahn valley 11 years or so ago. . . . There are a few oldish houses here, our windows look right on to tlie principal one, a rum old seventeenth-century house, the old Kurhaus, I believe. They keep early hours here; the band woke us this morning at 7 with Luther's Hymn played in thundering style. . . . This morning I managed to scramble through Acontius and Cydippe; I have now got to knock it into shape; I am not sanguine about it. . . -[1]

Fortuna, Bad-Ems
To Philip Webb 15 August [1869]

Dearest Friend. ... A month yesterday we left London, and 3 weeks to-morrow we came here: I have some hopes that we shall be at home again in 3 weeks from to-day, but don't like to think too much about it though I catch myself now and then looking up the time-tables and considering which train we shall go to Cologne by. I get out for a walk every morning now, and if the weather looks well stretch my legs a bit, but always take a pocket book with me and do a little work. This morning I walked to Nassau and back, 12 miles in all; it is a pretty quiet little town higher up the Lahn; Stein, the great Prussian statesman who did for the high tory party in Prussia, was born there, was the swell of the place in fact. I also brought Paris's Death to an end roughly; again I'm not very sanguine about the merit of it; but I shall get through the work I set myself to do here in some way, and have a month to turn over the first of the tales before I go to press when I come home. . . .

[1] **Part of *The Earthly Paradise,***

Fortuna, Bad-Ems
To F. S. Ellis[1] 18 August 1869

Many thanks for your letter again, and the *Temple Bar*, which did not excoriate my thin hide in spite of a tender contempt with which Mr Austin seemed to regard me.[2] Commercially I suppose I ought to be grateful to him and am so; from the critical point of view I think there is so much truth as this in his article, as that we poets of to-day have been a good deal made by those of the Byron and Shelley time—however, in another sixty years or so, when it won't matter three skips of a louse to us (as it don't matter much more now), I suppose we shall quietly fall into our places. I get about three hours' walk (with a pocket-book, Mr Publisher) every morning, and am in roaring and offensive health, keeping country hours, woke by the band (with a hymn-tune) at seven every morning and going to bed at ten every night. I shall want about a fortnight after I come home before I begin to feed the free burgher of Berwick-upon-Tweed with my immortal MS., and after that I hope there will be no hitch. Believe me, the longest and heaviest of sticks is buzzing about my ears, as you would find out if you had passed a week at this skin-'em-alive place; I'm not quite sure now if I shan't have to be sold to the Prussian government to sweep up horse-dung in Ems streets (they are very particular about it)—my God, what a bad bargain I should be!

I have not got any good wine at Ems, and perhaps they don't charge for such as they sell you! but the Grunhauser at Cologne and Coblentz was jolly that hot weather. Did you ever speculate as to what they fed German sheep on? deep thought at breakfast time has led me to suppose india-rubber to be their pabulum—this is not very encouraging to your journey to Ems, but you see my wife is not strong enough to get to the restaurants here; I daresay we could get a tolerable dinner there.[3]

Fishing I have not tried yet; I am too lazy to look up proper baits.

[1] **From Mackail, i. 202-3. Publisher and bookseller, dealer in rare manuscripts and early printed books. At that time in business in King Street, Covent Garden, he later moved to Bond Street. He published *The Earthly Paradise* and became one of Morris's closest friends. He also took over *Jason*, which Morris had published at his own expense, from Bell & Daldy.**

[2] **Alfred Austin's article on Arnold and Morris was reprinted in *The Poetry of the Period* (1870). 'Mr Morris,' he wrote, 'has given the go-by to his age. . . . But in doing so not only has he not produced great poetry—he has evaded the very conditions on which alone the production of great poetry is possible.'**

[3] **Rossetti also visited Morris and did a drawing of him reading aloud to Janey, which he called 'The Ms at Ems'.**

The inside of a roll would be about as far as I should care to go. They don't seem to understand gentles at Ems; nor have I seen anybody trying either worms or minnow, though there must be perch here somewhere; I have seen some big chubs about. . . .

Bad-Ems
To Philip Webb 29 August [1869]

My Dearest Friend

I am at work still but have got the fidgets: I went a long walk in the heat of the day yesterday to get rid of them; walked over the uplands till I came to a wood through wh: I had a lonely walk of an hour, taking a forest road at hazard: I thought I had fairly lost my way but it befell that I took the right turning, for at last I came upon a green-painted seat which showed I was near Ems; I drank a small lake of Seltzer water & white wine afterwards & got rid of my thirst, but not my fidgets.

However, to-day much against the grain I wrote 120 lines but have still got the fidgets. I will write once at least again from here before we start & then from Cologne or Ghent or both.

Your most affectionate
W. M.

26 Queen's Square
Bloomsbury
To J. R. Thursfield[1] [1869]

Dear Sir

I am sorry you are in trouble about the works at the Union, and hope I shan't increase it by my letter: I can speak distinctly about two of the pictures in question, Mr Hughes', the one at the North end, and Mr Burne-Jones' (Nimue and Merlin). Of these I think the design of Mr Hughes to be quite among the best works of that painter, and a very beautiful and remarkable one: I think I have been told it is in a bad state; but I suppose something might be done to it. Mr Burne-Jones' is a beautiful work, and admirably suits its space as to decoration; it would be quite absurd to cover it up. Mr Pollen's, opposite Mr Hughes', was never finished; two others, one by Mr Prinsep, another by Mr Stanhope, though not very complete

[1] From Mackail, i. 124-5. Chairman of the Committee appointed 'to enquire into, and report upon, the history, condition and treatment of the paintings' originally executed on the walls of the new hall of the Oxford Union in 1857, now the library.

in some ways, yet looked very well in their places I think. As for my own, I believe it *has* some merits as to colour, but I must confess I should feel much more comfortable if it had disappeared from the wall, as I'm conscious of its being extremely ludicrous in many ways. In confidence to you I should say the whole affair was begun and carried out in too piecemeal and unorganized a manner to be a real success—nevertheless it would surely be a pity to destroy some of the pictures, which are really remarkable, and at the worst can do no harm there. I am sorry if this is 'cold comfort'; but I thought you would really like to know what I thought, and so here it is. I must thank you heartily however for the enthusiasm you have shown in the matter; and I wish I could be of more use to you.

Yours faithfully
William Morris

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] October [?, 1869]

. . . about him which nearly drives me mad when I am in an irritable humour: but I behaved very well, though I felt rather crushed among so many clever people, and didn't say much. Brown I thought a trifle too genteel for a bachelor party. I prefer his company when the Westland Marston element is absent—I am in short a narrow and monotonous bore—and being so, will not bore you any longer. Good-bye, and stand as long as you can

Your most loving friend
W. M.

Over page for 'October'. Show it to Ned if he is with you.

26 Queen Square
To Algernon Charles Swinburne[2] 21 December 1869

My dear Swinburne

Many thanks for your kind letter and the criticisms therein. I am delighted to have pleased you with the Gudrun. For the rest I am rather painfully conscious myself that the book[3] would have done me more credit if there had been nothing in it but the Gudrun, though I don't think the others quite the worst things I have done. Yet they are all too long and flabby, damn it! I am glad you see any-

[1] **Single leaf fragment on reverse side of 'October' from *The Earthly Paradise,* Walthamstow Public Library.**
[2] **Ashley Library 3871.** [3] ***The Earthly Paradise.***

thing to like in the Rhodope. I thought myself I had tried to make her too much of a character for the importance of the tale, which is such a very slight one. Acontius I know is a spoony, nothing less, and the worst of it is that if I did him over a dozen times I know I should make him just the same. I am hard at work now, but I am making blunder on blunder, and if I could find anything else that really amused me except writing verses I would give up that art for the present, for I am doing no good. Thorgerd plays a fine part in a beautiful episode of the Egils Saga, where Egil loses his favourite Sow, and is minded to starve himself to death because of it. I could tell you more about it when I saw you. The whole story is very remarkable, admirably written and full of incident, but the most distinctly northern of all the Sagas, and Egil himself a strange savage character, though his poetry seems to me to have been really fine, but quite untranslatable. I am about an Icelandic translation now, which quite throws all the other stories into the shade (for the story of Gudrun is told very disjointedly in the original, and generally in a bald way very different from Njala).

This is the Volsunga, the story of the Nibelungen in fact. I daresay you have read an abstract of it somewhere, but it would give you very little idea of the complete work. I should like very much to show you the translation, which is nearly finished now, you couldn't fail to be moved by it I'm sure.

I am proudly conscious of my position as the Christian poet of the age, though I must risk that position, first by communicating with you,and next by impugning the statement of holy writ, 'Blessed are those that seek, for they shall find', at least in my case.

Yours affectionately
W. Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury

To Professor Charles Eliot Norton[1] 21 December [1869]

My dear Norton

I suppose I had better waste neither invention nor materials in excuses for not writing, so I will only say how very glad I shall be to hear from you again despite my 'lachesse'. I don't know if you have my book by this time, or have begun to deal with its some-

From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* i. 471-3.

what elephantine bulk, wh: I should feel penitent about, only it is principally caused by the length of Gudrun which I feel sure is the best thing I have done—however no more of that. I have begun a translation of the 'Nibelungen' which I find very amusing; I have also another translation in hand, the Volsunga Saga viz. which is the Ice: version of the Nibelungen, older I suppose, and, to my mind, without measure nobler and grander: I daresay you have read abstracts of the story, but however fine it seemed to you thus, it would give you little idea of the depth and intensity of the complete work: here and there indeed it is somewhat disjointed, I suppose from its having been put together from varying versions of the same song; it seems as though the author-collector felt the subject too much to trouble himself about the niceties of art, and the result is something which is above all art; the scene of the last interview between Sigurd and the despairing and terrible Brynhild touches me more than anything I have ever met with in literature; there is nothing wanting in it, nothing forgotten, nothing repeated, nothing overstrained; all tenderness is shown without the use of a tender word, all misery and despair without a word of raving, complete beauty without an ornament, and all this in two pages of moderate print. In short it is to the full meaning of the word inspired; touching too though hardly wonderful to think of the probable author; some 12 century Icelander, living the hardest and rudest of lives, seeing few people and pretty much the same day after day, with his old religion taken from him and his new one hardly gained—It doesn't look promising for the future of art I fear. Perhaps you think my praise of the work somewhat stilted, but it has moved us one and all in the same way, and for my part I should be sorry to attempt reading aloud the scene I have told you of before strangers. I am not getting on well with my work, for in fact I believe the Volsunga has rather swallowed me up for some time past, I mean thinking about it, for it hasn't taken me long to do. I had it in my head to write an epic of it, but though I still hanker after it, I see clearly it would be foolish, for no verse could render the best parts of it, and it would only be a flatter and tamer version of a thing already existing. . . .

Yrs. affectionately
W. Morris

26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury
London

To Mrs William Morris [15 March 1870]

Dearest Janey

I am glad to hear from Bessy that you are better. I hope (rather against hope) that you are not deadly dull. I have been hard at work, but have not done much except the translations as they are rather pressing now, and I want to get all my Volsung work done this week: then I shall set to work about Gabriel's review, wh: I must say rather terrifies me.[1] I dined at Leyton on Saturday. Rendal came to fetch me: he is gotten awfully fat: has taken a house at Acton (close to London) and is thinking of setting up a poultry farm there: which I think rather a good idea if he will stick to it, and is pretty lucky.

Henrietta has been eating eggs all the week (apropos of poultry) she didn't seem to like them on Saturday, but made out with a nice mince pie—Ned was to have come to see me on Sunday at 6 o'clock: I waited till to 10 and then went to North End to see him, and he came in presently having come to me about 5 minutes after I went out; he is not in condition, poor sad dog! I read him my stanzas for the Volsunga and he thought them good. As for other news: our lamp is now fairly broken, and I must look about for a new one: I don't know what to get—I did hope to be able to give you the news of my hair being cut this morning, but I had to stay in fair-copying for Strangeways.

I send you a *Spectator* with a review,[2] not bad as things go. Its awfully cold here, but sunny—to my comfort, as I suppose it must be tolerably pleasant in the sun on the parade down there—I shall write to the littles in a day or two and try to find something pretty to send them: why haven't the little rascals written to me? I hope you find the lodgings pretty comfortable—Bessy seems rather disposed to go down to you, I suppose you would find room for her there.

Please write soon and tell us how you are and if you want books or anything.

Your loving
W. M.

[1] **Morris's review of Rossetti's *Poems* appeared in *The Academy* for 14 May of this year.**
[2] **Of *The Earthly Paradise, Vo s.I-ll.***

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs Coronio[1] [April 1870]

My dear Mrs Coronio

If you will be at home I will call on Tuesday, and bring you your worsted. Ned says you want to know how to read Chaucer; I will bring a vol: in my pocket, and with your leave will induct you into the mystery, wh: is not very deep after all: many thanks for your kind note—I have done my review [i.e. of D. G. Rossetti's *Poems* just this moment—ugh!

Yours very truly
W. M-

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris Good Friday

(at least Bessy seems to have gone to church) [15 April 1870]

Dearest Janey

Many thanks for note: I was glad to hear from you: I thought the wine would be useful: I went to Holland Park on Wednesday; and it seems they had heard lately of Stillman's[2] affairs, and were rather full of them: I went by invitation to see Aglaia's house yesterday afternoon & saw both the ladies, who were still on the subject. I am going to sit to Watts[3] this afternoon, though I have got a devil of a cold-in-the-head, which don't make it very suitable. It will be so precious dull here till after Monday: how I do hate Easter, second only to Christmas: however I'm going to Ley ton on Monday: I make no doubt I shall come down to you Wednesday afternoon but will write again meantime. My cold makes me stupid today so I will shut up.

Your loving
W. Morris

[1] **Aglaia, one of the daughters of Alexander Constantine Ionides, of Tulse Hill, a wealthy Greek merchant and a patron of the Pre-Raphaelites.**

[2] **W. J. Stillman, American journalist and man of letters, for many years *Times* correspondent in Rome. He married Marie Spartali, who frequently posed for Rossetti. She was Mrs Morris's nearest friend.**

[3] **G. F. Watts, 1817-1904. Now in the National Portrait Gallery, London.**

Tuesday
To Mrs William Morris [25 April 1870]

Dearest Janey

Many thanks again for note: I am so rejoiced that you keep well; I scarcely dared hope you would get so much better. On Sunday I did a good day's work at the Venusberg [1] and sat up till 3 last night writing it all out, I think I may finish this last part this week, but then I have to rewrite a good deal of the earlier part. I had a pleasant evening on Friday with Brown and HiifFer: Ellis came in later and quite distinguished himself in the way of talk. I have just parted from Gabriel (and oysters) at Rules: he is pleased with his binding and so am I, the book seems selling well 250 copies.[2] I should think Stillman's remarks showed his genuine taste: I dont suppose him to be a delicate or discriminative judge of female beauty. I have sent in my review: I read it to Brown on Friday and he thought it good: the editor has asked me to write a notice on the Academy pictures this year, but I have refused, as there wouldn't be a dozen pictures that I could speak of without using more forcible words than people expect to see in print. I don't suppose the Volsungs will be out till the end of next week, the block is promised me by Tuesday; I have pretty much outworn my impatience about it by now; I am going to receive Aglaia's bland flatteries on my way to Ned's this afternoon—I do rather wish she wouldn't butter me so, if that isn't ungrateful, so you needn't chaff me as one who can't see the fun of it: I shall certainly come down for a day or two next week and fetch you up when you are ready to be fetched—do you want any more wine? I am with love Yourloving

W.M.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris Saturday [3 October 1870]

Dearest Janey

It was a great relief to know that you are better; I daresay getting home to something more amusing than—well—I send a P.O.O. for £5 drawn by William Morris in favour of Jane do: will that do? I shall be so glad of you dear, when you come home. Picture is hung up again; perhaps it looks better, but I can't see much

[1] **'The Hill of Venus',** ***The Earthly Paradise,*** **Vol. IV.** [2] **Rossetti's** ***Poems.***

difference, one *can't* see it and never will be able in that room. Meanwhile the rooms looks very little altered for the new paper: the paint looks queer and 'foxy'. The book won't be out till Tuesday; so its no use sending one down to you—As to the coming back: if you will let me know in case they are not coming on Thursday next, and you have made up your mind to come that day, I will come down Tuesday night or Wednesday morning, and bring you up: for I'm quite sure you oughtn't to make the journey alone, poor little dear. As for living, dear, people like you speak about don't know either what life or death means, except for one or two supreme moments of their lives, when something pierces through the crust of dullness and ignorance, and they act for the time as if they were sensitive people.

For me I don't think people really want to die because of mental pain, that is if they are imaginative people; they want to live to see the play played out fairly—they have hopes that they are not conscious of— Hillao! here's cheerful talk for you. I beg your pardon, dear, with all my heart.

I am going this afternoon to get a little sentiment out of Aglaia, in case she's in: she is making quite a fine thing of her bookbinding by the way.

Its horribly cold here whatever it may be at Torquay: though it will seem that those sort of places are always hot when they ought to be cool, and cool when they ought to be warm.

Goodbye dear child, love to all kinswomen.

Your most loving
William Morris

Queen Sq.
Wednesday Morning
[November 1870]

To Miss Ionides[1]

Dear Miss Ionides

I have just picked up a fine specimen of a cold and sore-throat; and dursn't face the white frost this evening: will you please make excuses for me all round: I am very much vexed, but I really dursn't come, I get so knocked up by my colds: my wife is bad too; in bed these three days with sciatica and lumbago so we ain't particularly cheerful down here!

Yours very truly
W. Morris

[1] **Sister to Mrs Coronio.**

Queens Sq.

To Mrs William Morris Friday [26 November 1870]

Dearest Janey

I am so glad to hear of your well-doing: many thanks for your note: my cold is nearly gone: I am still hard at work over the proofs: [1] but 'twill soon be all done: I expect to get a copy or two by about the 3rd in wh: case you will have it down there; but I don't suppose the book will be published before the 10th: the other vols, have been moving a bit these past days; and Colvin's article has appeared;[2] which I send herewith: I think it may be considered satisfactory: The weather has got beautiful here when it don't rain: but it rains a good bit. I went yesterday to order myself some new clothes: but was so alarmed at the chance of turning up something between a game keeper and a methodist parson, that I brought away some patterns in my hand to show Webb: but haven't seen him yet. I heard the thunder on Tuesday night & was astonished by it. I feel rather lost at having done my book: I find now I liked working at it better than I thought. I must try and get something serious to do as soon as may be: best love to all of them. Tell Emmie I shall have a Christmas present for her which I hope may tend in some degree towards counteracting a youth spent in—ah!— Have the kids written? Such a rumpus this morning May enjoying a good tease and Jenny expressing herself in boo hoo.

I am with best love Your loving
William Morris

[1] Of *The Earthly Paradise,* Vol. IV.
[2] Sidney Colvin's review of *The Earthly Paradise,* Vols. I—III.

PART THREE

1871-80

Kelmscott; Iceland; Break with Rossetti; Dyeing and Tapestry Work; Sigurd; Kelmscott House, Hammersmith; Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; Eastern Question Association; Voyage of the Ark from Hammersmith to Kelmscott

To C. J. Faulkner[1] 17 May 1871

I have been looking about for a house for the wife and kids, and whither do you guess my eye is turned now? Kelmscott, a little village about two miles above Radcott Bridge—a heaven on earth; an old stone Elizabethan house like Water Eaton, and such a garden! close down on the river, a boat house and all things handy. I am going there again on Saturday with Rossetti and my wife: Rossetti because he thinks of sharing it with us if the thing looks likely. . . .

To Jane Alice and May Morris Reykjavik, Iceland

Dear little daughters

Isn't it funny that I am writing to you from Iceland: I got here safe & sound about 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon; we had a good voyage, and I was not very sick: one day we saw porpoises a long way off and when they saw the ship they swam after it as far as they could, jumping out of the water so that you could see them all: they soon came up with the ship and played about her: it made one laugh so, because they looked like oiled pigs: We first saw Iceland about 3 o'clock on Thursday morning: that was at a place called Bernfirth; it looked very wonderful, for there was a huge mountain like this [drawing] with clouds all round it: we saw several whales that morning: afterwards we sailed along the coast & saw great ice mountains with rivers of ice looking as if they were running into the sea: this is a funny little town with more poneys than men in it, and we are lodging in such a queer little cottage, but very clean: We have bought 20 poneys for our journey tomorrow if all goes well: it is a very bright beautiful day to-day and very warm.

I hope you are very good and are kind to Mama and that you are happy at Kelmscott: it is not much like Iceland I can tell you. I send you some wild thyme I plucked this morning in the fields close by here: there are many pretty flowers about, but no trees at all; not even a bush about here, but the mountains are very beautiful.

[1] **From Mackail, i. 225-6. Fellow and Mathematical Tutor at University College, Oxford. When Morris moved to London he resigned his position and started work in an engineer's office, keeping the books of the Firm in his spare time. Later he returned to Oxford and became a rallying point of Socialism there. He accompanied Morris on his voyages to Iceland and other travels.**

I send kisses and love, my littles, and goodbye: I am writing to Mama too: I am your most affectionate father
William Morris

Reykjavik, Iceland
To Mrs William Morris 16 July 1871

Well, my dear, here I am safe and quite well: I have written to the littles too, because I thought it would be fun for them: all goes well and we start up country tomorrow with 20 horses, such jolly little fellows the poneys are; they almost look as if they would talk: We had a very good and swift voyage out on the whole: the first day it was very calm, and so on the next morning (we didn't sail till Sunday at 6 am) but after we passed the Orkneys we got a very heavy sea for some hours, and I was sick though not very ill, C.J. F. being pretty much prostrate; that was on Monday; on Tuesday morning about 7 we reached Thorshaven in the Faroes, and went ashore for 12 hours: we went a long walk over the hills on the most beautiful of days and it was so calm that evening that the captain was able to thread the labyrinth of the islands, and a most wonderful sight it was: I have seen nothing out of a dream so strange as our coming out of the last narrow sound into the Atlantic, and leaving the huge wall of rocks astern in the shadowless midnight twilight: nothing I have ever seen has impressed me so much: we saw no land all Wednesday wh: was a very cold bleak day, though the wind was fair: but on Thursday morning about 3 Mag: called me up to see Iceland: I think I told you we were to go to Bernfirth in the east first of all; and we were just at the entrance to it now; it is no use trying to describe it, but it was quite up to my utmost expectations as to strangeness: it is just like nothing else in the world: it was a wild morning too, very black out to sea, and very bright sun under a sort of black canopy over Iceland: we coasted all that day and had fine weather at first, as we passed by the stupendous mass of glaciers they call Vatnajokull, where ice-rivers seem to run fairly into the sea: we sailed by Orcefajokull too with fair weather; it is the highest mountain in Iceland: after that the clouds settled on the land & it began to rain and blow & the sea soon ran very high: but the wind was fair & the ship went very fast: about 9 P.M. we were opposite Njal's country and the clouds lifted a corner there to show a watery copper & green sunset very splendid: then about 2 am on Friday we made the Westman Islands, & stopped there to give & take letters: they were some

time coming off and we had a good view of that wild collection of rocks, in which there showed great caves, with little beaches to them, a rare matter in the rocky coast we had seen: it was a doleful sight rather to see the poor chaps going back again in their walnut shell of a boat with 3 letters wh: was all their post: Next morning we had a good knocking about before we reached Reykjavik but I had got my sea-legs by then, and didn't mind it much: we got to Reykjavik about 3 in the afternoon this day (Friday) and went ashore soon, and were taken by Mags: to the house of one of his kinsfolk and are quite comfortable a-nights on the floor of a very small clean room, and are abundantly fed: the town itself might be in Canada, and is quite commonplace, but all the houses seem clean—inside. We three worked hard at repacking all yesterday—and Oh my dear—do you remember the parcel from the Cooperative Store that they ought to have taken out of our case, and didn't send in time to do it? well many a speculation we had as to what it could be, whether good to eat, drink or wear; and I for my part said: perhaps it will be Floriline and hair brushes—excitement there was when we got to it —and—may I never be forgiven if it did not contain these articles—

1st 2 doz. bottles of scents.
Item 2 doz. do of *Floriline*
Item 1 large box of violet powder

There! there! there! here is a laugh to end with: we howled so over it that we nearly killed the landlady with curiosity to know what it was all about.

Please dear Janey be happy & don't forget the date of letter to me. The boat starts back for England Sept 1st so I hope to be at home about the 8th (in London I mean) if you are still at Kelmscott I will come at once to see you. Be happy. I am with all love

Your most affectionate
William Morris

11 August [1871]
Stykkisholme on
To Mrs William Morris Broadfirth, Iceland

Dearest Janey

This is a little sort of town by the seaside, a trading station, and there is come into the haven a Danish schooner from Isafyorde (Icefirth) that will sail for Liverpool in a day or two: he the merchant

has kindly offered to take letters for us and so [as] there seems a chance of their reaching you before I do, I write. I have little time however as we go early tomorrow morning: I am tremendous in health and in very *[fair* crossed out] good spirits, and enjoy the riding very much: the poneys are delightful little beasts, and their amble is the pleasantest possible means of travelling: everybody has behaved charmingly; even I have not lost my temper often: C.J.F. (from the other side of the table) begs to state that he would have been better tempered had it not been that riding has not been as enjoyable to him as to me, & even a black sheep skin has not made his saddle as soft as by rule of 3 it ought to be. We shan't get through above our stores I fancy, people have been so hospitable: there has been but little roughing it, and I find sleeping in a tent very comfortable work even when the weather is very cold: the weather has been cold, and rather broken till the last few days: last Tuesday week we had a very bad day, riding over the wilderness in the teeth of a tremendous storm of snow rain and wind; it was an 8 hours job but I was not a penny the worse for it next morning. You've no idea what a good stew I can make, or how well I can fry bacon under difficulties. I have seen many marvels and some terrible pieces of country; I slept in the homefield of Njal's house, and Gunnar's, and at Herdholt: I have seen Bjarj and Bethstead and the place where Bolli was killed, and am now hours ride from Holyfell where Gudrun died: I was there yesterday and from its door you see a great sea of terribly inky mountains tossing about: there has been a most wonderful sunset this evening that turned them golden though: the firth we look on here is full of little islands that breed innumerable eider ducks, and a firth we crossed yesterday was full of swans: Give dear love to the little ones and tell them I am going to try to bring them my pretty grey poney home; but if I don't they must not be disappointed for there may be difficulties or he may not turn out well: his name is Falcon, and when he is in good condition he ambles beautifully; fast and deliciously soft; he is about 13 hands high. I wish you could see us to understand how jolly it is when we have got a good piece of road, and the whole train of 28 horses is going a good round trot, the tin cups tinkling and the boxes rattling (my word how the shine is taken off them!) I must 'premise' however that I am dirtier than you might like to see me: my breeches are a triumph of blackness, but not my boots, by Jove! I may mention in passing that an Icelandic bog is not good riding, and that the loose stones on

the edge of a lava-field is like my idea of a half-ruined Paris barricade: that there are no lice in Iceland and that itch is unknown: but Evans deposeth that there are fleas galore—however they dont bite —me.

Goodbye, my dear, I have so often thought of the sweet fresh garden at Kelmscott and you and the little ones in it, and wished you happy—Please write to mother with my best love: I would have written but time presses strongly—goodbye with all love.

Your loving
William Morris

To [?][1] August-September 1871

There, it was worth doing and has been of great service to me. I was getting nervous and depressed and very much wanted a rest, and I don't think anything would have given me so complete a one.[2]

We have taken a little place deep down in the country, where my wife and the children are to spend some months every year, as they did this—a beautiful and strangely naif house, Elizabethan in appearance though much later in date, as in that out of the way corner people built Gothic till the beginning or middle of last century. It is on the S.W. extremity of Oxfordshire, within a stone's throw of the baby Thames, in the most beautiful grey little hamlet called Kelmscott.

To Mrs Alfred Baldwin[3] September 1871

I think I should have plenty to tell you of my travels if I saw you, but I am the worst of letter writers; besides I made a sort of journal which I intend writing out, perhaps may manage to do so to part of it in time to send Georgie while she is staying with you, and then you can read it if you care to; anyhow you shall see it when it is done if you like, though I believe it will be but a poor specimen of its class. Moreover, I confess to a dread of setting to work on it[4]: it is true that the journey was altogether successful, and that I think I have gained in many ways by it; but it seems such a long way off now, and

[1] From *Memorials of Edward Bur ne-J ones* by G. B-J., ii. 24.
[2] I.e. as the trip to Iceland.
[3] From Mackail i. 273-4. Daughter of the Rev. G. B. Macdonald, sister of Georgiana Burne-Jones and mother of Stanley Baldwin. Another of her sisters was the mother of Rudyard Kipling, while another married Sir E. J. Poynter, P.R.A.
[4] This journal of the first visit to Iceland, together with that of the second visit two years later, forms **Vol. VIII** of the Collected Works. These journals were never published during Morris's lifetime, though they contain some of his finest descriptive writing in prose. Extracts are given by Mackail i. **242-73.**

there is a bit of one's life gone; and the world so much the narrower to me because of it: and when I look over it I am afraid of having to grin sourly at this bit of enthusiasm, and be puzzled at that bit of high spirits; and note here how I refused to acknowledge a disappointment, and there how I pretended not to be weary—and in short—all the rest of it; something in its way like looking at a drawerful of old letters—if anybody ever did venture on such a bold act, which I doubt,

I rather miss the mountains, I must say, which is not what I expected, for I used to consider myself a hater of them: to-day I had to go out on business to a place near Wimbledon and there was what people called a pretty view there, and I thought how dull it looked, and that after all people were right to build villas and plant red geraniums about it: my own little old house by Lechlade though is sweet and innocent enough, and though it has a sadness about it, which is not gloom but the melancholy born of beauty I suppose, it is very stimulating to the imagination. I am going down there on Saturday, where I expect to enjoy myself making the acquaintance of the little pony that carried me in my six week's ride, the bravest and best tempered of little beasts: you should have seen him picking his way in one of those dismal bogs, where if you sneeze, the earth, or rather the roots of the grass, trembles violently: they say, however, that the Icelandic ponies get lazy among the fat pastures and soft air of England—small blame to them.

Kelmscott

To Mrs Burne-Jones [?][1] 13 February 1872

I have come down here for a fortnight to see spring beginning, a sight I have seen little of for years, and am writing among the gables and rook-haunted trees, with a sense of the place being almost too beautiful to live in. I have been in trouble with my own work, which I couldn't make to march for a long time; but I think I have now brought it out of the maze of re-writing and despondency, though it is not exactly finished. . . .

Queen Square

To Mrs Alfred Baldwin[2] 22 June 1872

Dear Louie

Herewith I send by book-post my abortive novel: it is just a specimen of how not to do it, and there is no more to be said there-

[1] From Mackail i. 280-1. [2] From Mackail i. 287-8.

of: 'tis nothing but landscape and sentiment: which thing won't do. Since you wish to read it, I am sorry 'tis such a rough copy, which roughness sufficiently indicates my impatience at having to deal with prose. The separate parcel, paged i to 6, was a desperate dash at the middle of the story to try to give it life when I felt it failing: it begins with the letter of the elder brother to the younger on getting *his* letter telling how he was going to bid for the girl in marriage. I found it in the envelope in which I had sent it to Georgie to see if she could give me any hope: she gave me none, and I have never looked at it since. So there's an end of my novel-writing, I fancy, unless the world turns topsides under some day. Health and merry days to you, and believe me to be Your affectionate friend,

William Morris

Queen Sq. 8 October

To Mrs Coronio 1872

My dear Aglaia

I wrote you a letter some three weeks ago, and enclosed it to your mother: so I suppose you will get it some time or other: I am sorry you have been disappointed of it since you are so kind as to set any store by my letters. In case you don't get it however I will repeat the chief news about myself, which is that I am bringing out my *Love is Enough* next month without the woodcuts, as there seemed no immediate chance of Ned going on with them: it has been all in the printer's hands some time now and we shall publish at the end of November: I should hope that you will be back earlier than would make it any use to send you a copy out there. Other news is little of me: I am working hard at the Icelandic translations, and I am also doing things for the firm: On Sunday last I spent the afternoon at the Grange and Ned and I went a walk about Hammersmith to see if we could find any house to let thereabout, but saw little or nothing: Yesterday I was up there again, and we went in great excitement to look at a house in that row of houses in the high road just before you come to North End: but it turned out altogether too small and wretched: Ned was very much disappointed. I dined afterwards at your aunt's and thought Mary looking very well. I have been backwards and forwards to Kelmscott a good deal this summer & autumn; but shall not go there so often now as Gabriel is come there, and talks of staying there permanently: of course he

won't do that, but I suppose he will stay some time: he is quite well and seems very happy.

I ought to be able to write you a long letter, and should very much like to, but I never felt so dry and stupid in my life as this morning. My work is absorbing me very much now, though it is not of the most serious: tonight I am going down to Cambridge to spend a day reading Icelandic with Magniisson.

The weather has been lovely here this autumn, but doesn't seem to have suited me very well, I have been queer several times, and am not very brilliant today—As to my mental health—I have had ups and downs as you may very easily imagine: but on the whole I suppose I am getting less restless and worried, if at the same time less hopeful, still there is life in me yet I hope. I am sorry you seem to find Athens a disappointment; but I can imagine how revolting the contrast must be between modern smartness and the ancient glory: I suppose too there are little or no remains of any mediaeval buildings or few even of the earlier Byzantine, that history has to take a jump from the Acropolis to the stock exchange. . . .

Goodbye I am Your affectionate
William Morris

To Mrs Coronio

Queen Sq:
24 October 1872

My dear Aglaia

I am so grieved to hear of your troubles though I hope by the time you get this they may be bettered. I don't wonder that you crave for more comforts: for 'tis a different thing (since you compare Iceland and Athens) to sit over a sick child with nothing particular to do, and to get up every morning for a ride in the fresh air, not caring where you are to be at night, and in short with no sort of responsibility or anxiety about you. I am quite distressed that you should be so worried: I was hoping by the tone of your first letter that you would be having a not uncomfortable time of it with pleasant memories for time to come. When are you coming back again? you know how much I miss you so there is no need of talking of that any more. I should have answered your last letter before; but I have had a fit of low spirits—for no particular reason that I could tell—which is over now for the present I hope. I am and have been hard at work on the Icelandic translations principally but my book

will be published in about a months time. I suppose you see that Tennyson is publishing another little lot of Arthurian legend. We all know pretty well what it will be; and I confess I don't look forward to it. I went down to Kelmscott on Saturday last till Tuesday, and spent most of my time on the river: it ought to cool you in dusty Athens there to hear of my Sunday on the Thames: a bitter north-east wind and pouring rain almost all day long: however I enjoyed it on the whole, and Monday was fine & warm, so the *days* went well enough: but Lord how dull the evenings were! with William Rossetti also to help us. Janey was looking and feeling much better. It was such a beautiful morning when I came away, with a faint blue sky and thin far away white clouds about it: the robbins hopping and singing all about the garden. The fieldfares, which are a winter bird and come from Norway are chattering all about the berry trees now, and the starlings, as they have done for two months past, collect in great flocks about sunset, and make such a noise before they go off to roost. The place looks as beautiful as ever though somewhat melancholy in its flowerless autumn gardens. I shall not be there much now I suppose. We are looking after a house in the west of London still; but a tolerable one after my wishes seems hard to find. I am going to stay for a day or two with Ned next week I fancy. I have had a hardish time of it here all alone with Bessy; with whom I seldom exchange any word that is not necessary. What a wearing business it is to live with a person with whom you have nothing whatever to do! I am afraid my letters are stupid: one needs the flint and steel of question and answer to exchange any ideas to any purpose—and after all one has so much to say that unless by some special luck one wanders about without fixing on any real subject at all.

Goodbye and I hope to hear better news of you soon.

I am Your affectionate
William Morris

Queen Square
To Mrs Cor onto 25 November [1872]

Dear Aglaia

Many thanks for your letter: I am very glad to hear that you are getting better; though indeed I heard from Webb some little time ago that so it was.

Janey has just come back from Kelmscott last Saturday, and is

very well apparently, and in good spirits certainly. I suppose you will have heard before this reaches you all about Mary's illness and how very ill she has been; though I hope it will all come right now. I did not see Ned for a fortnight, and Georgie scarcely more: it was a dismal time for all of us; but as aforesaid I hope it is well over. I dined at the Grange last Saturday, and found Ned in good spirits: he himself has not been well at all quite apart from other matters. I am going with Janey tomorrow to look at a house in Hammersmith in 'Theresa Terrace': it is Mason the painter's house, who died about a month ago. We must, it seems, turn out of this house next spring for Wardle wants it all for the business. I confess I don't look with pleasure at the prospect of moving; one gets a bit used to a house, even when as with me one feels as if living in a furnished lodging. However I shall keep my old study with the little bedroom still.

When I said there was no cause for my feeling low, I meant that my friends had not changed at all towards me in any way and that there had been no quarrelling: and indeed I am afraid it comes from some cowardice or unmanliness in me. One thing wanting ought not to go for so much: nor indeed does it spoil my enjoyment of life always, as I have often told you: to have real friends and some sort of an aim in life is so much, that I ought still to think myself lucky: and often in my better moods I wonder what it is in me that throws me into such rage and despair at other times. I suspect, do you know, that some such moods would have come upon me at times even without this failure of mine. However that may be, though I must confess that this autumn has been a specially dismal time with me. I have been a good deal in the house here—not alone, that would have been pretty well—but alone with poor Bessy. I must say it is a shame, she is quite harmless and even good, and one ought not to be irritated with her—but O my God what I have suffered from finding [her] always there at meals and the like! poor soul 'tis only because she is an accidental person with whom I have nothing whatever to do. I am so glad to have Janey back again: her company is always pleasant and she is very kind & good to me—furthermore my intercourse with G. [Georgiana Burne-Jones] has been a good deal interrupted; not from any coldness of hers, or violence of mine; but from so many untoward nothings: then you have been away so that I have had nobody to talk to about things that bothered me: which I repeat I have felt more than I, in my ingratitude, expected to. Another quite selfish business is that Rossetti

has set himself down at Kelmscott as if he never meant to go away; and not only does that keep me from that harbour of refuge (because it is really a farce our meeting when we can help it) but also he has all sorts of ways so unsympathetic with the sweet simple old place, that I feel his presence there as a kind of slur on it: this is very unreasonable though when one thinks why one took the place, and how this year it has really answered that purpose: nor do I think I should feel this about it if he had not been so unromantically discontented with it & the whole thing which made me very angry and disappointed. There, dear Aglaia, see how I am showing you my pettinesses! *please* don't encourage me in them; but you have always been so kind to me that they will come out. O how I long to keep the world from narrowing on me, and to look at things bigly and kindly!

I am going to try to get to Iceland next year, hard as it will be to drag myself away from two or three people in England: but I know there will be a kind of rest in it, let alone the help it will bring me from physical reasons. I know clearer now perhaps than then what a blessing & help last year's journey was to me; what horrors it saved me from. But if I cannot go, I shall have a fortnight or so on the river as *apis alter.*

My poem is out now. You have not answered me as to whether I shall send it to you or not; nor have you told me when you are coming home, but your aunt told me incidentally the other day that you wouldn't be back till February; which seems a long time to me. Please write again soon to me: there was rather a long space between your last two letters.

Forgive my rambling and most egotistical letter and

Believe me Your affectionate
William Morris

P.S. Many thanks about the pods: I will leave it all to you. You have a pretty taste in such matters.

To Mrs Coronio

Queen Sq:
23 January [1873]

My dear Aglaia

I must ask your pardon for not answering your last kind letter before: but the fact is I have been waiting for a cheerful time to come to me, for I have been very dull and bad company; but as the cheerful time wont come I must ee'n write uncheerful for fear

you should put down my silence to unfriendliness, which I hope may be far from me: also don't be alarmed for any domestic tragedy; nothing has happened to tell of and my dullness comes all out of my own heart; and—in short I am ashamed of it and don't like talking of it. I haven't sent you a copy of my book because ist I heard from your mother that you had had one sent from elsewhere, and 2nd because I have kept a big paper copy in which I will write your name as soon as I see you [i.e. *Love is Enough].*

And now for news, such as I have got—and this time I really have a little: for we have cleared out of Queen Sq. as far as our domesticity is concerned: I keep my study and little bedroom here, and I daresay as time goes on shall live here a good deal: for the rest we have taken a little house on the Turnham Green road, about 20 minutes walk from the Hammersmith station; and otherwise easy to get at because of the omnibuses: it is a *very* little house with a pretty garden, and I think will suit Janey and the children: it is some hours walk from the Grange which makes it quite a little way for me; on the other hand I can always see anyone I want at Queen Sq: quite safe from interruption: so in all ways it seems an advantage—does it not? Withal I never have had any sentiment of affection for this house, though so much has happened to me while I have lived here: I have always felt myself like nothing but a lodger here. Nevertheless there is something profoundly dismal about the empty rooms here that strikes a chill on one. By the way I forgot one most decided advantage about the change—to wit, that Bessy will no longer live with us: rejoice with me over that. Now I will break off for today and see if tomorrow will bring me anything pleasanter to say.

Jan: 24th. Well I *am* in better spirits strange to say: nay in good spirits for the time being howsoever that comes about—by little matters not worth talking of. I am going to have the little ones home to Turnham Green today: 'tis a month since I have seen them. Jenny is 12 years old now: bless us how old I'm getting.

Except the work for the firm, in which I am rather busy, I am doing nothing now but translations: I should be glad to have some poem on hand, but it's no use trying to force the thing: and though the translating lacks the hope and fear that makes writing original things so absorbing, yet at any rate it is amusing and in places even exciting.

I fancy the Iceland voyage will be a necessity to me this year: sometimes I like the idea of it, and sometimes it fills me with dismay:

but I think 'tis pretty certain to do me good if I come back safe from it.

I hope to hear in your next letter to me that you are coming back soon. Goodbye. I am Your affectionate
William Morris

To Mrs Coronio[1] *11* 26, Queen Square
February 1873

My dear Aglaia

You see our letters crossed: and I'm glad I wrote to excuse myself before I got your letter taking me to task. I am in much better condition now than I was when I wrote last: I suppose the change has done me good: we are quite settled in our new house, and I find it very pleasant: my own room is particularly cheerful and pretty, and I can work in it with a much better heart than in the dingy room at Queen Square. I go most days to the Square though, and come back when I feel inclined, or not at all when I feel inclined: all this involves a good deal of walking, which, no doubt, is good for me: it seems quite a ridiculously little way to the Grange now, after the long way it used to be. Last Sunday, Ned came to breakfast with me, and we had a pleasant hour or two. I am very hard at work with one thing or another; firm's work for one thing. I should very much like to make the business quite a success, and it can't be, unless I work at it myself. I must say, though I don't call myself money-greedy, a smash on that side would be a terrible nuisance; I have so many serious troubles, pleasures, hopes and fears, that I have not time on my hands to be ruined and get really poor: above all things it would destroy my freedom of work, which is a dear delight to me. My translations go on apace, but I am doing nothing original: it can't be helped, though sometimes I begin to fear I am losing my invention. You know I very much wish not to fall off in imagination and enthusiasm as I grow older: there have been men who, once upon a time, have done things good or noteworthy, who have got worse with time and have outlived their power: I don't like that at all. On the other hand, all great men that have not died young have done some of their best work when they were getting quite old. However, it won't do to force oneself about it, and I certainly enjoy some of the work I do very much, and one of these days my Heimskringla will be an important work.

[1] **Printed by Mackail i. 290-2.**

Iceland gapes for me still this summer: I grudge very much being away from the two or three people I care for so long as I must be, but if I can only get away in some sort of hope and heart I know it will be the making of me. I am very much disappointed that you are not coming back before: I quite looked for you this month.

Yes, truly, letters are very unsatisfactory; they would do very well if one could write them at our best times; but continually one has to sit down to them dull and cold and worried, with the thoughts all slipping away from us, till the sheet is filled up with trivialities—as this will be I fear—only there is something about the look of the writing of anyone one is fond of, that is familiar and dear and saves one from utter disappointment, and one feels that the stiff awkward sentences all about nothing or little have still something of a soul in them. Think what an excitement that day was for me when I got letters after eight weeks in the Iceland journey: lord! how my heart did go thump thump as I galloped up to the post-office at Reykjavik!

I wonder how you will feel at the changes in the house here: Janey's room has already got the workmen's benches in it: the big room is bare and painty; there is hammering and sawing and running up and down stairs going on: and all looks strange, and as yet somewhat wretched. It doesn't touch me very much I must say though: for this long time past I have, as it were, carried my house on my back: but the little Turnham Green house is really a pleasure to me; —may all that be a good omen! Yet you must come and see me here too when you come home, if you won't be too much terrified at my housekeeper, who is like a troll-wife in an Icelandic story: with a deep bass voice, big and O *so* ugly!

We have had cold weather enough lately, snow and a dreadful east wind; all of which I don't care a penny about to say the truth.

On Saturday I am going down to Cambridge, to Magmisson, to do Icelandic: as stupid over the language as you others who are such quick linguists would think me, I am really getting on with it now: when I am down there, which has been once or twice, we all talk nothing but Icelandic together.

Well, I had best make an end now before I get too dull. Once again forgive me for not writing to you oftener: I have really had a hard time of it: but I hope things have taken a long turn now, and that I shall be something worth as a companion when I see you again;

which I look forward to very much indeed. Write soon again, please, and tell me how you are.

Goodbye, then, with love and best wishes.

I am your affectionate
William Morris

To Mrs William Morris Florence, Sunday [9 April 1873]

Dearest Janey

We ended our long journey yesterday: it had been very fine all the way: for my own part I was not over-tired, though the night journey from Paris was sufficiently wearisome. All is well here, and Ned in great spirits. We went out this morning to the Duomo and S. Maria Novella: but it has clouded over now and is raining.

You will hardly expect me to tell you of all the marvels in the limits of a letter; besides I am *such* a bad hand at it: I suppose in some respects we have come into Italy by the worst road: nevertheless it is all full of wonder and delight: one gets a bit tired of the eternal mulberry trees between Turin & Bologna but the passing of the Apenines thence to Florence is a wonderful journey; especially where you come out of a tunnel and see from the edge of the mountains the plain of Florence lying below you, with the beautiful old town of Pistoija within its square walls at the mountains' feet: it was something also to remember coming down into the plain of Piedmont out of the Alps: on the most beautiful of all evenings, and going (still between snowcapped mountains) through a country like a garden: green grass and feathery poplars, and abundance of pink blossomed leafless peach and almond trees. The Duomo here [is] certainly the most beautiful church in the world outside; and inside I suppose would be if it had not been made as bare as the palm of my hand. The cloisters of S. Maria Novella though is what I have seen most to my mind here. We went through a market this morning and that was the greatest game: the lemons and oranges for sale with the leaves still on them: miraculous frying going on, and all sorts of queer vegetables and cheese to be sold. 'Tis Palm Sunday today and the people are going about with bunches of olive boughs to serve for palms. The monks of S. Maria Novella make scents: I must bring you home a bottle, also I must, if cash holds out, buy a toy for the littles from the jewellers' shops on the Ponte Vecchio: the shops are a good deal shut today; so I couldn't see much there. I suppose I shall stay here till next Friday, so don't write here again but write

to the Hotel Lille & Albion, Rue St. Honore, Paris. Best love to you & the littles; dont tell them I think of bringing them home a toy though. I hope you are much better. I am Your loving
William Morris

At the Sign of the White Lion
In the street of the New Vine
To Philip Webb Florence. 10 April [1873]

My dear Chap

April showers in Florence—that's the weather since we came here, and cold enough it has been too till yesterday evening when it began to get warmer: it is a lovely morning just now after a very heavy shower.

I have been merchandizing for the Firm here, rather to Ned's disgust I am afraid; but can't be helped: I have bought a lot of queer pots they use for hand-warmers *{scaldini)* of lead glazed ware; also I have ordered a lot of flasks wickered of all sorts of pretty shapes: I suppose they will be in England in about 6 weeks. I bought some things for the firm in Paris also: so I hope my journey won't be quite unfruitful even if I don't find anything in Thun.

I shall start back from here on Sunday morning and hope, doing the Swiss detour & all, to be back in London on Thursday next, this day week.

I ought to say a great deal about works of art here, but I had rather wait till I see you and we can talk over it. I am not at all disappointed with Italy, but a good deal with myself: I am happy enough, but as a pig is, and cannot bring my mind up to the proper pitch and tune for taking in these marvels; I can only hope that I shall remember them hereafter. I daren't whisper this to Ned who is horribly jealous of the least sign of depression in me here, thinking that Florence ought to make a sick man well, or a stupid one bright. I venture to think though that there is another side to it which may at least make one sad; change and ruin and recklessness and folly and forgetfulness of 'great men and our fathers who begat us'—it is only in such places as this that one can see the signs of them to the full. Well you remember my ways at Troyes, don't you? and they are scarce likely to be better in Florence: Ned already complains of me that I seem to pay more attention to an olive-tree or a pot than I do to a picture—mind you, though, an olive-tree is worthy of a great

[1] From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* i. 649.

deal of attention, and I understand more of pots than of pictures; and he is a painter professed; so it isn't quite fair. This is a dull letter to come from Florence; though by the way Florence seems to me, not dull certainly, but melancholy enough—but I thought you might like to know that I was alive and well, as is Ned also. This is a nice little Inn that we are quartered in, and 'tis a great comfort not to form part of the furniture of a gigantic Yankee-hutch.

Herewith an end for the present. . . . Your affectionate

W.M.

To Mrs William Morris Reykjavik, 18 July [1873]

Dearest Janey

Here I am safe after having seen some part of the wonders that those [see] who are fools enough 'to exercise their business in the great deep.' In fact I have been very sick as was no wonder for we have had several rough days, especially last night when we fairly had to turn tail from the last headland and lie-to under the lee of the land till the gale lulled a little; however no bones are broken and I am quite well now and so is C.J.F. [C. J. Faulkner].

We are off to-morrow morning to my great satisfaction, except that it keeps me from writing a long letter to you my dear, as I should like to have done. I'm afraid we shall have a coldish season, there is much more snow on the mountains than in '71. However all seems like to go well otherwise.

It is all like a kind of dream to me, and my real life seems set aside till it is over.

Kiss my dear little ones for me and tell them I positively have no time to write to them, as you would easily know if you saw me now amid the boxes with C.J.F. and another man in the room: I will send a letter to them from Akreyri (in the north) if I find a ship going to Iceland [to England, he means].

My dear how I wish I was back, and how wild and strange everything here is. I am so anxious for you too, it was a grievous parting for us the other day—and this shabby letter! but how can I help it, not knowing whether I am on my head or my heels?

Well all my love to you and the dear good little ones,

I am your loving

W.M.

P.S. We start back from here on September 5th, so don't expect me before that.

Reykjavik
To Philip Webb 18 July **[1873]**

Dear old chap

We are off in a great hurry to-morrow morning; have got 15 horses & shall pick up 5 more in the Fleetlithe country. You can easily imagine that I am pressed for time, and not alone & so can forgive a few lines the easier.

I am so distracted I really can't find anything rational to say even if I had time to say it. Nothing is changed here. We even sighted Iceland on much such a morning as last time, cold & bright as might be—a prodigeous & glorious sight. The season is cold though and Heckla is covered with new-fallen snow while in '71 there was no sign of it there.

Such a NW gale as we came in by this morning! Last night we fairly had to turn tail before it, at the last headland, and lie to under the lee of the land till the gale lulled for an hour or two about sunrise.

More when I meet you again, which will be as soon as I come back —that is, not earlier than the 12th September. Ever your affect:
W.M.

Horrington House
Turnham Green
To Mrs Coronio Sunday [September 1873]

Dear Aglaia

I am back safe you see and am very well, and happy: I landed at Granton on Friday morning, and got home about past 10 in the evening. I called at your house on Saturday afternoon, & was very much disappointed to find you out of town. I went to the Grange on Saturday morning, and had as joyous a meeting as you may imagine. The journey was very successful, & has deepened the impression I had of Iceland, & increased my love for it, though I don't suppose I shall ever see it again: nevertheless I was very full of longing to be back, and to say the truth was more unhappy on the voyage out and before I got into the saddle than I liked to confess in my letters from Reykjavik, but the glorious simplicity of the terrible & tragic, but beautiful land with its well remembered stories of brave men, killed all querulous feeling in me, and have made all the dear faces of wife & children, and love, & friends dearer than ever to me:

I hope I shall not miss your face from among them for long: please write and tell me when I shall see you.

You wrote a very kind letter to me at Reykjavik: you won't want to be thanked for it I know, but you will like to hear that it answered its kind purpose & made me happier— What a terrible thing it is to bear that moment before one gets one's letters after those weeks of absence & longing.

Do you know I feel as if a definite space of my life had passed away now I have seen Iceland for the last time: as I looked up at Charles' Wain tonight all my travel there seemed to come back on me, made solemn and elevated, in one moment, till my heart swelled with the wonder of it: surely I have gained a great deal and it was no idle whim that drew me there, but a true instinct for what I needed. So goodbye for the present, & let us see a great deal of each other these coming days, and believe me ever to be Your affectionate

William Morris

To Mrs Alfred Baldwin [1]

Queen Square
22 October 1873

My dear Louie

Georgie says you would like to hear from me from time to time, which makes it a very great pleasure for me to write: only I am one of the worst letter-writers, and have little enough to talk about except that (to me) most interesting subject, myself. Georgie will tell you how inexhaustible I find that subject in talk with my friends, & so you must put up with your share of it if you want to hear from me.

I am wanting to settle down now to a really industrious man: for I do not mean to go to Iceland again if I can help it, and it is strange what a hole in my life that determination has made. I have had a good deal to do of a trivial kind & to say the truth have been busy enough over such things: but it seems that I must needs try to make myself unhappy with doing what I find difficult—or impossible—so I am going to take to drawing from models again, for my soul's sake chiefly, for little hope can I have ever to do anything serious in the thing. It must be six years now since I made a habit of drawing and I never, if you can understand that, had the *painter's memory* which makes it easy to put down on paper what you think you see; nor indeed can I see any scene with a frame as it were round it, though in my own way

[1] May Morris, *Collected Works,* Vol. XXII.

I can realise things vividly enough to myself—also I am getting old, hard on 40 Louie—so add all things together, and if I can tell you in six months time that I have been persevering in my drawing, I give you leave therewith to praise my patience, though I can scarcely hope it will come to that.

It is wet and wild weather here now, but somehow I don't dislike it, and there is something touching about the real world bursting into London with these gales; and it makes me wish to travel in spite of my knowledge of how sick I should be at sea. It makes me feel lazy in the mornings though and I feel as if I should like to sit in my pretty room at Turnham Green reading some hitherto unprinted Dumas say about as good as the 3 Musketeers.

By the way did you ever steep yourself in that delightful series: did you ever read all the Vicomte de Bragelonne and wish at the end that it was double as long: if not let me beseech you to do so now and be rewarded: did you ever read what I think Dumas' best book Olympe de Cleves? I made Georgie read it once, and she enjoyed it very much, but we used to quarrel desperately about the character of the hero whether any woman could have stood him at all, I taking his part: I think I have rather altered my opinion now.

Excuse my saying abruptly good-bye at this point, for I see it is past 2 and I have an engagement to keep: I hope you will be able to read my writing.

Hoping to hear better news of you soon.

I am Yours affectionately
William Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
12 November 1873

To H. Buxton Forman [1]

Many thanks for your letter and the translation of Wagner.[2] I have not had time to read it yet: nor to say the truth am I much interested in anything Wagner does, as his theories on musical matters seem to me as an artist and non-musical man perfectly abhominable: besides I look upon it as nothing short of desecration to bring such a tremendous and world-wide subject under the gaslights

[1] **From Mackail i. 299. H. Buxton Forman (1842-1917), civil servant and editor of Keats and Shelley.**

[2] **This was a translation of the libretto of *Die Walkure* by Buxton Forman's brother, later incorporated in his *The Nibelung's Ring* . . . English words to Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in the alliterative verse of the original, London 1877.**

of an opera: the most rococo and degraded of all forms of art—the idea of a sandy-haired German tenor tweedledeeing over the unspeakable woes of Sigurd, which even the simplest words are not typical enough to express! Excuse my heat: but I wish to see Wagner uprooted, however clever he may be, and I don't doubt he is: but he is anti-artistic, don't doubt it. . . .

To H. Buxton For man [1] 8 December 1873

I would have answered your letter before (many thanks for it) but I had not quite made up my mind about the Stories in my translation book. It stands thus now as I intended at first: the Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue, printed in the *Fortnightly* some years back; the Story of Frithiof the Bold, printed before in the Dark Blue; the story of Viglund the Fair, never before printed: these' Three Northern Love Stories' will give the name to the book, but to thicken it out I add three more short tales; Hroi the Fool, Hogni and Hedin, and Thorstein Staff-smitten; the first of these three a pretty edition of a 'sharper' story and the same as a tale in the Arabian Nights. The second a terrible story; a very well told, but late version of a dark and strange legend of remote times. The third simple, and not without generosity, smelling strong of the soil of Iceland, like the Gunnlaug. . . .

26 Queen Square

To Mrs Alfred Baldwin [2] 26 March 1874

My dear Louie

Many thanks for your kind and friendly letter: it was very nice of you to remember my birthday, which was solemnized by my staying at home all day and looking very hard at illuminations, now my chief joy. Yesterday, however, was May's birthday, mine was on Tuesday, on which sad occasion I was forty. Yet in spite of that round number I don't feel any older than I did in that ancient time of the sunflowers. I very much long to have a spell of the country this spring, but I suppose I hardly shall. I have so many things to do in London. Monday was a day here to set one longing to get away: as warm as June: yet the air heavy as often is in England: though town looks rather shocking on such days, and then instead of the sweet scents one gets an extra smell of dirt. Surely if people lived five hundred years instead of threescore and ten they would find some better way of living than in such a sordid loathsome place, but now it

[1] From Mackail i. 300. [2] From Mackail i. 302-3.

seems to be nobody's business to try to better things—isn't mine you see in spite of all my grumbling—but look, suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields, so that you could be in the country in five minutes' walk, and had few wants, almost no furniture for instance, and no servants, and studied the (difficult) arts of enjoying life, and finding out what they really wanted: then I think one might hope civilization had really begun. But as it is, the best thing one can wish for this country at least is, meseems, some great and tragical circumstances, so that if they cannot have pleasant life, which is what one means by civilization, they may at least have a history and something to think of—all of which won't happen in our time. Sad grumbling—but do you know, I have got to go to a wedding next Tuesday: and it enrages me to think that I lack courage to say, I don't care for either of you, and you neither of you care for me, and I won't waste a day of my precious life in grinning a company grin at you two.

And so good-bye again, with many thanks.

Yours affectionately
William Morris

Hotel du Commerce
Bruges

To Mrs Cor onto 24 July [1874]

Dear Aglaia

Many thanks for your kind letter & the jasmine blossoms from your window: I am very sorry to have disappointed you about your letter, but I find it very difficult to get time to write, being always with the children and really having no time to myself to think at all: even now they are all here as I write while we are waiting to go out. We have only had 2 railway journeys, from Calais to Tournay last Saturday, and from Tournay to Ghent on Sunday: I must say I had no idea what heat was before, it was like being in a Turkish bath: after the 2nd one we by common consent determined to have no more of it than was positively necessary, & so gave up going to Antwerp & Mechlin, and hired a charabanc at Ghent to drive us to Bruges by road on the Tuesday: that was really a very pleasant drive, all among the pretty orchards, the ripening wheat & oats, & the rye that they are already cutting, and so at last into Bruges by the ancient Gate of the Holy Cross: it took all day, about 29 miles it is. We shall stay here till over Sunday, & then go to Ypres & then to

Calais, & cross next Wednesday or Thursday night: I devoutly hope the first, for I most earnestly wish to be at home again: not that anything has gone wrong: on the contrary all is well & the children are very good: but travelling without time or space for musing is dreary work to me. We are all very much gnat-bitten, my right wrist is so stiff thereby that I really find it difficult to write so you must excuse a short letter. Bruges is a very beautiful place certainly, & I think I shall come over here one of these days when I have some literary work to do, and stay here working for a few days by myself. Janey seems pretty well on the whole, and none the worse for the travelling for the present.

I had a letter from Ned yesterday not in high spirits I must say: he said he had seen you. I feel my imagination rather dull & torpid in spite of all the change & beauty: I think 'tis the children being about, & the difference of age between us, & not knowing what they are thinking of. I am in the same room now as Janey & I were in when we came [to] Bruges on our wedding-trip: this morning we went to the Hospital of St John (where the Memling pictures are) and I looked in the book for my name & Murray's & found them October 3rd 1870, & all the while I had been thinking it was only two years ago since I had been here. I will write you another line before I come back to say exactly when we shall be in London. Goodbye meantime.

I am Your affectionate
William Morris

Naworth Castle
Cumberland

To Mrs Coronio Thursday [August 1874]

Dear Aglaia

Though the weather is broken & stormy I have been passing a delightful time of doing nothing here: the place is so beautiful that one really does not want to do much, & doesn't feel it on one's conscience either. There are no visitors in the house but us & all is very pleasant. Ned & I pass our mornings in a most delightful room in one of the towers that has never been touched since William Howard of Queen Elizabeth's time lived there: the whole place is certainly one of the most poetical in England. We had a long drive yesterday all along the border, & I sniffed the smell of the moors & felt in Iceland again. The whole countryside is most poetical & full of history & legend. I think it has done Ned a great deal of good coming here:

he is certainly better, & is quite cheerful & natural: the beauty of all this country moves him hugely.

I think we shall not come back till Sunday. I can't stay longer if I would, & I don't want to for many reasons. I hope you are well & happy.

Your affectionate
William Morris

To the Hon. Mrs George Howard[1] August 1874

I would like you to understand, as well as my clumsy letter-writing will let you, how very happy I was these few days in the north. I hope you will let me come again some time: and that then you will think me less arrogant on the—what shall I say?—Wesley-an-tradesman-unsympathetic-with-art subjects than you seemed to think me the other day: though indeed I don't accuse myself of it either: but I think to shut one's eyes to ugliness and vulgarity is wrong, even when they show themselves in people not un-human. Do you know, when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal I always feel, quite apart from my aesthetical perceptions, a sort of shame, as if I myself had some hand in it. Neither do I grudge the triumph that the modern mind finds in having made the world (or a small corner of it) quieter and less violent, but I think that this blindness to beauty will draw down a kind of revenge one day: who knows? Years ago men's minds were full of art and the dignified shows of life, and they had but little time for justice and peace; and the vengeance on them was not increase of the violence they did not heed, but destruction of the art they heeded. So perhaps the gods are preparing troubles and terrors for the world (or our small corner of it) again, that it may once again become beautiful and dramatic withal: for I do not believe they will have it dull and ugly for ever. Meantime, what is good enough for them must content us: though sometimes I should like to know why the story of the earth gets so unworthy. . . .

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London

To Mrs Coronio 1 January 1875

My dear Aglaia

Shall I come round on Monday? I have been trying to come before and have not been able. I myself have been unwell, but am

[1] **From Mackail i. 304—5. Naworth Castle was the property of the Hon. George Howard, afterwards Lord Carlisle.**

getting better—cold &—liver—if I may mention that organ to a lady. I beg to state that I have not the least idea where it lives. I was very sorry to miss you last Monday & that you had been unwell: I hope you will be much better on Monday. I am Your affectionate

William Morris

To Mrs *Coronio*

Lichfield
4 February [1875]

My dear Aglaia

I have come over here with my dyeing friend to spend Sunday & am writing a letter or two while he is at church, I have been very busy last week & shall be busier still this, and shall not come back till the Saturday if even I can get away then.

This little town ought to have the prize for dullness over every other place in the world: but tomorrow will come, & I shall be back in the dye-house at Leek, to my great comfort. I shall be very glad to get back home again, I feel very much cut off from the trunk here, I mean away from London.

This is a short note, but I have nothing to tell you except about my dyeing process, so it must pass for the present.

I am Yours affectionately

William Morris

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1]

Lichfield
4 February 1875

We have come over here to spend Sunday. Such a dull town is Lichfield, in a dull landscape: the church elaborate and complete, but so small as to be even petty: the old houses here seem to have been pulled down gradually by prosperous dullness, there are scarcely any much older than Johnson's time left; I daresay it was a sweet place enough awhile ago, when the old wood houses were standing. They have had some history even of late too; there is a stone in a house looking up into the Cathedral-close to mark where Lord Brooke fell, shot through the head from the big tower of the church just as he was beginning the siege of it (he was a Parliamentarian) in 1642—what a little time ago!

I shall be glad enough to get back to the dye-house at Leek tomorrow. I daresay you will notice how bad my writing is; my hand

[1] **From Mackail, i. 317-8.**

is so shaky with doing journey-man's work the last few days: delightful work, hard for the body and easy for the mind. For a great heap of skein-wool has come for me and more is coming: and yesterday evening we set our blue-vat the last thing before coming here. I should have liked you to see the charm work on it: we dyed a lock of wool bright blue in it, and left the liquor a clear primrose colour, so all will be ready for dyeing to-morrow in it: though, by the way, if you are a dyer, you must call it *her*.

Leek, Monday. I was interrupted there, and had no time for more at Lichfield: we drove from there this morning about eighteen miles to a station on the Dove, not a bad drive, through the last remains of Needwood Forest. I have been dyeing in *her* all the afternoon, and my hands are a woeful spectacle in consequence: *she* appears to be all that could be wished, but I must say I should like not to look such a beast, and not to feel as if I wanted pegs to keep my fingers one from the other. I lost my temper in the dye-house for the first time this afternoon: they had been very trying: but I wish I hadn't been such a fool; perhaps they will turn me out to-morrow morning, or put me in the blue-vat. . . .

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs Coronio Thursday [March 1875]

Dear Aglaia

Next Monday I suppose you mean, the 9th of March that is. I shall be very glad to come at 4. I have missed you very much & never expected that it would be so long between the times of seeing you. I went down to my mother's yesterday and stayed there till noon to-day. I was very dull when I went, and expected that it would make me duller; but somehow I found myself much better this morning, and am quite changed now. I can only hope that it will last. I am ashamed of myself for these strange waves of unreasonable passion: it seems so unmanly: yet indeed I have a good deal to bear considering how hopeful my earlier youth was, & what overweening ideas I had of the joys of life.

The country touched me very much this time: so much so that I think some day soon before the spring has grown old I shall take my illuminating down to my mother's and stay there for three days—that seems a huge venture to me I assure you.

Write and tell me if it is not *next* Monday you mean, as I am sure

I hope it is, otherwise expect me by 4 o'clock. I am going this very minute to order my new clothes. Alas I am afraid they will not be ready in time. Your affectionate

William Morris

To Charles Fairfax Murray[1] 11 March 1875

[At Pisa]

I enclose a P.O.O. for £5 for further disbursements on vellum: I would send more, but for the scraping everything together to pay my partners, who have come to some kind of agreement with me, if they don't cry off before the law business is settled; which drags on confoundedly, and to say the truth bothers me more than I like to confess.[2] As to my illumination work, it don't get on just now, not because I shouldn't like to be at it, but because I am doing something else with Virgil, to wit, doing him into English verse: I have got toward the end of the 7th book and shall finish the whole thing and have it out by the beginning of June I hope: so you imagine I have not been idle. I shall keep you a big paper copy both of that and my new volume of Icelandic stories[3] and of the new edition of 'Guenevere.'

26 Queen Square

To Mrs Alfred Baldwin' 25 March 1875

It was very kind of you and I thank you very much for remembering me and my birthday: I have been a happy man with my friends, nor do I think, as far as my constant affection and good wishes are concerned, that I have done otherwise than to deserve the good hap. I am in the second half of my life now; which is like to be a busy time with me, I hope till the very end: a time not lacking content too, I fancy, I must needs call myself a happy man on the whole: and I do verily think I have gone over every possible misfortune that may happen to me in my own mind, and concluded that I can bear it if it should come.

You would like to see my babies: they are such big girls—and so

[1] **From Mackail i. 319. Charles Fairfax Murray (1849-1919), artist, collector, connoisseur and close friend of Rossetti and the Morris circle. The purchases of vellum were for the great illuminated manuscript of the *ALneid* on which both Morris and Burne-Jones were engaged at this time.**

[2] **On 31 March this year the partnership of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. came under Morris's sole management and proprietorship.**

[3] ***Three Northern Love Stories.*** [4] **From Mackail i. 309-10.**

good; and even so handsome. Me! what a boy I feel still to have that responsibility on me, for in spite of my forty-one years I really don't feel a bit older than when Ned and I were living within sound of those tin-pot bells of St Pancras: well-remembered days when all adventure was ahead! Nay, in some things I have run through a time when I was older—but by no means wiser—than I am now, between those days and" these.

I shall not be very far from you next week: for I am going with Charley Faulkner, my inevitable travelling-fellow, to look at my fatherland [i.e. Wales]. We are going to Shrewsbury, and thence to a college farm of his on the very head waters of Severn and Wye, where we are to have ponies and go over the hills and far away, only for about a week in all though: 'tis a short journey, but I think I shall love it. I think one sign of my increasing years is an increasing desire for travel, that I may see the wonders of the world before it is all gone from me: but I suppose I shall get less and less of that pleasure for some time to come: for I am very busy both with my bread and cheese work, and also with my pleasure work of books. I am publishing a little set of Icelandic stories very soon: also this summer a translation of the Eneids, which has been my great joy for months of late. . . .

Bull Hotel, Bala

To Jane Alice and May Morris 5 April 1875

Dearest Jenny and May

The Bull's Head is the proper name though, in accordance with the picture [i.e. on the head of the note paper]: 'Tis a queer dull little grey town is Bala: but we are resting the horses here for a day. This morning I went out fishing in the rain up a very pretty river, the Welsh name of which will not stick in my head: I caught but two trouts which we had for dinner.

The little town lies at the head of a lake some 5 miles long which the Welsh call Llynn Taged: I don't know what that means: indeed I am but an ignorant person in Wales. The country is pretty about the lake but not so fine as some [we] have been through. We had a beautiful ride yesterday from Dinas Mawddwy up the valley of the Dyfi (a river) till it came to an end, and then over the mountain-necks into another valley, and so here. The Dyfi valley was most beautiful, and I thought that it would be so nice to have a little house and a cow there, and a Welsh pony or two. The little houses are very rough outside but cleaner and trimmer inside than one might

imagine. We had our lunch in one (a pot-house) yesterday, and they brought us the biggest loaf I ever saw: the Italian cake-bread was a mere joke to it: it was very good to eat. To-morrow we go to Dolgelley which is in a shy mountainous country under Cader Idris: not more mountainous though than Dinas Mawddwy: the next day to Towyn, about a mile from the sea; and on Thursday to Dinas Mawddwy again by a road that runs on the other side of Cader Idris: on Friday we set off to Oxford and London from that place, so that I shall be back some time on Friday evening probably: and so glad as I shall be to see you and the Mammy.

We have seen something of Plinlimmon already: stopped at a farm of University Coll: under it or rather amidst it (for 'tis a great spreading down-like thing not craggy) on Thursday. The farmhouse kitchen was such a nice place: there were some very pretty children there, but not a word could they talk of anything but Welsh, except one older girl. . . .

To Mrs Coronio

Towyn,
7 April [1875]

My dear Aglaia

I thought you might like to hear of my being still in the land of the living: I am in a little queer grey Welsh town by the sea-shore on the flats under the mountains in the most Welsh parts of Wales. We rode here through a rough mountain road this morning through rain and sunshine: it was very beautiful a great part of the way: desolate enough otherwhere, but always interesting to me. To-morrow we ride down a long trench (as it were) on the other side of the mountains we passed today and that will be our last ride; for on Friday we shall take train home. I will try to call on you as I come home from business on Monday if I don't hear from you to stop me.

It is a great thing to have seen new country if it has any character, and a great deal of what I have seen is very impressive: about here the people talk very little English which I am glad to find; and in a queer way they are proud of their Welsh: they are mostly very polite and much better mannered than the same sort of people would be in England.

I will tell you more about it all when I see you. I have got a most villainous scratchy pen: so excuse the writing.

I am Yours affectionately
William Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London

To Mrs Coronio Monday 3 o'clock [April 1875]

My dear Aglaia

I was just setting off to come to you this afternoon when I remembered your ineradicable habit of writing to me at Queen Sq: instead of Horrington House, so I expected a note from you here & I came here instead, where I haven't been since Thursday, this being the Easter Holidays: it seems too late to call on you now as I couldn't get to you till after past 3: Unluckily tomorrow I have to go to my sisters' at Weybridge in the afternoon: so could I come on Wednesday or Thursday or Friday—the sooner the better. It is a great disappointment to me to have missed you: all the more from the selfish reason that I am not very well, & that an hour or two with you would have helped me to get along. I intend to walk the greater part of my way home for I have not been out of the house since Friday morning when I went to the Grange: I have had my nose down on my vellumallthe rest of the time & am somewhat weary of it though leant helpliking to see the page brighten while I am at it. I think I will try to do violence to my inclination & pound away at a poem good or bad before long. I wonder if I have gone stupid & can't though.

Well—please attend—if I am to come on *Wednesday* write to me at *Queen Sq:* since I shall have to come back to the office on that morning after sleeping at Weybridge. But unless on special occasion 'tis always better to write to me at Horrington House: unless you write in the morning for me to get the letter in the afternoon. I hope all is pretty well with you and rest Your affectionate

William Morris

To William Bell Scott[1] Horrington House, 6 May 1875

My dear Scott,—I must ask you to forgive me for letting a week go by without taking any notice of the gift of your book; but I do think you remember that I am a bad letter-writer even on ordinary matters, and often on extraordinary ones a helpless shamefacedness holds me back till I find I have committed an act of rudeness as now, which I am very far from meaning. I trust to your good nature to understand that, and to forgive me.

[1] **Poet and painter (i 811-90). From *Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott,* edited by W. Minto, ii. 212.**

I was very glad to see your book, with the poems that I first found so sympathetic when I came up to London years ago, when I was pretty much a boy; and also that there were others that seemed to me as good, of which I have heard nothing meanwhile. Pray believe that I was touched and delighted by the affectionate inscription in the beginning, and though not more so (in some sense) by my share of the dedication at the end, yet as much, amidst my surprise at the honour of it; for indeed, I did not suppose you would have put me in the same place with A.C.S. and D.G.R.,[1] both of whom I considered for the most part as 'passed masters' over me in the art.

I am sorry we have seen but little of each other for so long. I was thinking of coming in one morning next week to see if you would come over here some evening soon, and meet Ned Jones. I was very vexed that my Welsh engagement kept me from coming to you that evening you asked me. . . . With hearty thanks for your book and its dedication. I am, yours affectionately

William Morris

To Charles Fairfax Murray[2] 27 May 1875

[At Pisa]

The vellum came all safe to hand: many thanks for it. I noticed that the smaller size seemed very good: but had not much time to attend to it much, as I am very busy all sorts of ways. I have got my partnership business settled at last, and am sole lord and master here now, with never a Jorkins to refer unpleasant words to: however 'tis a great blessing, and has set me working hard to make things go. I have somewhat slacked from the Virgil translation, as I found it not possible to get it out this summer and easy enough to get it out by October: also I have begun one of the pictures for the Virgil: I make but a sorry hand of it at first, but shall go on with it till (at the worst) I am wholly discomfited. Whether I succeed or not in the end 'twill be a long job: so I am asking you if you would do some of them and what it would be worth your while to do them for. I shall be publishing the Icelandic stories in a week or two. After all I have no news for you: I am up to the neck and trying out designs for papers, chintzes, and carpets, and trying to get the manufacturers to do them: I think we are doing some good things in that way. . . .

[1] Algernon Charles Swinburne and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

[2] From Mackail i. 319-20. The Virgil, now in America, was finally laid aside after the completion of six books. Morris's translation of the *Eneids* was published this year.

26, Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs Coronio 21 October 1875

My dear Aglaia

Thank you for your note, & 'kind enquiries'. I am exceedingly well and in good spirits, & shall be very glad to see you when you come back. We have got a few pieces of printed cloths here, and they are hung up in the big room, where they look so beautiful (really) that I feel inclined to sit and stare at them all day; which however I am far from doing as I am working hard. I don't suppose we shall get many people to buy them, however; which will be a pity as we shall be obliged in that case to give up the manufacture. Item, we have got a pattern of a woolen cloth that pleases me hugely, though I don't know if it would please you, for it looks quite like a mediaeval manufacture.

All this keeps me busy and amuses me very much, so that I may consider myself a lucky man, among so many people who seem to find it hard to be amused. I am Your affectionate
William Morris

Kelmscott
Tuesday afternoon
To Mrs William Morris [9 November 1875]

Dearest Janey

It began to rain again before I got to Lechlade at first to my infinite disappointment: however when I got here and had had my lunch and, as it were, made myself free of the river by an insane attempt to fish, I began to feel very comfortable, and took out my work and looked at it. The floods are already very high, and as it is certainly going to rain for the next 24 hours I expect to see something curious. I don't think I shall come back before Saturday as I really hope to do a pile of work here. I am rather short of victuals, as the booby Judd (female) only got me a ilb of bacon instead of 3, as I ordered her: however there will be enough I daresay, till we can send into Lechlade: there is also a tin of kangaroo meat. My hands are still somewhat stiff with my work on the river—Lord! how cold it blew—wind E. or thereabouts. I am obliged to write by candlelight though 'tis only 4 o'clock.

Best love to my one daughter—wouldn't she have liked to have been out on the flooded river with me, the wind right in our teeth

and the eddies going like a Japanese tea-tray: I must say it was delightful: almost as good as Iceland on a small scale: please the pigs, I will have a sail on the floods to-morrow.

With best love goodbye I am Your loving
W.M.

To Mrs Emma Morns 1876

Dearest mother

I send you my best love and many happy returns of the day: item I send you a flower-pot and saucer from some samples that they have just sent us from India, and which are still curiosities, as I suppose there are not two more in England at present out of the India House Museum. I have just come from the D.G.C. [Devon Great Consols] meeting, and, I suppose, ended my business there, except for receiving my £100 which they were once kind enough to vote us.[1] Stanley will tell you all about the meeting. I am much better than I have been. I went down (or up) to Oxford for two days at Whitsuntide, and I am going there about the middle of June again to take my M.A. degree; which is perhaps rather a fad of mine; but I thought I might indulge it for once.

Kelmscott, Wednesday afternoon

To Mrs William Morris [26 January 1876]

Dearest Janey

Here I am safely: The floods are facts enough, but the water has gone down a good deal since Sunday: I have been muddling about on the river and floods for exercise sake: It is a most beautiful afternoon: there are violets out, and aconites, and the snowdrops are showing all about. Love to the babies. I am Your loving
W.M.

Mr Butcher sold me a piece of steak and 2 kidneys: I hope the first won't be tough.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London

To Mrs William Morris 8 March 1876

Dearest Janey

Thanks for your note: I was glad to hear that you are doing pretty well.[2] We came back from Marlborough on the Monday

[1] This refers to his resignation of his Directorship of the Devon Great Consols Company. On his return home from the Directors' meeting he solemnly sat down on his top hat.

[2] Mrs Morris was staying with Rossetti at Aldwick Lodge near Bognor.

morning: we had a delightful drive to Silbury & Avebury on Saturday through a wild stormy afternoon: Avebury is a beautiful place: the little village lies all within the earthwork of the old temple which, though not many of the huge stones are now left, is about 3 quarters complete, the church and a lovely old manor-house breaking the circuit in one place. Sunday I must say was dullsome; for it rained hard all day: the others of them went to chapel in the morning, which treat I refused: Jenny had a cold and so couldn't go with us to Dr Farrer's to dinner in the evening: I don't think she suffered much for *that* loss however. Her cold is better now, and she has not stopped away from school. Phil by the way seemed very well, and played such a knife & fork as reminded me of my own better days: in short he ate like a ghoul.

The embroidery ladies gave me such a turn of it this morning I thought I should have been both walked & talked off my legs. I am withal in the thick of poetry, blue-vats, and business. I finished, by the way, by buying *both* those pieces of embroidery for *£160:* I think I have as good as sold one of them: but of course I shall keep them till you come back; I shall get one photographed. I don't think there is any more news: Give my best love to May.

I am Your loving
W.M.

Horrington House
Saturday
To Mrs William Morris [18 March 1876]

Dearest Janey

I won't press you to come back, then: only let me know by return about when you intend coming: the point is that I have pretty well settled to go to Leek next Wednesday. I intend when I go there to be about a fortnight away: now if you are coming back say this day week, it would not stop my going, as I should ask Bessy to keep Jenny company for those 2 or 3 days: but if you were going to stay much beyond that I should put off my Leek journey till after Easter as I should not like Jenny to be left parentless so long. Of course when I made the arrangement for going I thought you would have come back today or Monday: I should like to go & get it over, and no doubt I am wanted there: but I don't know that my putting it off will much matter.

So let me recapitulate: Write by return & say when you are com-

ing back: if you will not be away for more than another week I shall go to Leek next Wednesday, & get Bessy to come here till you come home: if you are going to be away longer, I shall stay here till Easter is over. Except by the way that I have promised to go with Webb to Kelmscott for 3 days at Eastertide.

Give my love to May & thank her for her letter, & tell her that if I were not very busy over my poetry today I would write to her: I will try to do so on Monday. It is fine & dry here today but very cold: I think the March dryness is going to set in.

I am with love Your
W.M.

Ilorrington House
Tuesday morning
To Miss May Morris [March 1876]

Dearest May

Thank you for your letter: I should dearly like to have seen the storm. It is a hard frost this morning: this has been the coldest 'Blackthorn winter', as they call it, that I ever remember. So I am off to-morrow to Leek and the dye-tubs. Mr Tom Wardle has promised to get me a pair of sabots to work in: however even when I come back to Queen Sq: I shall not be without the dye-tubs: for we have fitted up the old larder into a make-shift dye-house. You shall come and see its wonders when you come home: also our Persian carpets, of which we have bought many lately: it will all make you feel as if you were in the Arabian Nights. Even Mrs Judd may help the illusion if you make up your mind that she is your regular old woman of that work 'a calamity of calamities', like the spotted green and yellow toad: or as we should say like a walnut shell spoiled.

Well, you may reckon how glad I shall be to see you and Mamma when I come back, which will be in about a fortnight.

I hope you will be in a riotous state of health.

I am, my dear little May Your loving father
William Morris

Leek
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 26 March 1876

My days are crowded with work; not only telling unmovable Lancashire what to do, but even working in sabots and blouse in the

[1] From Mackail, i. 324-5.

dye-house myself—you know I like that. Your kind hope for my poem was vain I am sorry to say: T. Wardle rather insisted on my going out with him, so I yielded, not very loth, as I thought a country walk would not be amiss: so we took train to a station and then walked, first by a gim-crack palace of Pugin's, Alton Towers to wit, then to a village where your friend the novel-writer came from (called Ellaston, I rather think), then to a village church, Norbury, with a strange very rich chancel to it, out of place in that queer way that things are in England, then up the valley of the Dove to Ashbourne, which I think Dr Johnson had something to do with: a dull walk that last, I scarcely know why, but Ashbourne church very fine and rich; and so home.

Some time this week I am going to Nottingham to see the hot vat in operation for flock wool-dyeing: when I was a very youngster, my father's mother, then grown doting, used to promise me a journey to Nottingham, her home, if I were a *very* good boy.

Meantime I trust I am taking in dyeing at every pore (otherwise than by the skin of my hands, which is certain). I have found out and practised the art of weld-dyeing, the ancientest of yellow dyes, and the fastest. We have set a blue vat for cotton, which I hope will turn out all right to-morrow morning: it is nine feet deep, and holds 1000 gallons: it would be a week's talk to tell you all the anxieties and possibilities connected with this indigo subject, but you must at least imagine that all this is going on in very nearly the same conditions as those of the shepherd boy that made a watch all by himself. . . .

St Edward Street, Leek
28 March [1876]

To Mrs Coronio

My dear Aglaia '

I am at last able to write to you and thank you for your letter: I have a huge deal to do in a very limited time, for I am trying to learn all I can about dyeing, even the handiwork of it, which is simple enough but, like many other simple things, contains matters in it that one would not think of unless one were told. Besides my business of seeing to the cotton-printing, I am working in Mr Wardle's dye-house in sabots and blouse pretty much all day long: I am dyeing yellows and reds: the yellows are very easy to get, and so are a lot of shades of salmon & flesh-colour & buff and orange;

[1] **Printed by Mackail, i. 325-7.**

my chief difficulty is in getting a deep blood-red, but I hope to succeed before I come away: I have not got the proper indigo-vat for wool but I can dye blues in the cotton-vat and get lovely greens with that and the bright yellow that weld gives.

This morning I assisted at the dyeing of 20 lbs of silk (for our damask) in the blue-vat; it was very exciting, as the thing is quite unused now, and we ran a good chance of spoiling the silk. There were 4 dyers & Mr Wardle at work, and myself as dyer's mate: the men were encouraged with beer & to it they went, and pretty it was to see the silk coming green out of the vat & gradually turning blue: we succeeded very well as far as we can tell at present: the oldest of the workmen, an old fellow of 70, remembers silk being dyed so long ago. The vat, you must know, is a formidable-looking thing: 9 ft deep & about 6 ft square: and is sunk into the earth right up to the top. So you see, I am too busy to be bored—except in the evenings, when I have to see more people than I bargained for: this evening for instance I am going out to dinner—well bed must follow it after all. To-morrow I am going to Nottingham to see wool dyed blue in the woad-vat as it is called; on Friday Mr Wardle is going to dye 80 lbs more silk for us, and I am going to dye about 10 lbs of wool in madder for my deep red.

With all this I shall be very glad indeed to be home again, as you may well imagine.

I am glad you liked my work at the show, though I don't think it was much to make a row about; the silk piece I thought was the best.

Mrs Lewes came from this country-side by the way: I went through the village where she lived, on Sunday: Ellaston, I think, it was called; a dull village: I seem to see a good few people about like the 'Aunts' in the *Mill on the Floss.*

I hope you are well. I am Your affectionate
William Morris

Leek
To I?][1] March 1876

Wherein you are spiritless, I wish with all my heart~that I could help you or amend it, for it is most true that it grieves me; but also, I must confess it, most true that I am living my own life in spite of it, or in spite of anything grievous that may happen in the world. Sometimes I wonder so much at all this, that I wish even that I

[1] From Mackail, i. 327-8.

were once more in some trouble of my own,[1] and think of myself that I am really grown callous: but I am sure that though I have many hopes and pleasures, or at least strong ones, and that though my life is dear to me, so much as I seem to have to do, I would give them away, hopes and pleasures, one by one or all together, and my life at last, for you, for my friendship, for my honour, for the world. If it seems boasting I do not mean it: but rather that I claim, so to say it, not to be separated from those that are heavy-hearted only because I am well in health and full of pleasant work and eager about it, and not oppressed by desires so as not to be able to take interest in it all. I wish I could say something that would serve you, beyond what you know very well, that I love you and long to help you: and indeed I entreat you (however trite the words may be) to think that life is not empty nor made for nothing, and that the parts of it fit one into another in some way; and that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful. . . .

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
Monday [Summer, 1876]

To Mrs Coronio

My dear Aglaia

I am very sorry to hear that you have the measles, am not at all inclined to laugh at you on that score: neither am I at all frightened & will come & see you whenever you wish me to—I was just writing this yesterday when everybody came in and there was no more peace for me for the rest of the day. I hope you are better today: as to what I am doing, I am drawing patterns so fast that last night I dreamed I had to draw a sausage; somehow I had to eat it first, which made me anxious about my digestion: however I have just done quite a pretty pattern for printed work. I am getting on with my poem,[2] in quantity at any rate: I have (roughly) done the 3rd part: that is Sigurd & Brynhild are dead, & people are busy forgetting them after the fashion of our amiable race: all that I have left to do now, if the last written parts turn out successful, is the revenge and death of Gudrun, which will be certainly short, and probably not difficult compared with what I have had to do. I am a little looking forward to having a rest some day soon: my rebellious inclina-

[1] **This wish was speedily granted, for in the summer of this year Jenny's health completely broke down, and henceforth Morris was never free from anxiety on account of her recurrent attacks of epilepsy.**

[2] ***Sigurd the Volsung.***

tions turn toward Iceland, though I know it to be impossible, so I suppose it will be Kelmscott & the river some day soon. I was one day in the country on business last week: a dull place and a dull business: I am glad that arid weather has changed as I suppose everybody else is. Here is an end of a letter which if it amuses you you must be very hard up for amusement. I am Your affectionate

William Morris

Kelmscott
Friday
To Mrs William Morris [9 July 1876]

Dearest Janey

Here I am then all safe: I have passed the morning on the river: the fishing is bad; water low & bright; but I am not absolutely fishless, even as you foretold: for I am to dine off fish today, and am sousing (or Mrs Comely[x] is) two small jack for to-morrow or Sunday. The morning was not unpleasant; but this afternoon has turned out diabolically so: a strong East wind & a yellow blight are depressing even at Kelmscott—Ah, it is raining fast now, which I am glad of, as we may have a change to-morrow. The garden has suffered here much from the cold and wet, I mean to say as to vegetables, for it looks beautiful; the strawberry bed is a mass of blossoms; there [are] no roses out except the yellow ones on the gable wall of the barn: but a fortnight hence, it will be a wonder for the roses: I must try to get down if only for a day at that time.

Would you please send me by return of post the baccy which is in my room at home. You can easily make it into a parcel that will go by post & I shall get it on Monday. I am short of that article. I shall not come back till *[Monday* crossed out] Wednesday if all bowls row aright: I enjoyed my morning on the river very much, though I lost the only really good perch I hooked, by my own stupidity, also by the same course of action a big chub. Kiss those dear babies for me. I am Your

W.M.

Broadway Tower
To Mrs Coronio Tuesday [September 1876]

My dear Aglaia

Here is the note then. I have been nearly a fortnight at Kelmscott, off and on, and am going back there tomorrow till Friday

[1] **Housekeeper at Kelmscott Manor.**

when I am coming to town, but only for a day or two, after which I shall be going to Kelmscott again for a few days and then home. I believe I shall be at Horrington House next Saturday afternoon: and if you are coming out that way I shall be happy to see you. I am to-day at Crom Price's Tower among the winds and the clouds. Ned & the children are here, and all are much amused. I am glad you have benefitted by Herr Wagner's instructive great work.[1]

I am Yours affectionately
William Morris

To the Editor, The Daily News 24 October 1876

ENGLAND AND THE TURKS

Sir

I cannot help noting that a rumour is about in the air that England is going to war: and from the depths of my astonishment I ask, On behalf of whom? Against whom? And for what end? Some three weeks ago, if such a rumour had arisen my questions would, I imagine, have been answered in this way: 'The English nation has been roused to a sense of justice (for at heart they are a generous people) by a story of horrors that no man has been able to gainsay, so they are going to war against the Turkish Government on behalf of certain subject peoples whom the Turks conquered long ago but have never assimilated, and whom now, in their decrepitude, insolvency, and terror they have been torturing and oppressing in the vilest manner while they claim to be considered and treated as a civilized Government and part of the comity of Europe. The end and aim of the war is to force the Turkish Government (who, to speak the downright truth, are a gang of thieves and murderers) to give these subject peoples, who are quite orderly and industrious, some chance for existence; to force the Turkish Government to agree to give these peoples some security for life, limb, and property, and to take order that they shall carry out this agreement (by occupying their territory or otherwise)—this is the end and aim of the war; and we and all Europe think it a just and honourable aim, and that we are the right people to see it carried through; for we, a peaceful people, not liars (except in trade), we have nothing to gain by helping these luckless folks to live; and, though we are only their neighbours, in the sense that the Samaritan was to him who fell among thieves, yet

[1] **Prof. Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905), the conductor and translator of Wagner's prose works, married Mrs Coronio's sister, Chariclea.**

we are in a kind of way responsible for their usage, for we have before this waged a great war to keep the Turks, their jailors, alive [i.e. the Crimea War], thinking that we could make them a respectable and even a progressive people—so sanguine, and, to say the truth, such fools we were! However, except that we are still paying for it out of pocket, all that is past; we meant no harm then, and now we mean good and will do it.'

If I had fallen asleep three weeks ago, and woke up yesterday, I should have expected some such answer to my questions of—For whom? Against whom? and Why? And I, a mere sentimentalist, should have rejoiced in such a war, and thought it wholly good: the people to be helped worthy of helping, the enemy thieves and murderers, all Europe our friends, no mouth to gainsay us but the mouths of thieves and murderers. Yes, I should have thought I had lived for something at last: to have seen England just, and in earnest, the Tories converted or silenced, and our country honoured throughout all the world. In very truth, all this seemed on the point of happening three weeks ago, though without the terrible expense of a war; but alas, though I have not slept, I have awakened, and find the shoe quite on the other foot. The Tories are not converted; England is pretty much mocked throughout all the world. I must say, justly mocked, if as I fear, we were not in earnest when we held all those meetings, and passed all those resolutions full of just anger, as it seemed. I say, not in earnest, because to put all conventionalities aside, we know well that, in matters of peace and war, no Government durst go against the expressed will of the English people, when it has a will and can find time to express it; and, on the other hand, again setting aside conventionalities of 'deliberation', 'calm', 'statemanship' and the like, we know well that our Tory Government has determined to disregard, as utterly as if it had not happened, the seeming enthusiasm or repentance, which the dreadful facts stated by your Correspondent and Mr Schuyer, and confirmed by Mr Baring, seemed to awake, and which Mr Gladstone's noble and generous rhetoric, and Mr. Freeman's manly and closely-reasoned letters, fanned into a seeming fire.[1] We know, to speak plainly, that the new-made 'brave' Earl [i.e. Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield], to whom 'nothing is difficult', has at all events found it easy to see through a ladder, and is determined to drag us into a shameful

[1] These correspondents had seen hundreds of Bulgarian men, women and children impaled on wooden stakes by the Turks, villages burned down and the countryside devastated.

and unjust war—how shameful and unjust no words can say. I say it would be impossible even for that clever trickster to do this, not only if united England were in earnest to gainsay him, but even if a large minority were but half in earnest and spoke and said 'No And now, not even the wretched packed Parliament we have got is sitting. The cry for that was not believed; the members are too busy shooting in the country, and the nation is dumb, if it were not for the 2000 working men who met last Sunday at Clerkenwell, and who took it for granted, as everybody else I come across does, that the crossing of the Turkish border by Russian troops would be followed at a greater or less time by England's declaration of war against Russia. And do you suppose the Turks do not take the same thing for granted?

I appeal to the Liberal Party, and ask if it is not worth while their making some effort to avoid this shame. I appeal to the working men, and pray them to look to it that if this shame falls upon them they will certainly remember it and be burdened by it when their day clears for them, and they attain all, and more than all, they now are striving for: to the organizers of both these bodies I specially appeal, to set their hands to the work before it is too late, to drop all other watch-words that this at least may be heard—No war on behalf of Turkey: no war on behalf of the thieves and murderers! I appeal to all men of sense and feeling of all parties, and bid them think what war means, and to think if only perhaps this were an unjust war! What, then, would come of it but shame in defeat and shame in victory, and in the end ignominious undoing of all that the war should seem to do. I who am writing this am one of a large class of men—quiet men, who usually go about their own business, heeding public matters less than they ought, and afraid to speak in such a huge concourse as the English nation, however much they may feel, but who are now stung into bitterness by thinking how helpless they are in a public matter that touches them so closely. To these also I appeal to break silence at last, if they in any wise can, and to be as little hopeless as may be, for that all may perhaps help, and perhaps they as much as people more busy in such things: for the old proverb is true now as ever—'Like people like priest'. If this monstrous shame and disaster—if this curse—has to fall upon us, we cannot make Lord Beaconsfield or Lord Derby, the Tory Party or the House of Commons, our scapegoats; we must, our very selves, bear the curse, and make the best of it, for we put these men where

they sit over us, and do their own will, such as it is: and we can put them down again if we choose. And, meanwhile, till that happy day comes round, I say again that I firmly believe that a large minority, or even not so large a minority of English people, expressing their earnest will, would be enough to prevent any war: for, surely, even the Earl of Beaconsfield must hesitate before signing the death-warrant of so many men, if he has an excuse given him for it; since they say he is human, though, indeed, I scarce believe it. Any war could be stayed, much more, surely, such a cynically unjust and shameful one as this would be—nay, such a monstrously laughable one, if the world could laugh for shame and grief. This is the last word. I call on all those who attended those many thronged and enthusiastic meetings throughout the country the other day to meet again. Let their organizers see to it. For I assure them that not the less because they have forgotten it were those babies murdered in Bulgaria—there were more, I believe, slain in Scio a while ago, but that is more utterly forgotten than these last—not the less were the poor souls robbed to their very shirts, it seems; not the less because they no longer heed it are people dying in hundreds a day of cold and hunger out there; let those who attended those meetings, now they have rested, once more bring their imaginations to bear upon it all, and to take note that we have refused to help those poor people, that we have refused to take order that the like desolation shall not happen again, and have forced the Russians to do our share and their own of the business—for which we propose to go to war with them, after all we have said in our thronged and enthusiastic meetings! Can history show a greater absurdity than this, or greater fools than the English people will be if they do not make it clear to the Ministry and to the Porte that they will wage no war on behalf of the Turks, no war on behalf of thieves and murderers?

I beg with humility to be allowed to inscribe myself, in the company of Mr Gladstone and Mr Freeman, and all men that I esteem, as an hysterical sentimentalist: and am, Sir, your obedient servant

William Morris

Author of 'The Earthly Paradise'

{The Daily News, 26 October 1876.)

Leek

To Mrs Burne-Jones [?][1] January 1877

My ill temper about the public was only a London mood and is quite passed now: and I think I have even forgotten what I myself have written about that most glorious of stories, and think about it all (and very often) as I did before I began my poem.[2]

I had been reading the Njala in the original before I came here: it is even better than I remembered: the style most solemn (Dasent now and then uses a word too homely I think, which brings it down a little): all men's children in it, as always in the best of the northern stories, so venerable to each other, and so venerated: and the exceeding good temper of Gunnar amidst his heroism, and the calm of Njal: and I don't know[1] anything more consoling or grander in all literature (to use a beastly French word) than Gunnar's singing in his house under the moon and the drifting clouds: or do you remember the portents at Bergthorsknoll before the burning, and how Skarphedinn takes them? or Skarphedinn's death; or how Flosi pays the penalty for the Burning, never appealing against the due and equal justice, but defending himself and his folk stoutly against it at every step. What a glorious outcome of the worship of Courage these stories are. . . .

To J. R. Thursfield' 16 February 1877

I am afraid you must think I have been a long time answering your letter; I beg you to excuse my apparent neglect on the grounds that I found it hard to make up my mind what was right to do. In the first place I thank you personally very much for moving in the matter, and I must say that nothing hardly would please me so much as such a recognition from my University, apart from considerations of fitness on my side: nor would laziness or the various heavy business on my hands prevent me from coming forward if I thought I could be of any real use: neither would a contested election frighten me, though I don't like such things. It is therefore with the greatest

[1] From Mackail, i. 335.

[2] *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Nibelungs's* Morris's great epic, had received less than its due from the critics. Morris made two versions of the Sigurd story, though in his epic he made no attempt to reproduce the stark brevity of the Edda. Once again it tells, as he wrote in the fine verse prologue to his prose rendering of *The Volsunga Saga* (1870), *'Of* utter love defeated utterly, Of grief too strong to give Love time to die!' See letter to Prof. Norton of 21 Dec. 1869.

[3] From Mackail, i. 336-7.

regret that I find I must needs say 'no'; and this simply because I feel that I am not the man to fill the post: I suppose the lectures a Poetry Professor should give ought to be either the result of deep and wide scholarship in the matter, or else pieces of beautiful and ingenious rhetoric, such, for example, as our Slade Professor [i.e. Ruskin] could give; and in both these things I should fail and do no credit either to the University or myself. It seems to me that the *practice* of any art rather narrows the artist in regard to the *theory* of it; and I think I come more than most men under this condemnation, so that though I have read a good deal and have a good memory, my knowledge is so limited and so ill-arranged that I can scarce call myself a man of letters: and moreover I have a peculiar inaptitude for expressing myself except in the one way that my gift lies. Also may I say without offence that I have a lurking doubt as to whether the Chair of Poetry is more than an ornamental one, and whether the Professor of a wholly incommunicable art is not rather in a false position: nevertheless I would like to see a good man filling it, and, if the critics will forgive me, somebody who is not only a critic. I ask your pardon for writing so much about myself, but your kindness has brought it on your head.

26 Queen Square
To the Editor, The Athenaeum 5 March [1877]

Sir

My eye just now caught the word 'restoration' in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott. Is it altogether too late to do something to save it—it and whatever else of beautiful or historical is still left us on the sites of the ancient buildings we were once so famous for? Would it not be of some use once for all, and with the least delay possible, to set on foot an association for the purpose of watching over and protecting these relics, which, scanty as they are now become, are still wonderful treasures, all the more priceless in this age of the world, when the newly-invented study of living history is the chief joy of so many of our lives?

Your paper has so steadily and courageously opposed itself to those acts of barbarism which the modern architect, parson, and squire call 'restoration', that it would be waste of words to enlarge

here on the ruin that has been wrought by their hands; but, for the saving of what is left, I think I may write a word of encouragement, and say that you by no means stand alone in the matter, and that there are many thoughtful people who would be glad to sacrifice time, money, and comfort in defence of those ancient monuments: besides, though I admit that the architects are, with very few exceptions, hopeless, because interest, habit, and ignorance bind them, and that the clergy are hopeless, because their order, habit, and an ignorance yet grosser, bind them; still there must be many people whose ignorance is accidental rather than inveterate, whose good sense could surely be touched if it were clearly put to them that they were destroying what they, or, more surely still, their sons and sons' sons, would one day fervently long for, and which no wealth or energy could ever buy again for them.

What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope.

William Morris [1]

(The Athenceum, 10 March 1877.)

Horrington House
Turnham Green,
9 March [1877]

To Mrs Henry Holiday

Dear Mrs Holiday

I have had all my time taken up for the past month with 'politics' so-called, till this week, when I found time for a little gout: if it had not been for these two pleasures I should have had some more to say to you about the embroidery before now. I was quite delighted with the success of the door-hanging: I think it is so good in colour and way of working that I am quite sure we can do nothing better: so as this first one is an order and is to be sent away I should be much obliged if you would put another *just like it* in hand: I know you don't like doing repetitions: but this is such a beautiful thing that I should think it a great pity if there were not more than one of it in the world. As soon as I can I intend getting a small

[1] **As a result of this letter the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings ('Anti-Scrape') was constituted a month later and had held its first meeting with Morris as secretary.**

piece of work ready that might amuse you more. As to those beautifully coloured cushion-pieces you sent; I thought the sort of work rather too *frail* for the purpose, and proposed the quilting of the long stitches down with hair-lines of silk; even at the expense of losing some of the beauty. I think also I might find some better designs for cushions for you: in fact I have one which I will send you if you please to do as you will with [it] as to colour and style of work: with the caution however that durability is necessary for such things; especially when the work is as beautiful as you make it.[1]

I am Yours very truly
William Morris

Horrington House
To William De Morgan[2] 3 April 1877

My dear De Morgan

I should be sorry indeed to force Mr Carlyle's inclinations on the matter in question,[3] but if you are seeing him I think you might point out to him that it is not only artists or students of art that we are appealing to, but thoughtful people in general. For the rest it seems to me not so much a question whether we are to have old buildings or not, as whether they are to be old or sham old: at the lowest I want to make people see that it would surely be better to wait while architecture and the arts in general are in their present experimental condition before doing what can never be undone, and *may* at least be ruinous to what it intends to preserve.

Yours very truly
William Morris

To the Editor", The Athenaeum 4 April 1877

Sir

I am not quite sure that I should wish to see Tewkesbury minster 'replaced in its former state', or one of its many 'former states'; but

[1] **'My wife had for some time been practising embroidery, and had developed a technique of her own. William Morris, whom I had known for many years, saw some of this work, and admired it so much that he asked her to execute large designs of his, leaving the colour to her. One day he had been lunching with us, and, while walking up and down my studio, in the way he had of working off some of his superabundant energy, said to me in emphatic tones, "You know,Holiday, I'd back your wife for heavy sums against all Europe in embroidery".' Henry Holiday, *Reminiscences of my Life*, p. 226.**

[2] **Potter and novelist, 1839-1917.**

[3] **That is, as to his becoming a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. This was a diplomatic letter, written at De Morgan's request to show to Carlyle**

as it is clearly impossible, when one comes to think of it, for ourselves or our buildings to live again either in the fifteenth century or the twelfth, it is hardly worth while to say much on this purely hypothetical matter of taste. On the other hand, I am sure that I do not wish the minster to look like a modern building, and I think Sir Edmund Lechmere also would disclaim any such wish, though doubtless many others would not; and I assert that the more money is spent in altering its 'present state' in the year 1877 and onwards, the more modern it will look. In truth, I am afraid that it will look much more modern than Sir Edmund Lechmere hopes; for I am older in restorations than he seems to be, and pretty well know the value of assurances of strict care and such-like in restorations. They are always made even in the worst cases, and never kept even in the best; as, indeed, they cannot possibly be. Everyone who has had to do with old buildings knows what a perilous process is that business of stripping, so naively alluded to by Sir Edmund Lechmere, and how comprehensive a phrase 'comparatively recent' can be made, nay, must be made very often when alterations once begin in an old building.

After all, the issue is narrow between Sir Edmund Lechmere and the restorers, and myself and the anti-restorers. Neither side wants a building to lose its ancient character; only the restorers think it will look even more ancient if it be worked all over under the 'care' of Sir Gilbert Scott today—which opinion we cannot admit. The issue being thus narrow, and the consequence of error so serious to lovers of art, I think it is but reasonable for the minority, to which I belong, to appeal to the public to *wait.* This is all the more reasonable, since if we are wrong no harm will be done. The unrestored ancient buildings are wronging no one in Church or State, as they are now; and it is but waiting a few years, and they can be restored then. Whereas if the restorers are wrong and have their way, they will hopelessly destroy all that is left us of our ancient buildings.

Prudence, we submit, should enlist the public on our side, for architecture is at present in a wholly experimental condition, as I suppose I need scarcely call on London streets to witness; and yet, such is the headlong rashness of our architects, that they have for the last thirty years made the priceless relics of medieval art and history mere blocks for their experiments; experiments which some of them must regret heartily, and sorely wish to 'restore'.

In my belief there is no remedy for the spreading of this disease

but for the public to make up its mind to put up with 'comparatively recent' incongruities in old churches and other public buildings, and to be content with keeping them weather-tight; and if they have any doubts about the stability of the fabric, to call in an engineer to see to it, and let iron ties, and the like, do what they can. For my part, I cannot help thinking that they will soon find it easy to bear the absence of stained glass, and shiny tiles, and varnished deal roofs, and all the various upholsteries with the help of which our architects and clergy have striven so hard to 'replace' our ancient buildings in their 'former state', or at any rate, in some 'former state' imagined by themselves to be super-excellent.

William Morris

{The Athenceum, 7 April 1877.)

To Thomas Wardle[1] 13 April 1877

Thank you for getting me news of the brocader [M. Bazin of Lyons]. We are willing to agree to his terms of 3,000 fr. for the year, and think it would be prudent not to guarantee for longer: but if he suits us, no doubt the situation will be a permanent one for him. I think before we strike a bargain we should see his specimens of work: meantime we send a parcel of examples of cloth such as we are likely to want as far as the weaving is concerned. We shall have to find him standing-room for the loom: what space and height is wanted for this? we should by all means want it big enough to weave the widest cloth that can be done *well* without steam-power: and it ought to be such as could weave a design 27 inches wide. We should certainly want to weave damask. I hope that your correspondent understands that we want a really intelligent man: if he turn out such, his position with us will be good, as we should surely be wanting more looms, and he would be foreman over the others. As soon as we are agreed, he must let us know when he can come, and send us some proper paper for pointing, in order that we may get a design ready for him without delay. So much for the brocader, when I have thanked you again very much for getting me on so far, and confessed that I am prodigiously excited about him.

The tapestry is a bright dream indeed; but it must wait till I get my carpets going; though I have had it in my head lately, because

[1] From Mackail, i. 351-2. Sir (then Mr) Thomas Wardle (1836-1909) of Leek, Staffordshire, was not only the greatest English expert in the art of dyeing at that time, but also famous for his researches into the silk industry in India.

there is a great sale now on in Paris of some of the finest ever turned out: much too splendid for anybody save the biggest pots to buy. Meantime much may be done in carpets: I saw yesterday a piece of ancient Persian, time of Shah Abbas (our Elizabeth's time) that fairly threw me on my back: I had no idea that such wonders could be done in carpets. . . .

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris 2 May 1877

Dearest Janey

I have got a lot of work to do just now of the Boots and Brewer kind; for we are going to have a great anti-Turk meeting next Monday at St James's Hall: ' would you very much mind if I were to come down on Friday morning instead of Thursday night: there is a committee meeting to-morrow at past 3, and I might be able to be there and catch the 4.45 train, and would do so if I could: otherwise I would be with you on Friday to dinner 1 o'clock: you had better telegraph if you particularly want me on Thursday evening and I will come at any rate. There is a great stew in political matters, and our side will be done for and war certain if we don't raise the very devil over it. Picture to yourself 3 years war and the shop in Oxford Street,[2] and poor Smith standing at the door with his hands in his pockets! There is a small meeting tonight at the Cannon St Hotel: I am going there to swell the crowd. . . .

Your loving
W.M.

26 Queen Square, W.C.
To the Editor, The Times 4 June 1877

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

Sir,—As Mr Loftie's letter, quoted in your columns, calls on our Society by name, and as the letters of the Dean of Canterbury and

[1] **That is, the Eastern Question Association, of which Morris was treasurer, formed *to* exploit the public indignation caused by Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria, then a part of the Ottoman Empire, at a time when there was a danger of England forming an alliance with Turkey against Russia. The Tory government of Disraeli feared that should Russia gain control of the Dardanelles, then Britain's route to India would be menaced together with her influence in the Middle East. Gladstone, as leader of the Liberals, on the other hand, by his campaign of 'Bulgarian atrocities', rallied one-half of British opinion in support of the oppressed Christian Slavs of the Balkans. It was Russia, with her Slavophile policy, that actively intervened in their support by declaring war against Turkey.**

[2] **Morris & Co., 264 Oxford Street, at the corner of North Audley Street. Telegraphic address: Honeysuckle London.**

Mr Beresford Hope touch our principles closely, I venture to hope that you will give me space for a word or two on the subject of the restoration of the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral. As to the present woodwork at the west end, it seems superfluous to praise it, as it is agreed on all hands that it is good, though in some people's minds I suppose it would be condemned as inherently unholy, because it is a post-Reformation work. But, good as it is, I cannot conceive what purpose it can serve when it is taken away from the place it was made for, and in which it looks both dignified and serious, as well as elegant; furthermore, what is to be the fate of the present stone screen when Sir Gilbert Scott's conjectural restoration of Prior Eastry's work is carried out? It is true that its surface has been destroyed by restoration, but it has been at least a fine work of a good date.

It may seem a little matter to make a stir about a piece of clever joinery and carving of Charles II's time, when the great work of the 12th century Frenchman[x] is about and above it, but I must confess to sharing that fear which Mr Beresford Hope thinks has made reason unhelpful to Mr. Loftie; for I suppose that the proposed imitation, restoration, or forgery of Prior Eastry's rather commonplace tracery is only the beginning of the evil day at Canterbury, and that before long we shall see the noble building of the two Williams confused and falsified by the usual mass of ecclesiastical trumpery and coarse daubing that all true lovers of art and history dread so sorely; that, in short, the choir of Canterbury will go the way of Ely, St Cross and Salisbury.

Sir, I think that our ancient historical monuments are national property and ought no longer to be left to the mercy of the many and variable ideas of ecclesiastical propriety that may at any time be prevalent among us.

I am, Sir, yours obediently
William Morris
Hon. Sec. of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

To the Editor, The Times 7 June 1877

Sir,—I am sorry to trouble you again in the matter of the proposed restoration of Canterbury Cathedral,but the Dean's letter shows that

[1] **William of Sens, who built the choir, died after falling from the scaffolding there.**

he has misunderstood both Mr Loftie and myself somewhat seriously, I think. He is mistaken in reading my letter as an approval of the schemes of restoration now afoot: on the contrary, I implied that the removal of the stalls now proposed would practically destroy a worthy work of art, which I value pretty much as Mr Loftie does, and I expressed a dread, which I still feel, that changes would not stop there, but would spread to the ancient fabric of the choir: I believe myself to be justified in that fear by the well-known fact that assurances of the kind the Dean is now giving are impossible to be kept to when restoration once begins. I am glad to hear from the Dean that he dreads paint in restoration, though it is by no means the only thing to fear; but I protest strongly against the charge that I consider the ancient painted work of our churches coarse daubing. I look on it rather with the greatest interest, and know that the art in it is often great, however rude it may be: it is the unfeeling and dead imitation of it so rashly practised in restoration that I condemn.

But the Dean's most serious misunderstanding both of Mr Loftie's letter and mine and of the general aim of our Society is in supposing that we wish our ancient buildings reduced to the state of ruins, whereas we earnestly press on their guardians the duty of keeping them in sound and orderly repair, so that they may never want restoration. Where Canterbury Cathedral has not been restored it is in as good a state as in the thirteenth century, and, man's work as it is, has hardly begun to perish yet, nor will it for many a hundred years, if only the roofs be well kept: where it is restored—well, let the ghost of the Norman tower tell that tale.

The Dean's argument about divine worship I do not understand, coming from him;[1] in the mouth of an ultramontane priest I should take it to mean, 'Yes, we know our doings are in bad taste, but we don't heed that, since they beguile the Vulgar—let them be beguiled.' For my part, remembering well the impression that Canterbury Cathedral made on me when I first stood in it as a little boy, I must needs think that a great building which is obviously venerable and weighty with history is fitter for worship than one turned into a scientific demonstration of what the original architects intended to do: I think that these learned restorations are good on paper to be

[1] The Dean had written: 'Mr Morris's Society probably looks on our Cathedral as a place for antiquarian research or for budding architects to learn their art in. We need it for the daily worship of God,'

kept in portfolios, but not good in new stone for the use of people who are busy and in earnest.

I am, Sir, Your obedient Servant
William Morris

The Society for the Protection
of Ancient Buildings
26 Queen Square, W.C.
10 July 1877

To John Ruskin

My dear Ruskin

We all think it might do good to distribute a leaflet with a reprint of your words on restoration in the Seven Lamps [1]: will you allow me to do so? They are so good, and so completely settle the whole matter, that I feel ashamed at having to say anything else about it, as if the idea was an original one of mine, or any body's else but yours: but I suppose it is of service, or may be, for different people to say the same thing.

I needn't say I don't feel in very high spirits as to the amount of good our Society is like to do; especially since so little is left to save: yet it might be of use for the future if we could make people ashamed of the damage they have done; and at the worst one must say that we are driven to speak at last.

With best wishes I am My dear Ruskin Yours affectionately
William Morris

26 Queen Square
London, W.C.
16 August 1877

To Mrs William Morris

Dearest Janey

I shall come to-morrow (Friday) by the train that gets to Lechlade at + past 5 (the one we came by). I shall bring a hamper with me; so I suppose Mrs Hiett's fly had better be requisitioned. I may just as well be at Kelmscott as here since everybody is away & in consequence I have nothing to do: however I shall be able to bring a bit of work with me. Please tell May to have a many worms ready for me: proper brandlings I must have: they are striped & don't smell nice—that is their sign.

I have got everything you want I think: I hope the bonnet will

[1] **Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).**

come to hand in moderate preservation. By the way Crom is coming with the Neds on Monday. Margery is wild with joy at the idea of coming. Love to the babies Your loving

W.M.

I didn't get your letter till last night, as I slept in town on Tuesday. Dont forget the *worms.*

26 Queen Square

To Mrs Henry Holiday 1 October 1877

Dear Mrs Holiday

I will do my best with the plum colour you send me a pattern of. I think I can match it: I shall send you the yellow for the body of the work in a day or two: I daresay it won't be a dead match, but will certainly be the same sort of colour: so I must ask you to make the best of it: a little variety of colour will be no harm. I hope to dye the 2 blues and the sea-green this week. As to our Exhibition, I shall certainly want the coverlet and some other pieces of work also: I want to make an impression on the one hand, and to have some small pieces about for people to buy on the other.

Yours very truly
William Morris

P.S. I forgot to say that I have no pattern by me of the light blue silk for the big leaves. Will you kindly send it at once.

Tullamore
Tuesday evening

To Mrs William Morris [10 October 1877]

Dearest Janey

I am safe and unsick across: the passage was very calm. The coast looked much more beautiful than I expected to see it. I did not sleep except for an hour on board, being prevented in the train by the jaw-bone of a fool.

A long journey from Dublin here through a curious country: it seems a little queer to be in Ireland, & I feel somewhat touched by it.[1]

I am writing just before dinner: the letter won't go off till to-morrow, but I know I shall want to roll into bed as soon as I get upstairs—not from whisky-punch however. I am lodged in an octa-

[1] **Morris had gone to visit the Countess of Charleville, Tullamore, King's Co., to advise her about doing up her house.**

gonal room which reminds me of Crom's tower, because that was hexagonal—you see the Irish charm is beginning to work already.

I have told Wardle [1] to send you a cheque for £5 at once: if he doesn't please blow him up: also ask for more. Love to the babies: I hope they are good. Your loving

W.M.

Leek

To Mrs Burne-Jones [?] [2] October 1877

... I slept on board for about two hours, and then stirred myself to get up and look, and when I came on deck we were just well in sight of land. It was much more beautiful than I expected to see: a long rather low cliffy coast on the right with a rocky steep island in front of it; and on the left a long line of mountains rather than hills going on and turning the corner, and casting up points a long way inland: the said mountains very lovely in outline. The sky was grey and sulky, but not unfit for the scene, and a thickish mist hid all the feet of the mountains, while a cloud or two was lying on the tops of them: it looked very like Iceland and quite touched my hard heart.

Dublin is not altogether an ugly town; the Liffey runs through the chief street much like the Seine at Paris, which is good: yet a dirty and slatternly city is Dublin, and Guinness seems the only thing of importance there. I set off about midday for my aristocrats; the train running through a very flat country with the aforesaid Dublin mountains on the left; you pass the Curragh, where our army of occupation sits, a fine moorland swelling up towards the Dublin mountains: then you see Kildare, with a great ruined mediaeval church and a tall round tower beside it. Then the Dublin mountains die away, and the Slieve Bloom hills rise up on the left of the great plain; which is to say the truth nothing but bog, reclaimed, half-reclaimed, or unreclaimed: in Elizabeth's time thick forest covered it, but the oaks and all are gone now. The villages we passed were very poor-looking, the cotters' houses in outside appearance the very poorest habitations of man I have yet seen, Iceland by no means excepted.

Tullamore, my town, lies a little without the old Pale: my employers told me that it used to be the very centre of ribbonism; even last year a man was slain there for 'agrarian' reasons. They told me

[1] This was George Wardle, the manager of Morris & Co., and brother-in-law to Thomas Wardle of Leek.

[2] Mackail, i. 358-9.

that an old man had told them how he had seen in the rebellion 20 miles of country burning in a straight line, the cabins and villages fired by the Orange yeomanry: the grandfather of the present young lady who owns the estate commanded the troops of that district in the war, and his banners hang up very little the worse for wear in the hall of the house now—and these unreasonable Irish still remember it all, so long-memoried they are! . . .

To Henry Holiday[1]

26 Queen Square
24 October 1877

My dear Holiday

I enclose a cheque for £50, the sum I agreed to pay for the table-cloth, pending the sale of it: if I can sell it for £100 I shall owe Mrs Holiday £40 more: at the same time I shall ask her to let me consider it if I get an offer at a less price; as it would be a pity to be obliged to stop the work for want of a market: if Mrs. Holiday would like any further payment on account of the work now in hand, I can manage it I think.

As regards the future, I am bound to be careful, as it is doubtful what market there is for these costly articles; the coming year will enlighten us a little on that point. I don't fancy it would be easy to get orders for curtains in the way you suggest: I will however get in hand a design for a portiere, which I will ask Mrs Holiday to carry out for me in one or two ways & will see what our clients say to it: I should make the design less minute than the coverlet, and therefore easier to carry out.

Yours very truly
William Morris

To Mrs Henry Holiday

26 Queen Square
24 October 1877

Dear Mrs Holiday

I am glad to hear you are getting on so well; I hope to be able to send your silks in a day or two dyed as well as I can. I don't know if you ever test colours by putting them in the sun on a card; I should advise you to do so: some colours on silk are so very fugi-

[1] **Painter (i839-1927), chiefly known for his designs for stained glass and the painting of Dante's first meeting with Beatrice. 'I painted a picture this year of the "Rhine-maidens", from Wagner's "Rheingold". For this purpose I modelled the three nymphs, tinted them, and placed them in a large tank with a plate-glass front, filled with water coloured transparent blue-green. I also modelled rocks, and the effect was curiously natural. Burne-Jones borrowed my tank later when he painted his "Mermaid".' Henry Holiday, *Reminiscences of my Life* pp. 266-7.**

tive; and though it doesn't matter so much for embroidery as other matters, yet it is as well to know what one has got to trust to. Many thanks about the anemone: I am going down to Kelmscott in about a month: if the plant could stay unharmed in the earth till then, I should like to take it with me and plant it there.

I am longing to see the big coverlet finished: I will set to work now about designing a portiere as my note to Mr Holiday explains.

Yours very truly
William Morris

26 Queen Square
To Mrs Henry Holiday 29 October 1877

Dear Mrs Holiday

Many thanks for your kind note: I am glad to be able to give you a fairly good account of our mishap: it is the glazier's shop, the nice-looking building at the back that is burnt: there is a good deal of stained-glass destroyed and material for it, but *nothing else;* also we are fully insured: of course there will be a good deal of trouble and loss from the stoppage of business.[1]

As to the money-matters, I am sure that no one need be uneasy about taking money duly earned, as no one ought to grudge paying it, and so your mind may be quite at rest about the matter.

I am just beginning the design for the portiere, which I mean shall be much bolder and less minute than what I have hitherto done for you.

Yours very truly
William Morris

To Thomas Wardle[2] 14 November 1877

I shall probably find one letter's space not enough for going into the whole matter of the tapestry, but I will begin. Let's clear off what you say about the possibility of establishing a non-artistic manufactory. You could do it, of course; 'tis only a matter of money and trouble: but *cui bono?* it would not amuse you (unless I wholly misunderstand you), and would, I am sure, *not* pay commercially: a *cheap* new article at once showy and ugly, if advertised with humbug enough, will sell, of course: but an expensive article, even with ugliness to recommend it—I don't think anything under a Duke could sell it. However, as to the commercial element of this part of the

[1] **This refers to a fire which broke out in the workshops at 26 Queen Square.**
[2] **Mackail, i. 363-5.**

scheme, 'tis not my affair, but on the art side you must remember that, as nothing is so beautiful as fine tapestry, nothing is so ugly and base as bad: e.g. the Gobelins or the present Aubusson work: also tapestry is not fit for anything but figure-work (except now and then; I shall mention wherein presently). The shuttle and loom beat it on one side, the needle on the other, in pattern-work: but for figure-work 'tis the only way of making a web into a picture: now there is only one man at present living (as far as I know) who can give you pictures at once good enough and suitable for tapestry—to wit, Burne-Jones. The exception I mentioned above would be the making of leaf and flower pieces (greeneries, *des verdures),* which would generally be used to eke out a set of figure-pieces: these would be within the compass of people who could not touch the figure-work. It would only be by doing these that you could cheapen the work at all.

The qualifications for a person who would do successful figure-work would be these:

i. General feeling for art, especially for its decorative side.

2. He must be a good colourist.

3. He must be able to draw well; i.e. he must be able to draw the human figure, especially hands and feet.

4. Of course he must know how to use the stitch of the work.

Unless a man has these qualities, the first two of which are rare to meet with and cannot be taught, he will turn out nothing but bungles, disgraceful to every one concerned in the matter: I have no idea where to lay my hands on such a man, and therefore I feel that whatever I do I must do chiefly with my own hands. It seems to me that tapestry cannot be made a matter of what people nowadays call manufacturing, and that even so far as it can be made so, the only possible manufacturer must be an artist for the highest kind of work: otherwise all he has to do is to find house room, provide the frame and warp, and coloured worsteds exactly as the workman bids him. In speaking thus I am speaking of the picture-work: a cleverish woman could do the greeneries no doubt. When I was talking to you at Leek I did not fully understand what an entirely individual matter it must be: it is just like wood-engraving: it is a difficult art, but there is nothing to *teach* that a man cannot learn in half a day, though it would take a man long practice to do it well. There *are* manufacturers of wood-engraving, e.g. the Dalziels, as big humbugs as any within the narrow seas. I suspect you scarcely understand what a

difficult matter it is to translate a painter's design into material: I have been at it sixteen years now, and have never quite succeeded.

In spite of all these difficulties, if in any way I can help you, I will: only you must understand fully that I intend setting up a frame and working at it myself, and I should bargain for my being taught by you what is teachable: also I see no difficulty in your doing greeneries and what patterns turned out desirable, and I would make myself responsible for the designs of such matters. With all this, I have no doubt that we shall both lose money over the work: you don't know how precious little people care for such things.

To recapitulate: Tapestry at its highest is the painting of pictures with coloured wools on a warp: nobody but an artist can paint pictures; but a sort of half-pictures, i.e. scroll-work or leafage, could be done by most intelligent people (young girls would do) under direction.

I am sorry if in any way I appear to have wet-blanketed you: but the matter is such an important one that it is no use avoiding facing the truth in all ways, and I have accordingly given you my mind without concealment.

To C. J. Faulkner [1] 15 November 1877

I am very willing to receive you as a convert if you must needs ticket yourself so, though I don't see the need, as both your views and mine being interpreted meant declaring ourselves enemies of that den of thieves the Turkish Government. As to the Russians, all I say is this: we *might* have acted so that they could have had no pretext for interfering with Turkey except in accordance with the unanimous wish of Europe: we *have* so acted as to drive them into separate interference whatever may come: and to go to war with them for this would be a piece of outrageous injustice. Furthermore if we came victorious out of such a war, what should we do with Turkey, if we didn't wish to be damned? 'Take it ourselves,' says the bold man, 'and rule it as we rule India.' But the bold man don't live in England at present I think: and I know what the Tory trading stock-jobbing scoundrel that one calls an Englishmen to-day would do with it; he would shut his eyes hard over it, get his widows and orphans to lend it money, and sell it vast quantities of bad cotton. For the rest, I know that the Russians have committed many crimes, but I cannot accuse them of behaving ill in this Turkish business at

[1] **Mackail, i. 347-8.**

present, and I must say I think it very unfair of us, who freed our black men, to give them no credit for freeing their serfs: both deeds seem to me to be great landmarks in history. However, I repeat, to finish, that my cry and that of all that I consider *really* on our side is 'The Turkish Government to the Devil, and something rational and progressive in its place,' If people say the latter part is difficult, I can only say that it is difficult to make a pair of shoes, or even a poem; and yet both deeds are sometimes done;—more or less ill 'tis true...

26 Queen Sq.

To Jane Alice Morris 29 November [1877]

... Let me see for news: First Mr Irishman will not have Horrington House being alarmed at the aspect of the ferocious Sarah—the more fool he! Next, & this is sad, poor Margery [Margaret Burne-Jones] has had a bereavement: her poor Persian Pussy: I had to help to dig it down into the cold earth last Sunday, for it had died suddenly in the night: and when I came in to breakfast [i.e. at the Grange] there were the two elders not knowing how to break the news to Margery; however I think she has got over her grief by now. I was there yesterday evening, & Margery had with her her little friend Henrietta.

We shall soon be beginning our new piece of silk in colours, Bazin is troublesome about it; these weavers don't understand much about getting a pattern together: they can just weave, & that is all. Apropos of frogs, your fat friend is giving a series of lectures on French history: aunt Georgie attends them & says he is very funny: he is abusing Napoleon the Great chiefly, who indeed somewhat deserves it, if he cares about it. They are all Germans of the female sex at the said lectures, which awful word reminds me of my own to come off next Tuesday. I went with Wardle to the place, & read Robinson Crusoe to him to see if I could make my voice heard: which I found easy to be done: yet I can't help feeling a little nervous at having to face my fellow beings in public. . . .

26 Queen Square

To Mrs Henry Holiday 4 December 1877

Dear Mrs Holiday

I have the coverlet and am delighted with it: it is beautifully smooth: I shall put it in a flat box to keep it.

About money matters: what am I to pay you for it: I am quite ashamed to appear to grudge paying for such a splendid piece of

work—but you know my difficulty which is with the stingy public: and if I could sell two or three grand pieces it would be encouraging both to you and to me: so I want to pay such a sum for it as would not make my price too prohibitive. I must say this looks mean when I must also add that I never saw a finer piece of work.

Yours very truly
William Morris

To Mrs Henry Holiday

26 Queen Square
6 December 1877

Dear Mrs Holiday

I sent a cheque for £60 on account of the coverlet yesterday, and I suppose I must ask you to wait to see what I can sell it for as to the other money: I am afraid we are hardly likely to get £120 for it: You see this opens up the difficulty in a commercial way of the whole industry: meantime I am so glad that such a fine piece of work should be done that I am quite willing to forgo any profit on it: but the question is what is to be done for the future? Can you suggest any smaller pieces of work that could be done? cushions and the like say, and what else: by doing these you could be paid duly for your work, and the articles would be more saleable: I should like to know what sort of work you think would do for such articles, as the kind of work would influence my designs: I shall soon have your silks ready for the portiere or all but the darker one: only I find it very hard to get the very light colours in 'good' dye. I have not yet been able to get the cloth for filling up *the* table-cloth which is a great annoyance to me.

The coverlet is certainly most satisfactory.

I am Yours very truly
William Morris

To Jane Alice Morris

Queen Sq:
7 December [1877]

. . . Yes, I gave my lecture on Tuesday & have only got your letter today Friday: it went off very well, and I was not at all nervous, but made myself well heard: I send you *The Architect* which has got it all in; but I intend publishing it again myself.[1] I can send you

[1] **This was Morris's first lecture, *The Decorative Arts*, given before the Trades Guild of Learning on 4 December in 'a dismal hole near Oxford Street'. It was published immediately after by Ellis & White and reprinted, under the title of 'The Lesser Arts', in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (Mackail, i. 359).**

some more books, my dear, if you like: have you a fancy for any? Why hasn't May written to me yet? is she too busy drawing? You mustn't get dull you know out there, or back you will all have to come.[1] I am going this evening with Uncle Ned & aunt Georgie to see *The Sorcerer*, which is a comic opera of Gilbert & Sullivan: I doubt if I shall care for it much though. On Tuesday I believe Mr Webb & I are going down to Kelmscott for 2 or 3 days. The river has been much flooded, Annie says, but is going down a bit now: the weather has been entirely beastly for the past week. . . .

I have been having an afternoon with froggy, the loom & our Coventry 'designer' so-called: the loom was the wisest of the 4 of us & understood much more of what the others said than anybody else did—at least I think so. . . . Well, my dear daughter, since I have been dyeing this morning, I must go & try to get my hands cleaner lest they should not let me into the theatre at all. Best love, my dears, to you all; 'tis getting on for three weeks since I saw the last of you.

Your loving father
William Morris

What larks![2]

To Mrs William Morris 14 December 1877

. . . I am just come back from Kelmscott where I was 3 days with Webb: it was rather melancholy after our jolly times of last summer: we had 2 fine but very cold days; this morning brilliant but white-frosty: the river had been much flooded, but was lower the first day, & I caught two good pike: I should like to have sent you one in a letter. . . . The blown down tree *is* that one by the causeway-gate: it makes a sad gap, for it was a fine branchy tree: a great mess it makes too: I shall write to Mrs Turner & ask her to bestir herself to get it moved, for it nearly blocks up the gangway altogether. Webb told Mitchell what to do with the little window & he will get it done at once. The garden looked neat & nice.

I am going out to dine with Stopford Brooke to-night, but I fear I shall be irreverently reminded of a parson in the 'Sorceress' [sic] by Gilbert which I saw the other night: he, the play-parson, was very funny, but all else I thought dreary stuff enough in spite of Ned. . . .

[1] The family were spending the winter months at Oneglia, Italy.

[2] Dickens' *Great Expectations* was one of Morris's favourite books and his daughter May tells us that he frequently impersonated Joe Gargery for their amusement. 'Wot Larx' was a habitual greeting with him when writing to his family.

26 Queen Square
To Mrs William Morris 20 December [1877]

Dearest Janey

I write just a line awaiting some letter from you or the babes: I am like to be very busy for the next 3 weeks: public matters pressing. Great things have happened since your letter to Georgie which she shewed me this morning: the marshal has given way; Plevna has fallen [i.e. to the Russians]; Servia is on the frontier—and things seem most like the Jew wretch & that old Vic forcing us into the war. You will see how the sprightly widow went to Hughenden & then said she would stay at Windsor Christmas over: & now Parliament is to meet for business on Jan. 17. So we are all alive at the E.Q.A. & shall miss George[x] very much in the matter. I am so busy today that you must excuse a miserable scrap. ... Of course you will see all the public news as soon as you do this; but I am so bothered by it all that I can do little else. I even tried to flit a few words at a small meeting we had at Lambeth yesterday: I can't say I got on very well but I did manage to get a few words out & get to the end. . . .

Much Hadham[2]
To Jane Alice and May Morris Christmas Day [1877]

Dearest Jenny & May

I have been so much about from pillar to post the last fortnight that I am hazy as to wh: of my babes I wrote to last so I will even write to both: and hereafter I shall solemnly write my letters in due order: 1st Mama 2nd Jenny 3rd May.

I have been much agitated for the past week by the goings on of an august personage & my Lord Beaconsfield; but we hope to agitate others in our turn next. I do not think it will really end in war: but the party of stupidity will do their best to bring it about: neither is there any doubt that the A.P. aforesaid is helping them and that this fact, strange as it may seem to us, makes many people, especially professional politicians, feeble in resistance. On the whole our side has got weaker, and many people are sluggish & hard to move who thoroughly agree with us: on the other hand serious business men & the like do shudder back from war, even those who are Turkophile: the E.Q.A. met in committee yesterday & agreed to do something, though not as dramatically as I could have wished: we are issuing a manifesto & asking people to stir: however we meet again next

[1] i.e. The Hon. George Howard. [2] His mother's home in Essex.

Monday & then I hope we shall arrange to have a big meeting before Parliament: meantime last Sunday we had a success, for a meeting summoned of working men on Clerkenwell Green to talk war turned all the other way by good management: item the same rascal (his name is Maltman Barry) has summoned a meeting to Trafalgar Sq: next Saturday, which I hope will go the same road.

So much for politics: I have seen several letters from your friends, so I know you have been busy in that matter. 'Tis a fine Christmas-day to-day though there has been a little snow. Edgar & his missis & baby are here, also Isabella & her naval officer, & Ada: the latter is really much improved. We have just had a peppery little snow-shower, item a cock-pheasant has been on the lawn just now: these are bits of Hadham news you know my dears: now they are coming in from church, so I shall [have] to give in. I think it is rather funny of you my babies not to like Italian: let me tell you my Jenny that if you were taught it as the Professor taught you French, you would like it very much. Uncle Ned would tell you that a great deal of it is old Latin, older than Augustan or even Lucretius: there's for you, my dear. Now I must leave off everybody is chattering about me: give my best love to Mama, & take my love yourselves. I am whiles a bit dull without you: but still wot larx! Your loving father

William Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London

To Mrs Henry Holiday Thursday [27 December 1877]

Dear Mrs Holiday

I was sorry not to see you: I will willingly pay the 40s. for the new cloth: of course I see that there is a great deal of work in it of a very careful kind: as to the colour it is lovely, nor do I think that anything could have looked better for the border than the light-blue: there is only one thing to be said further, wh: is that a *very little more* of the white and copper-coloured work in the body would improve it: would you mind doing this? it would be just a spot or two where the work looks a trifle unfinished for lack of it.

After all beautiful as this work is my mind is so perversely un-architectural, and I am such a savage that I prefer the many-coloured work on the cotton.

One other thing before you begin the new piece of door-hanging:

to wit: spun silk (filosel) is after all 'shoddy': would you find it harder to use net silk if it had a slight throw in it, that is what the Persian and Island Greek work is done with: say like floss only slightly twisted: the extra expense of material is not worth while considering when the *handiwork* is so costly. Yours very truly

William Morris

To Mrs William Morris

Queen Sq.
28 December 1877

Dearest Janey

I am dull enough without you on the very few occasions when I have anything to think of except my work of some sort or other. I was at mother's on Tuesday & Wednesday, the weather very bright & cold. . . .

We are still in a state of stew over the plot of 'the heart of a woman (he might have said an old & ugly woman) & the head of an aged statesman', as Mr J. Lemoine has it: but I do hope that we shall get free from our fear this time. However the E.Q.A. is stirring a little & perhaps next week we shall have a row. I am really sorry you find the weather so Icelandic at Oneglia. I tried to chaff Ned on the subject: but he was equal to the occasion & said he had always told me that the winter was colder in Italy than in England. I hope you wrap up well & have really warm things.

I am going to have a quiet evening over the proofs of my last lecture: and then I must set to at the next which is much harder to do really. I enclose 3 notes for Jenny, Xmas cards I suspect: I am sick of that useless form of industry. Annie Catherwood, I am told, spent her Xmas day at the Grange, where she was very lively: Ned confided to me that he was not: I for my part decidedly enjoyed the country, it was so bright: only—let me confess & be hanged—I drank 2 glasses of port wine on Xmas day, & on the next morning there were signs of the toe-devil, & I had in my terror to fast more on the day after Xmas than Henrietta fasted on the day before: owing to which I am all right. And I had a very tolerable day after all, doing nothing but a very little walk to the Cornwall's farm. Also Isabella cut my hair in your absence with much success. Mind and buy warm wraps against next month.. ..

I am Your loving
W.M.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Jane Alice Morris *4* January 1878

Dearest Jenny

As this is a sort of New Year letter I am writing to May as well: I have written what may be called the domestic news to her, and so here goes for politics to you: The last few days have been anxious, nobody knowing anything as to what was going on: To-day things look better: for Lord Carnarvon has spoken to a deputation, who came to him about African matters, both sensibly and well, as you will see when you get the papers: which will also tell you how the Russians have refused our mediation: you may fancy how the wretches of the *Telegraph* tried to whip up public opinion about that: but the *Globe* and *Standard are* both moderate: nevertheless we are *all* of opinion that we must go on agitating: personally I don't like it: for I have found myself pledged to go to Chichester on Monday to speak at a Liberal Association: I have spent the whole morning at Broadhurst's & am to go there to-morrow also: for we are going to hold a great meeting in conjunction with a working-man's committee: you see we want to finish with them for good & all this time: 'tis as bad as the Russians over Kars: are we always to be taking it? The Trafalgar Sq. last Saturday was disgracefully reported by *The Daily News: The Times* was much better about it: it was a glorious victory for us: though I believe some blood was shed (from noses): the enemy spent huge time & trouble & plenty of money all to be spoilt in the end. I was not there, but Faulkner was & one or two of our committee went to look on. I am really beginning to hope that Disraeli will be kicked out this time: but am afraid that he will draw back, and say he meant nothing: you may be sure that the Empress Brown has a great deal to do with it all: what a rage she will be in! For I really cannot think that the country will go to war when all is said: it would be too monstrous: the London working men have now got their backs well upon our side....

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris 19 January 1878

. . . The Agitation is over for the present I suppose: Parliament has met: the Queen's speech was the usual shilly-shally, but hinted at asking for money wh: everybody thought would be asked for;

but Northcote in answer to Harrington said they would not ask for the money till unexpected events happened: Dizzy's speech was angry but perfectly empty: Argyle made a very good & determined speech; so that I think the Liberals will vote against the money if it *is* asked for: which I don't think it will be unless any really unexpected events should change the general views of the country: there lies the danger: what one fears is that Dizzy has bidden the Turks *not* to make peace, but to draw on the Russians to Constantinople: I confess I fear the effect of a Russian siege of that city on the *ignorant* public; and meantime we expect every day to hear of the Russians at Adrianople. There is no doubt that the last fortnight's agitation has stopped Dizzy from asking for money & proposing a Gallipoli expedition: that is to say from proposing immediate war: this is encouraging: but the danger will not be over till peace is signed. As to the agitation I must confess I have been agitated as well as agitating: you will have got the newspapers by this time with a sort of report of our proceedings including the speech of me, & its —may I call it amiable indiscretion: of course I said more, and more connected words than that: the little meeting was very noisy, but I call it a success considering the slight care with which it was got up: at least it quite refused to cheer the Empress Brown: you see I had to speak at the end by wh: time the peace-party desired to fight for peace, and the war party was blue with rage. The evening meeting was magnificent:[1] orderly and enthusiastic: though mind you, it took some very heavy work to keep the enemy's roughs out; and the noise of them outside was like the sea roaring against a lighthouse and though the overflow meeting at Tralfagar Sq: was in our favour on the whole, yet there was opposition there also: you will have seen about our music: wasn't it a good idea? I think Chesson suggested it first: & then they set me to write the song, wh: I did on the Monday night. It went down very well, & they sang it well together: they struck up while we were just ready to come onto the platform & you may imagine that I felt rather excited when I heard them begin to tune up:[2] they stopped at the end of each verse and cheered lustily: we came onto the platform just about the middle of it. Mundella made a first-rate chairman, & the speaking was much above the average: and the opposition *inside* was so small as to be quite

[1] This was the Workmen's Neutrality Demonstration held in Exeter Hall on 16 January, at which Mr and Mrs Burne-Jones, C. J. Faulkner and Cormell Price were also present.

[2] To the tune of 'The Hardy Norseman's Home of Yore'.

insignificant, & even that soon got cowed into silence. I send you enclose[d] 3 "London Lads": I have a bundle here & if you want more for the Howards I will send on again.[1]

I am very tired with it and shall enjoy a week of dyeing & designing next week if Dizzy will let me have it. I am sorry to hear that Sarah is lonely: I bid her go out every Sunday: & next Thursday I am going to give a dinner party—Webb, Vinal & Wardle.

I have had a nice letter from May: give my best love to them both, & take it yourself.

Queen Sq.

To Mrs William Morris 1 February [1878]

Dearest Janey

I write you a short line to say that I am all right: safe in wind and limb, and not very likely to risk either at present; though I was at a very noisy meeting last night down at Stepney, where we had a bare majority: I have been writing to Howard today about the 'situation': I must say I feel gloomy enough about it, though I cannot suppose it is hopeless: meantime our people are much dispirited with the defeat at Sheffield, and the row yesterday in the City, at which latter place there were some 7000 people; they behaved very disgracefully, as you will see in the newspapers: they had 400 roughs down in waggons from Woolwich Dockyard, & generally played the gooseberry: people on our side had to hide away in cellars & places & get out anyhow: all of this is very enraging, & I am beginning to say, well if they will have war, let them fill their bellies with it then! However, perhaps the Government don't mean so much as they seem to mean: it may be bluster to satisfy the rump in and out of parliament. I feel very low & muddled about it all: but we have one shot in the locker yet, to whit a big, a real big demon-

[1] **The first two verses run:**

Wake, London lads, wake, bold and free!
Arise and fall to work,
Lest England's glory come to be
Bond servant to the Turk!

Think of your sires! how oft and oft
On freedom's field they bled,
When Cromwell's hand was raised aloft,
And kings and scoundrels fled.

The war party had a song, too, but it was directed against the Russians:

We don't want to fight,
But, by Jingo, if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men,
We've got the money too.

KELMSCOTT MANOR

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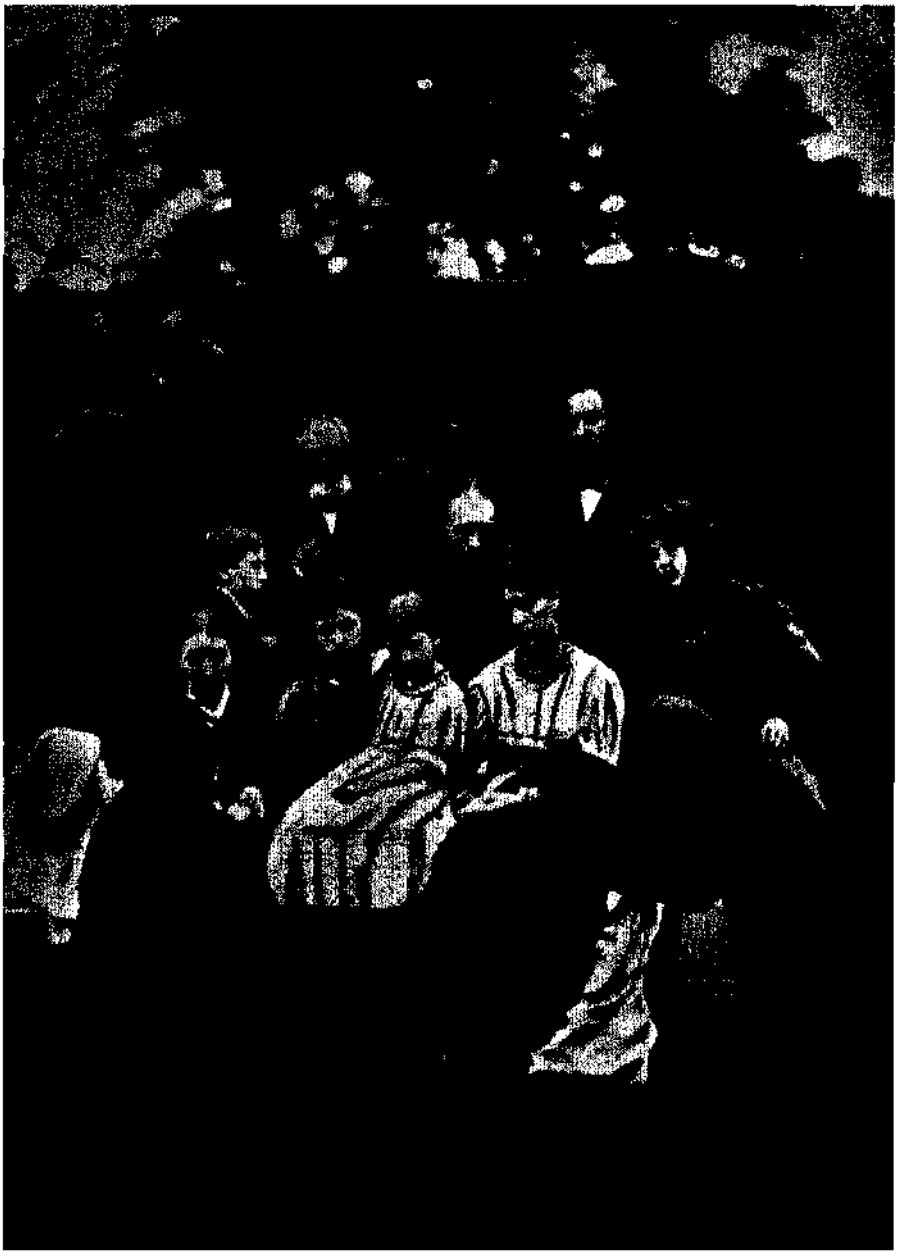

THE MORRIS AND BURNE-JONES FAMILIES
IN THE GARDEN AT THE GRANGE

stration in Hyde Park; which however is both expensive & dangerous; especially in England, where it sometimes rains. I hope you are having better weather and also that you are all better yourselves: I was very glad to hear the good news of Jenny: did she get my letter on her birthday? Would she like any book sent to her there do you think? she *hasrit* written to me for ever such a time. Your loving

W.M.

To Mrs William Morris

Queen Square
4 February 1878

I send the tea. 2lb. thereof by post: which is expensive but it don't matter.

I am very well: but still anxious work it is: though the news this morning is that the armistice is signed at last: the fact is that the Liberal Party are funking owing to the Tory successes against their meetings: I was at a committee-meeting this morning where I must say our counsels were perplexed: I can only say one must be patient, and hope, but I for one feel very bitter and angry.

It must be said that the debate ought to be very damaging to their (the Tory) cause: they have not a word to say: scarcely even lies: the debate will end on Thursday: but I fear our friends durst not *obstruct* and of course the Government will have a large majority. And after all if the country will have war, let it, and try a little ruin for the purging of its folly. . . .

To C. J. Faulkner[1]

5 February 1878

I am full of shame and anger at the cowardice of the so-called Liberal party. A very few righteous men refuse to sit down at the bidding of these yelling scoundrels and pretend to agree with what they hate: these few are determined with the help of our workingmen allies (who all along have been both staunch and sagacious) to get up a great demonstration in London as soon as may be, which will probably be Saturday week. There will certainly be a fight, so of course you will come up if you can.

To Jane Alice Morris

Horrington House
11 February [1878]

Dearest Jenny

I do not think you naughty for not having written before: in fact I am glad that you have plenty to do, & haven't so much time

[1] From Mackail, i. 361.

for letters: you see with us here, there are so many and such great events crammed into a short space, that the time seems long: the past week, as you will see by the papers, has been a very agitating one. On Monday (this day last week) there was a meeting of the E.Q.A. & it was obvious that our party in Parliament were getting out of heart: so some of us conscious how dangerous things were getting met at Mr Broadhurst's & talked about holding a great demonstration in Hyde Park to keep up their spirits: I set off with Mr Auberon Herbert to beg money for it to S. Morley's, a big merchant in the city, & then we went to the House of Commons to beset members in the lobby, which we had to do on the Wednesday again: on that day the Tories had a meeting in Exeter Hall, which turned out a very poor affair, the room only 2 thirds full & plenty of opposition: on Thursday morning I went to Auberon Herbert's & we concocted an address for the meeting; but as we came into the Strand in the afternoon the newspapers had in them, 'the Russians in Constantinople & Gallipoli': here was a spoke in our wheel! No one talked of anything else that evening. I heard that the confusion in the House of Commons was beyond everything; that it was like a French revolutionary assembly. Mr Foster, as you know, withdrew his amendment, & only 96 Liberals voted against the money vote: many people thought that war would be declared in a few hours. But next day (Friday) things looked much better, & our people began to pluck up heart again. In the evening I was at a meeting of the Workmans Neutrality Committee, & [after] the meeting about 50 people went as a deputation to the House to thank the 96: we were received in a room called the Conference-room, which has a sort of screen across it: and the scene (apart from the seriousness of the situation) was as good as one of your plays, my dear: for some of the Tory MPs were gravely & solemnly bowing and yes-ing to us in the nether end,—James & Chamberlain were having a pretty little quarrel with the intruders at the other end. Well things went much better that evening: Gladstone made a very good speech & when the division came off again about 30 more voted for us than on Thursday: also the Government made moderate speeches, and though the fleet had gone to Constantinople, Lord Derby has, so to say, wrapped it up in cotton wool: and this morning we were all thinking that things were looking better; nor indeed is it easy to see on what excuse we can go to war; but at noon is a new surprise got ready for us, and a curious one—*the Turk wont let our ships pass the Dardanelles.*—The

worst part of it all is that the war fever is raging in England, & people go about in a Rule Britannia style that turns one's stomach; they tried a big meeting at Cremorne on Saturday: but I put a spoke in their wheel, & it was not a great success for them: nevertheless though one foresaw that all this would happen it is nasty when it comes. Ask Mr Howard how he likes being at the mercy of the veracity of Beaconsfield, the sagacity of Northcote, & the tenacity of Derby. With which 3 long-tailed words I will end politics, my dear. Tell Mama that business is fairly good at 26 considering the state of trade: we have let our 2nd floor at Oxford St: We have had a longish spell of cold & raw weather: best love to you, to May & Mama, & good-bye. I have just got a letter from May. Your loving father

William Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris 25 February 1878

Dearest Janey

I suppose I shall have a letter from one or other of you to-morrow, but I shall scarcely be able to answer it, as I am going to Cambridge to give an address at the School of Art (for Colvin). As to my political career, I think it is at an end for the present: & has ended sufficiently disgustingly, after beating about the bush & trying to organize some rags of resistance to the war-party for a fortnight, after spending all one's time in committees & the like: I went to Gladstone with some of the workmen & Chesson, to talk about getting him to a meeting at the Agricultural Hall: he agreed & was quite hot about it, and as brisk as a bee: I went off straight to the Hall, & took it for tomorrow: to work we fell, & everything got into trim: but—on Monday our parliamentaries began to quake, and tease Gladstone, and they have quaked the meeting out now: the E.Q.A. was foremost in the flight, & really I must needs say they behaved ill in the matter: Gladstone was quite ready to come up to the scratch & has behaved well throughout: but I am that ashamed that I can scarcely look people in the face though I did my best to keep the thing up: the working-men are in a great rage about it, as they well may be: for I do verily believe we should have made it a success; though I don't doubt that there would have been a huge row: there was a stormy meeting of the E.Q.A. yesterday full of wretched little personalities, but I held my tongue—I am out of it now, I mean as

to bothering my head about it: I shall give up reading the Papers, and shall stick to my work. Of course after this fiasco it will be impossible to hold another meeting in London on the subject: we have been terrorized by the Medical Students & the Civil Servants, and are now slaves of the Tories for life. On the other hand it must be said that things look much less like war than they did: so we must even hope. I will write again soon: to May this time.

Best love to you all: I am so sick of it & so vexed but I shall not let it bother me over much. Yourloving
W.M.

To Jane Alice Morris

Horrington House
6 March [1878]

... I am at home to-day & have been since Saturday, because I can't help it, being lame with gouty-rheumatism, or rheumatic gout: I can't get down stairs, but I find the long room very comfortable: I don't suppose I shall be prisoner for more than one more day now, as I am not very bad. I duly went to Kelmscott with Ellis and Uncle Edgar getting down there on Monday-week evening: the fishing was not very good: we got a good many little perch but only one big one: & Edgar got 3 smallish pikes: on the other hand Ellis captured a monster under the willow on the Berkshire side of the old weir pool: he weighed 17 lbs. I thought we should never get him into the net he was so big: but somehow I don't seem to care about fishing like I did: I suppose I'm getting too old for it: this big pike bit a gold fish which Ellis had brought down with him. . . . The new window is made & the little room looks much better for it: but the stupid Mitchell has daubed the wall outside with nasty whitey-bluey cement about the joints: however I don't doubt we can scrape it off & set all right: the poor old tree is cut up, or all but, & ready to be carried away: Mouse [the Icelandic pony] looks shaggy & well in his winter costume, & the 2 pussies are as clean as ever.

I have been so long now without doing any work, I mean my proper work, that I have very little news to tell you about that: we have got a fresh piece of work (darned) from Mrs Holiday, which is prettier even than the coverlet: but perhaps I told you about that. Margery is quite well now: only she has had another pet trouble: a pretty little green parroquet wh. her papa bought her as a tooth-taking-out-reward has died after a short illness: I am glad my dears that you have not yet taken to pets: for they are a *nuisance*. . . .

To Thomas Wardle[1] March 1878

I enclose a warp from a sixteenth-century piece of tapestry, which as you see is worsted: the pitch is 12 to the inch: nothing in tapestry need be finer than this. In setting up your work you must remember that as tapestry hangs on the wall the warps are horizontal, though of course you weave with them vertical. If you send me the space of your loom I will make a design for it.

Thanks for sending me Arnold's lecture [i.e. the address on "Equality" delivered at the Royal Institution in the previous month and afterwards reprinted in Matthew Arnold's *Mixed Essays]* with the main part of which of course I heartily agree: the only thing is that if he has any idea of a remedy he durstn't mention it. I think myself that no rose-water will cure us: disaster and misfortune of all kinds, I think, will be the only things that will breed a remedy: in short, nothing can be done till all rich men are made poor by common consent. I suppose he dimly sees this, but is afraid to say it, being, though naturally a courageous man, somewhat infected with the great vice of that cultivated class he was praising so much—cowardice, to wit.

To Mrs William Morris 18 March [1878]

I *did* write after doing all I could of what you wanted: but no doubt by this time you will have my letter, so I needn't say any more about that. This letter to you is about house-hunting: you must pardon me for troubling you about it; but I do not like the idea of leaving all to be done after you come home; lest we should have to hurry into some den of a place at the last moment: besides any house we did take will want some doing up; and 6 months would be all too short to get the lease-wrangling over in time to be sure of our having leisure for the doing up. 1st about the MacDonalds' house (the Retreat).[2] I have been there again with Webb: and I have heard from the Miss Cobdens, who lodged with MacDonald for some time, the latter gave a very unfavourable account of the house: and I can't help thinking that your information comes by some road from them: their information is obviously exaggerated, and I should say that they hated the house, and probably the Macs also: my 3rd visit established the fact that the house was quite dry, and also in very bad

[1] Mackail, i. 365-6.
[2] The property of Dr George MacDonald (1824-1905), the novelist. Renamed by Morris, Kelmscott House.

repair: there was no smell about; the house could easily be done up at a cost of money, and might be made very beautiful with a touch of my art: even the dreary room could be made habitable: You could have a very nice room looking into the garden, and sufficiently to yourself to be comfortable and there would be a nice room for each of our maidens. The long drawingroom could be made one of the prettiest in London: the garden is really most beautiful, and there is a private door at the end leading out into Hog Lane close to the high road. Cross-examination of the woman who takes care, and has been about the house off and on all the time the Macs were there, could only draw out *for certain* that the cellars had been flooded at that abnormal high tide that happened 3 years ago: Webb thought that this might be easily guarded against, as it does not come up through the drains (since the house drains into the main sewer not into the Thames): meantime they are quite dry at present: there is a real green-house down the garden, if you care for that, and capital stabling & coach-house; so that we might perhaps manage to keep a poney & trap. Summa: the objects are two: 1st can you do with living so far from London? This is really the important point: for the threat of unhealthiness that the Miss Cobdens threw out I don't believe in, except that doubtless the drains want seeing to; as they probably will in any house we take: There is no doubt that the house is exceptionally dry. The situation is certainly the prettiest in London: you may mock at this among the olives beside the Midland sea but to us poor devils of Londoners 'tis something: now, my dear, you must settle whether I am to go further in this matter; as though 'tis certain that I am inclined to it I would not think of it again if you feel that you would not like it.

No 2.1 have seen a house at the corner of Earl's Terrace: the place I have no doubt you would like: looking into Holland Park on one side, and into Edwardes Sq: garden on the other: the house is big enough for us, and being not quite modern, is without gross vulgarity; on the other hand it is both scrimpy and dull, and the chief rooms look pretty much North: the garden is just a yard, no more: nevertheless if you come to think of it you will find that you won't get a garden or a house with much character unless you go out about as far as the Upper Mall: so I think this doubtful paradise of Earl's Terrace worth considering, if you say no to the 'Retreat'. I don't think either you or I could stand a quite modern house in a district say at Notting Hill: I don't fancy going back among the bugs of

Bloomsbury, though 'tis a healthy part & we might do worse: we might as well live at York as at Hampstead for all we should ever see of our friends: I am told that about Fulham and Putney are pretty houses to let: that would be as far off as the Mall: but what do you think of it? Earl's Terrace is certainly delightfully accessible: the rent is £140: ridiculous you say for what is after all a *lodging* not a house: but that I shall have to pay either in rent or in repairs wherever I go: rents have risen so: please let me hear from you at once about these matters, and say straight out what your views are: for it would not do for either of us to agree to go into a house in which one or other would pray for an earthquake to knock it down.

I am writing to Jenny: I am dreadfully anxious [about] you.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RETREAT ON THE UPPER MALL, HAMMERSMITH. Top floor 3 garrets: one very large, window looking west: one fairish but darkish (might make another window): one quite small, too small for sleeping.

2nd floor 3 bedrooms: No 1 a very pretty room about 17 ft sq: looking S. & W. No 2 smaller but good, looking S. No 3 small, no fireplace: big enough for spare-room—between 2nd & 1st floor: more modern part of house: a very large room, about 21 ft X 17 ft looking N (a fine view into garden) and W (call this A).

1 st floor. 1 st a very long drawing-room say 35 ft X 17. 2 fireplaces, 5 windows facing S (river). 2nd a queer little den of a bathroom with gas & water laid on: Ground floor—3 rooms one on each side of street door. No 1 smallish, cheerful. No 2 about 18 ft X 15 ft a good room—the 3rd is the dismallish handsome room: ('tis really very handsome) same size as big bedroom but very lofty: looks N into garden, door between it and front room No 2. I believe by dint of cheerful papering, book-cases and the like it might be made a very good dining-room. The Macs have done their best to make it look dismal. There is a big pantry on this floor (& Oh I forgot, as Jenny says) a beautiful linen closet close to the big bedroom on the floor above. Kitchen floor: No 1 a fairish kitchen facing S. No 2 a good back kitchen with fire-place & copper. No 3 what was the original kitchen turned by the Macs into a diningroom faces N: a very big room: the cellars are lower than the kitchen & are very big: the stables are big & good: a big loft: harness-room & 2 bedrooms both with fireplaces if we kept a gardener-&-groom he would or could inhabit these. Otherwise the one room might have a bed in it for Crom to sleep in: or it could be a general sulky-room.

There is a good garden & root-house, besides the large greenhouse tank in the former for watering purposes: there are 2 arbours: there are of big trees 1st a walnut by the stable: 2nd a very fine tulip tree halfway down the lawn—3rd 2 horse chestnuts at the end of the lawn: beyond that is a sort of orchard (many good fruit trees in it) with rough grass (gravel walk all round the garden) then comes the greenhouse & beyond that a kitchen-garden with lots of raspberries, this is the plan of the garden [here follows a rough plan] this is pretty accurate as to proportions: only the orchard is rather longer than I have drawn it & the kitchen garden not so long: the walls are covered with fruit-trees: Margery says the raspberries were very good & many there: the lawn is in good condition: sweet grass and not mossy.

I should suppose that you would occupy the big bedroom: the two dear maidens would occupy the 2nd floor rooms *(very* nice ones) & you might hand over to me the ground-floor ones for bedroom & study since your drawingroom would be so big.

The house, as I said in my last, wants small repairs badly but the floors are very good: much better than they would be in a modern house. I should of course send Vinal to report professionally on it: as to expense, if you are offered a house in good repair they make you pay a premium, so it comes to the same thing.

I must tell you that I have gone over the Earl's Terrace again and find it won't do at all: there is no room in it for us: 4 bedrooms (including servants), a den, a bathroom and a dressing-room: 2 drawing-rooms, 2 dining rooms: the only way to make the drawing-rooms livable in would be to knock them into one as they have been—the whole house mean & un-roomy beyond description: the rooms very *small:* the garden like a prison yard & very tiny: without a shrub in it: I don't think either you or I could live there. I find that a good house with a moderate garden nearer London than Hammersmith costs £300 a year: we had much better keep a pony and trap at Hammersmith than burden ourselves with a heavy rent: as it is, we need not expect to get any house for less than £120 or £140—including the repairs: rents have risen prodigiously in the last 6 years. I must say I am more strongly than ever in favour of taking the Retreat (we might re-name it) and ought to take steps in the matter as soon as may be: it would not be too early for us to take any house from Mid-summer and I would begin by offering £85 rent, as I am going to spend so much in doing it up.

So much for all that. I also shall be glad to see you all again. I have had but a dreary time of it. Thank dear Jenny for her orange-flowers: I will send on Osborne's Islam: there was an attack on it in *The Athenceum* tother day: said it was inaccurate. Your loving
W.M.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris 26 March 1878

Dearest Janey

House again! Of course I see nothing unreasonable in your objections to living so far out: nay I feel them myself & they make me very uncomfortable, because I don't think we shall manage to get what we want nearer: you see this is practically what we want in a house: servants rooms, kitchen & the rest: then 1st 2 nice airy rooms (though they needn't be very big) for our dear maidens: 2nd a good & quiet room for you, my dear: 3rd either a biggish room for my study to hold a bed for me also, or some den for my head, & a fairish room for my study: nor 5th can we quite do without a spare room: 6th 2 sitting rooms and (especially if only 2) one of them to be decidedly a good room: this, I think, is the least we can do with, and for all I can see I fear we shall not meet with such a big house for less than £300 anywhere Kensington—or West away, nearer than Hammersmith, that you would like to go to: also, at the risk of being considered self-seeking, I must say that in the ordinary modern-Cromwell-Rd-sort-of-house I should be so hipped that I should be no good to anybody; nor do I think that either you or the girls would get on in such a place. As to the Earl's Court Terrace house I tried my utmost to think that it would do, as the place was obviously good: I dismissed all prejudice from my mind; but the net result was that there was not so much room as in Horrington House, besides its being unutterably mean & work-housy, & the garden (what there was of it) most dreary: it plainly wouldn't do. You have not said what you think of trying Bloomsbury again: the worst of that is that you & the childer would be much cut off from the Neds; as for me I could get about no doubt: also I confess I fear the dirt: no house can be kept clean in Bloomsbury: St John's Wood & the Regent's Park I have always hated: besides I believe good houses are dear there: I do not know what the deuce to do.

Well—to change the subject: I have just had the babes' letters: I

will write a line to them to-morrow: meantime I have sent Mr Congreve £50 and asked him to send you the balance after paying the rent: then I sent off to-day by post Islam under the Kalifs. I didn't know Brook was coming out as soon: else I would have sent the books & tea by him. I will send a little tea to-morrow.

How about my coming out? Suppose I were to come just about when the Howards leave; stay a day or two at Oneglia just to see what sort of a life you have been living; & then go straight to Venice: we needn't go with Howards, as I should be there to take care & we should meet them at Venice: then stay about a week at Venice, & back by the Lombard cities to Milan: see Florence next time. Would that be feasible, as it certainly would be very nice?

Winter has reached us at last: bright & sunny with fierce snow & wind—storm between: and oh so cold! I dined at Hadham last night: H was better & Mother very well. Rogers cut my hair this morning in the presence of my kinswomen & the parrot: which last was delighted and mewed & barked & swore & sung at the top of his vulgar voice. Best love Your loving

W.M.

P.S. Mind a poney & chaise at the Retreat.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
2 April 1878

To Mrs William Morris

Dearest Janey

I have arranged to take the house. I had first a long & satisfactory letter from MacD. We can easily house the 3rd maid, & I think 'tis a good idea: the stable could also easily be turned into a gymnasium, & the maidens could have the 2 queer little rooms above for larking rooms: there is no doubt that if we had made up our minds to come nearer in we must have been prepared to sacrifice everything to position, and even then we should have had to pay at least £180 to £200 rent: Luke [Ionides] gave me a very bad account of the Earl's Terrace houses. I do think that people will come to see us at the Retreat (fy on the name!) if only for the sake of the garden & river: we will lay ourselves more for company than heretofore. You must remember also that 'tis much nearer to the Grange: & I have made Kate Faulkner promise to come & stay with us. So let us hope we shall all grow younger there, my dear. As to my coming out; it shapes to be that I shall get to you about the 21st

April: Ned is going to take Philip to see the real frogs (of Paris) & it would be pleasant to go so far in their company: he intends for the 18th or 19th. but he is a queer one, & I think wants to go by the Channel Fleet or the Castalia or dry-shod or some such game; so that may delay me: I will of course tell you the day and hour of my leaving Paris for Turin, & in return you must give me such information that I may not be landed a dumb beast of an Englishman at Rome or Beneventum or—Constantinople.

Which last word brings me to the 'situation': yesterday morning I suppose there were few people in England who did not think war as good as declared: but it is strange how a feeling of backing out on both sides seems growing this morning so that I should not wonder if the Jingoes were disappointed after all. E.Q.A. as good as dead.

Goodbye my dear best love to the dear babes. Yourloving
W.M.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs Coronio 5 April 1878

My dear Aglaia

You had better come & look over our stock of dyed silks & you shall have any of them you please in such quantities as I can spare: or shall I make a selection? As to the cheque—you must allow me to remark that though 'tis 5 days too late, I am not quite so easily taken in as that: so into the fire it has gone. Why you would never be able to use up £3 worth of silks if you lived to be a hundred (as I hope you may). Yours affectionately
William Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Mrs William Morris 11 April, 1878

Dearest Janey

What is to be said? What would you like best yourself? Will not the babes be dreadfully disappointed not to see Venice? My own feeling about the matter is, that though I should have been glad for work-reasons not to have gone yet now that all arrangements have been made I should indeed like to go.

Nevertheless prudence says that £100 though not nice in itself is useful: and you know my work cries out at me. Still I should insist

on coming out if the Howards are not to bring you home: & once out, why not Venice? and once at Venice, our only way back to Milan will be by the Lombard cities. Summa if the Howards don't come back out I go: if they do you settle it for me yes or no: only don't disappoint my babes too much.

You may tell G. Howard from me, that though he would have been of great use earlier in the year, he may now just as well come back for the boat-race as the general election (if there is one, and I suppose he is better informed about it than I am). Except for Scotland, Birmingham and a few boroughs in the NE and SW no man will have any chance of getting in, unless he is for supporting the Jew in the war policy: the peace-party are in a very small minority: pray insist on this earnestly to him: *there is no doubt of it.* Still 'tis like enough that our master & his Whig allies may give us peace, and on any terms I shall be glad of that: but still even in that case Mr D[israeli] will be the darling of this people—or in any case—in short for some years to come, until perhaps great disasters teach us better, we shall be a reactionary and Tory nation. I believe myself that the best way would be for all worthy men to abstain from politics for a while; so that these fools might be the sooner filled with the fruit of their own devices.

There enough of that! Please take council with the babes about the coming out: I should be glad to come & glad to stay: so that I see you all soon. The weather to-day is triumphantly horrible: it has rained hard for 30 hours with chill E wind.

To the Editor, The Times 17 April 1878

DESTRUCTION OF CITY CHURCHES

Sir

The question asked by Lord Houghton in the House of Lords on Thursday elicited from the Bishop of London an acknowledgment that the scheme proposed some few years back for the wholesale removal of the City churches is continuing its destructive course unimpeded. Four more churches are to be sacrificed to the Mammon-worship and want of taste of this great city. Last year witnessed the destruction of the fine church of St Michael's, Queenhithe, and All Hallows, Bread Street, which bore upon its walls the inscription stating that Milton had been baptized there. St Dionis Backchurch, a remarkable building by Wren, is now in course of destruction, while

within the last ten years the beautiful church of St Antholin, with its charming spire, and the skilfully designed little church of St Mildred, in the Poultry, All Hallows, Staining, (except its tower), St James's, Duke Place, St Benet, Gracechurch, with its picturesque steeple, the tower and vestibule of All Hallows-the-Great, Thames Street, have all disappeared. Those for the removal of which a Commission has now been issued are as follows: St Margaret Pattens, Rood Lane; St George, Botolph Lane; St Matthew, Friday Street; and St Mildred, Bread Street, all works of Wren, and two of them, St Mildred, Bread Street, and St Margaret Pattens, possessing spires of singularly original and beautiful design. It must not be supposed that these are the only churches which are in danger, but their proposed destruction serves to show the fate which sooner or later is in store for the whole of Wren's churches in this city, unless Englishmen can be awakened, and by strong and earnest protest show the ecclesiastical authorities that they will not tamely submit to this outrageous and monstrous barbarity.

From an art point of view the loss of these buildings will be irreparable, for Wren's churches form a distinct link in the history of the ecclesiastical art of this country.

Many persons suppose that by preserving St Paul's Cathedral, that architect's great masterpiece, enough will be left to illustrate his views upon ecclesiastical architecture, but this is far from being the case. For, grand as St Paul's undoubtedly is, it is only one of a class of buildings common enough on the Continent—imitations of St Peter's, Rome. In fact, St Paul's can scarcely be looked upon as an English design, but, rather, as an English rendering of the great Italian original, whereas the City churches are examples of purely English renaissance architecture as applied to ecclesiastical purposes, and illustrate a style of architecture peculiar not only to this country but even to this city, and when they are destroyed the peculiar phase of architecture which they exhibit will have ceased to exist, and nothing will be left to record it. The Continent possesses nothing in the least resembling our City churches, and the fact that they are all found in such close proximity to one another only serves to make them the more valuable for purposes of study. One great merit which they possess is shown by the fact that, though they are diminutive in point of size, scarcely any one of them being above 80 ft long, they possess a dignity of proportion, a masterly treatment as to scale, which renders them far more imposing than many buildings double

and treble their dimensions; the relation which they bear to each other and to the great Cathedral which they surround, enhancing by their thin taper spires the importance of the majestic dome, and relieving the dullness and monotony of the general sky line of the City, all serve as unanswerable arguments for their preservation. Surely an opulent city, the capital of the commercial world, can afford some small sacrifice to spare these beautiful buildings the little plots of ground upon which they stand. Is it absolutely necessary that every scrap of space in the City should be devoted to money-making, and are religion, sacred memories, recollections of the great dead, memorials of the past, works of England's greatest architect, to be banished from this wealthy City? If so, alas for our pretended love of art; alas for the English feeling of reverence of which we hear so much; alas for those who are to come after us, whom we shall have robbed of works of art which it was our duty to hand down to them uninjured and unimpaired; alas for ourselves, who will be looked upon by foreign nations and by our own posterity as the only people who have ever lived, who, possessing no architecture of their own, have made themselves remarkable for the destruction of the buildings of their forefathers. I am, Sir, Your obedient servant

William Morris

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] Genoa, 27 April 1878

We entered this ancient city yesterday evening by no means triumphantly: we had a lovely drive on Thursday morning to a hill town with an ancient stone or two in its buildings, which are now nothing but tatters of disorder: yet it was agreeable and not very dirty. Diano Castello it is called: people used to run there when the Saracen Vikings burnt Diano Marina and the shore in general: unhappily, though the drive was pleasant, and the evening wandering among the olives was pleasant, I felt the seeds of gout in me all day, and woke yesterday morning with that plant flourishing vigorously: but I didn't like to keep them stuck at Oneglia, as all preparations had been made for departure: so about midday we got away, and I found myself in a carriage somehow along with my dear Jenny, and a very pleasant ride we had to Genoa with my gout seemingly decreasing: but when we all met at the station there was a long way to go to the omnibus, and the octroi objected to the box of medicines

[1] Mackail, i. 366-8.

(thinking them syrops), and I could not walk or even hop well, so I got stuck, till a chap took me up on his back: but even then I behaved so ill as this, that when he set me down against a wall (lacking nothing of Guy Fawkes but his matches and lanthorn) things began to dance before my eyes, my knees went limp, and down I went, thank you, and enjoyed a dream of some minute and a quarter I suppose, which seemed an afternoon of public meetings and the like: out of that I woke and found myself on the ground the centre of an admiring crowd, one of the members of which held a brandy bottle to my lips which I had the presence of mind to refuse and call for water. Poor May, who was with me, was very much frightened, but was very good: even then I had to be Guy Fawkesed upstairs at the Hotel, chuckling with laughter, till they landed me in this present palatial suite of rooms: so I'm not likely to be able to tell you much of Genoa, I fear. Murray, who is still with us, has taken the two girls out for a walk; I can't help thinking that they will enjoy the port and streets of a big town after the quiet of Oneglia, though I, for my part, when I wandered among the olives above the sea the other day, felt as if I should be well contented to stay there always; it really was a most lovely spot: and it was pleasant to have the high road close by it and to hear the jingle of bells as the carts went by, though when you were among the olives you could not guess of any road near: the trees went on terrace after terrace right up to the top of the low hill: you could see nothing else: nothing can be imagined more beautiful and soothing.

This confounded gout and Guy Fawkesing of mine has of course put off our journey to-day, but I am much better now, and I hope we shall get on to Venice to-morrow: we shan't attempt stopping at Verona, where we can easily put up on our return: you see if we were once at Venice Janey and the girls could amuse themselves in any case; and as for me 'tis clear that Venice must be the hobbler's Paradise. Can't you imagine what a time it was for me when I looked out at the window at Oneglia, and saw those three all standing together?

Hotel de L'Univers
Grande Canal, Venice
To Mrs Coronio 2 May [1878]

My dear Aglaia

We have all got here & this is our 4th day at Venice: I think the girls but May more especially are the better for their sojourn: as to

Janey I should have said the same for her till she got here, but now she seems to have broken down, which is a great disappointment to me: the weather is very dull & close, which may have something to do with it. As for myself, I have made rather a mess of it, for my cold turned at the end of last week into gout or rheumatism or a mixture of both; which is very obstinate, and keeps me still quite lame; so that all I have seen of Venice as yet has been from 2 gondola rides; I got on pretty well in the long journey from Genoa here, & it was a beautiful day; so that after all if the worst comes to the worst I have seen a good deal to remember even as it is; & I suppose I may reckon on getting about in the course of 2 or 3 days. We think of staying here about 10 days in all, & then going home by way of Milan stopping at Padua & Verona also at least. I should think Verona right under the mountains would suit us all better than the lagoon—wonderful as the place is in all other respects. I found the place at Oneglia a most beautiful spot to live in: I don't think I should ever have tired of the olive-woods. Yours affectionately

William Morris

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1]

Verona
May 1878

'Tis a piping hot day, not a cloud in the sky. I have just been into Sta Anastasia, which is hard by: a very beautiful church, but appeals less to the heart than the head, and somehow don't satisfy that: also though 'tis meant to be exceedingly Gothic and pointed, it is thoroughly neo-classical in feeling. S. Zeno is not quite what I expected: 'tis a round-arched Gothic church, just as S. Anastasia is a pointed-arched Renaissance one. I am more alive again, and really much excited at all I have seen and am seeing, though sometimes it all tumbles into a dream and I do not know where I am. Many times I think of the first time I ever went abroad, and to Rouen, and what a wonder of glory that was to me when I first came upon the front of the Cathedral rising above the flower-market. It scarcely happens to me like that now, at least not with man's work, though whiles it does with bits of the great world, like the Garda Lake the other day, or unexpected sudden sights of the mountains. Even the inside of St Mark's gave one rather deep satisfaction, and rest for the eyes, than that strange exaltation of spirits, which I remember of old in France, and which the mountains give me yet.

[1] **Mackail, i. 369-70.**

THE *SOCIALIST LEAGUE, HAMMERSMITH BRANCH*

jenny Morris is skiing in (he ***centre.*** *May Morris is skiing* ***two places to*** *her right,* ***and*** *William Morris is standing ahout the same distance away on her left*

26, Queen Square,

Bloomsbury, London,

Jan 30th 1880

My dear Aglaia

I inclose a cheque for the amount: it don't matter about the Kermes: one expects to pay for one's whistle.

Thank you very kindly for all the trouble you have taken in the matter; I am really ashamed to give you so much trouble.

Yrs affectionately

William Morris

I don't think this is wholly because I am grown older, **but because I** really have had more sympathy with the North from the first in spite of all the faults of its work. Let me confess and be hanged: with the later work of Southern Europe I am quite out of sympathy. In spite of its magnificent power and energy I feel it as an enemy; and this much more in Italy, where there is such a mass of it, than elsewhere. Yes, and even in these magnificent and wonderful towns I long rather for the heap of grey stones with a grey roof that we call a house north-away.

To William Allingham [x]

Horrington House
6 June [1878]

My dear Allingham,—I have been out all the forepart of the week, so I could not come out now: else one certainly should go to St. Albans, and I should have been very pleased to have been there with you. Of course we are not going to let Scott [2] quite alone: but I don't know about attacking him in detail: I mean to say, fighting as to whether he has done such & such, and not done it: the human mind is shockingly given to lie when convenient (as witness Sir Stafford Northcote yesterday) and about such small matters the public is none the wiser, and soon gets tired of controversy concerning 'You did' and 'I didn't'.

But I daresay you don't mean the thing to be taken up like that, and your visit to St Albans is just the thing to help you to say that a restored building no longer looks like an ancient one, that the surface history is all gone, and with it the venerableness of the sense of lapse of time, and the pleasure of looking at a work of man that has withstood it,—and the like. I am very sorry I can't be with you, though I must say it would give me a great deal of pain to see St Albans now, as I have seen it once or twice while it was still in a genuine state: a strange and most poetical looking half mile of church.

Yours very truly
William Morris

P.S. On the whole the Anti-Scrape Society is doing well.

[1] From *Letters to William Allingham* (1911). William Allingham (1824-89) poet and friend of Tennyson, Carlyle and others. His diary is one of the most delightful records of the Victorian age.

[2] Sir Gilbert Scott, the great ' restorer' of mediaeval buildings and the architect of St Pancras Hotel and the Albert Memorial, Kensington.

To the Editor•, The Times 26 August 1878

ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

Sir,—Though the Committee for the restoration of St Albans Cathedral have determined to alter that church by putting a high-pitched roof on the nave in the place of the present flat one, the Committee of our Society cannot give up all hope that the public in general may yet interest itself in the matter, and refuse to support a scheme regarded by so many archaeologists as rash and destructive: in this hope we beg the favour of space in your columns to enable us to protest once more against what at the least we must call a dangerous alteration of an ancient and famous building.

Into the artistic matter of the relative advantage of a high or a low roof in the abstract, and the respective merits of the earlier or later styles represented at St Albans, we do not wish to enter, conceiving that both this as well as the archaeological point of dispute as to whether the church once had a high-pitched roof is beside the question: the point that we wish to lay before the public is that the church is already covered with a roof which can be repaired so as to be thoroughly substantial without risking the stability of the walls, and without altering the architectural character of the building, or making it other than it has grown to be through a long period of interesting history: of that history the present roof is a genuine part; it conceals or injures nothing more artistic or splendid than itself; the long unbroken line of parapet of mixed materials fitted to this roof must be allowed by everyone to hold its place amongst strong and remarkable architectural effects, the loss of any one of which would be a loss to the variety and interest of art. To replace this roof with a high-pitched one is an undertaking involving so much expense that the Restoration Committee shrink from the task of raising money to carry out the work with proper materials, and propose to use deal and slate instead of the present oak and lead. If this is done it will lay on the future guardians of St Albans a heavy burden of expenses for the repair of such perishable substitutes: but whatever material is used, the proposed new roof will involve possible danger to the fabric of the walls, and certain change in some of their architectural features, such as the parapets for instance: nor can we hide from ourselves that under cover of these necessary (and in many cases regrettable) changes, the mistaken zeal of the restorers will probably lead to quite unnecessary changes most destructive to the artistic and his-

torical interest of the building. We fear, in short, that it will end in the entire modernization of this great monument; a result which we are sure the public in general, even that portion of it which is not specially interested in archaeology, will heartily regret.

With this fear in our minds we wish to appeal to the public to notice that the opinion of archaeologists and artists is at least divided on the matter; we wish to point out to it that the risk of loss to the nation through possibly mistaken alteration is greater out of all proportion to its advantages than the risk incurred by possibly mistaken inaction. If the fabric of St Albans Abbey is watchfully, constantly and reverently repaired, it will not be too late, when the views of our Society are proved to be wrong beyond all question, to put a high-pitched roof on the nave: or indeed to pull down the whole church and rebuild it: but if the proposed alteration take place, and it be found some few years hence that our views are reasonable, as we confidently think it will be, then indeed it will be all too late for reparation, and no regrets will wish back the inimitable work of our forefathers, which our rashness and egotism will have destroyed forever.

I am, Sir, Yours Obediently
William Morris
On behalf of the Committee of the Society
for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury,
To the Editor', The Athenaeum 12 May 1879

I have noticed that Mr Vigfusson, in his recently published Prolegomena to the Sturlunga Saga, speaks of me as the sole translator of the English version of the Grettis Saga and the Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu, omitting to mention the name of Mr Eirikr Magmisson, my *collaborateur.* As a matter of fact, when we set about these joint works I had just begun the study of Icelandic under Mr Magniisson's mastership, and my share in the translation was necessarily confined to helping in the search for the fittest English equivalents to the Icelandic words and phrases, to turning the translations of the 'visur' into some sort of English verse, and to general revision in what might be called matters of taste: the rest of the work, including notes, and all critical remarks, was entirely due to Mr Magniisson's learning and industry.

I should explain that the Gunnlaugs Saga, which was first printed

in the *Fortnightly Review,* when republished in our "Three Northern Love Stories", went through a very careful revision, in which we both shared.

Mr Magniisson's responsibility and labour was, therefore, much greater than mine in these works, which if his pleasure in the labour was half as much as mine, it was great indeed. The recollection of the great services he rendered to me in the matter, and indeed, I think, to the public in general, makes me venture to trouble you with this letter.

William Morris

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London

To James Bryce [1] 3 June 1879

My dear Bryce

The meeting [i.e. of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings] is arranged for half past 2 on the 28th. & we shall ask you to move the first resolution. I could give you any number of instances unluckily of restoration sweeping the history from old buildings I saw them at Salisbury 'restoring' the traces of the 13th cen: painting by laboriously painting imitations of it, or rather what they thought it had been, over the old work; the same thing is now being done at Norwich Cathedral. I daresay you have seen the dulness of the sham mediaeval ornament which has disfigured so many of our churches, the grotesqueness copied, but not the life of the incomplete, but growing art. Of course one of the commonest forms that restoration has taken among ourselves has been the clearing away of all later additions to a building: e.g. perpendicular windows from a Norman church (as at Southwell) & this has been done by many men who should know better. Perhaps the point of the whole matter is that the workmen of the old buildings were intelligent members of the body artistic & yet that the whole weight of history forced them as it were to work in a certain style: they could not help dating a building for us, giving us clear indications of the tendencies & aspirations of their own times. If you go to Westminster Abbey & look at the western part of the nave you will see how the 15 th cent, men finished the 13th cent, church: their work carries on the earlier work worthily & handsomely, & is in no way discordant from the earlier work, but at a glance it is clearly of its own time. Compare

Walthamstow Public Library.

this with the work now going on in the porches of the N. transept: these had been tampered with I suppose about Wren's time with no light hand certainly, but London smoke had hidden the worst faults of it, & I have no doubt that the main outline of it was that of the 13th. cent, architecture: all the more as it was certainly French in tendency like the choir; and that outline was broad and stately: then look at the 'conjectural restoration' of the porches—tame and lifeless, with thin reedy imitations of the beautiful growth of the 13th century carving, done by men, who if you bid them would as lief carve the strap work of James's time as the cherubs' heads of Queen Anne. Why on earth was it necessary to tack on this bit of poorly designed finery to the transept, to confuse future times by setting them to wonder how the men who built the matchless choir & apse could have carpentered this together?

At St Albans there are the west front bits of Abbot Trumpington's unfinished work, of the very best of English work; they are now threatening to take the life out of these most gracious fragments by restoration. Do you remember how strange & romantic the unfinished Cologne Cathedral looked? How stupid the present completion of it looks I myself can bear witness. St Cross at Winchester: have you seen that simple & majestic piece of early work since its bedizenment? Ely you must have seen: I never saw it before it had been daubed over like a music hall: but what it must have looked, the rich choir, the amazing lantern & that finest of all Norman naves—what they must have looked when they were all grey & venerable together I can partly imagine. I hear that they threaten the Lady Chapel (so called) now: it is the richest piece of Edwardian architecture I know. St Albans, by the by, & the rash move of putting a new high roof on the whole nave is a very strong case; because Sir Edmund Beckett's high-handed proceedings have been so widely objected to. I could tell you, however, of dozens of bad cases enough & I have spun out this letter unconscionably. I shall be very glad to have your resolution at your convenience.

Yours very truly
William Morris

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] August 1879

... I was much impressed by it [i.e. Stonehenge], though the earth and sky nearly met, and the rain poured continuously, nothing

[1] **Mackail, ii. 2-4.**

could spoil the great stretches of the Plain, and the mysterious monument that nobody knows anything about—except Fergusson who knows less than nothing.

We went right up the Avon valley, and very beautiful it was; then, as the river narrowed, we turned off towards a little scrubby town called Pewsey that lies in the valley between the Salisbury and the Marlborough downs: it was all very fine and characteristic country, especially where we had to climb the Marlborough downs at a place I remembered coming on as a boy with wonder and pleasure: Oare Hill they call it. We got early in the afternoon to Marlborough and walked out to see the College, and so strolled away to the Devil's Den, and back in the dusk. The next morning we set out early for Avebury, in weather at first much like the day before; however it cleared before we reached Silbury, and was quite fine while we were thereabout for two hours, after which we drove on towards Swindon, intending Lechlade and Kelmscott that evening. The downs end at a village called Wroughton, and we could see a large piece of England from the slope of it, Faringdon clump not at all in the background. We got another trap at Swindon, where they warned us that we should have to go through the waters to get to Lechlade: we went through Highworth, a queer old village on a hill, and sure enough we could see waters out from thence, though they turned out to be only from the little river Coin: at Highworth we found that they were mending the bridge into Lechlade town, and that it would be closed; so at Inglesham we had to turn aside to strike the road that leads over St John's Bridge: sure enough in a few yards we were in deep water enough, right over the axles of the wheels: the driver lost his presence of mind, not being used to floods you see, and pretty nearly spilt us in the ditch, but we just saved the carriage, and after some trouble got into the high road by Buscot Parsonage; though even there for some time the said road was also a river: so over St John's Bridge and safe to Kelmscott. But opening the gate there, lo, the water all over the little front garden: in short, I have never seen so high a flood there: there was a smart shower when we got in and then a bright clear evening: the next day was bright and clear between strong showers with a stiff south-west gale: of course we could do nothing but sail and paddle about the floods.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To May Morris 15 September [Postmark 1879]

Dearest May

All right then, so be it. But my dear I do not think you will come by the Great Western, as you write, but more probably by the North Western: item, since the invasion of our ancestors (and I must say there were fools not to be able to say 24 o'clock) has arranged that there shall be 2 10.35s in the 24 hours, do you mean AM or PM? You must please tell me either by letter or telegram which you mean. As to Willesden Station, don't try it: it is a mere trap for the unwary, everything is arranged so that you shall miss your trains there; there are scarcely any men about, & what there are refuse to answer questions: the first time I went there I got into the wrong train; the second time I was so exacerbated by the coolness of the officials, that I had to offer to fight the only one I could find; fortunately for me he refused battle: but if you try the place, you may get back to Naworth,[1] or you may get to Aberdeen or Truro, or Northampton, or Norwich, or Boulogne—but to Hammersmith you will never get, unless you walk there—carrying your luggage, which would be wearying: so, *put yourselves in a cab* at Euston & come straight to Hammersmith.

I did my business in the heavy woollen country, & got back home about 7 p.m. on Saturday; a most miserable wet evening it was to be sure: but yesterday was lovely, & this morning it is clearing up after a heavy fog.

I was also very sorry to miss Mother, but cool reflection of course assured me that there was no chance of doing more than catching my train: apropos of that please remind mother to tip William (I think) he of the red-head, as I saw nothing of any body at the castle, but one kitchen maid: Such attraction had fat pigs for all the world except Jenny & me.

Best love to mother, my dear, who I hope is keeping well, or better, I should say. Also to Jenny. Your loving father
William Morris

[1] Naworth Castle, Brampton, Cumberland, where the family were staying witli the George Howards.

Kelmscott

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] October 1879

... As to poetry, I don't know, and I don't know. The verse would come easy enough if I had only a subject which would fill my heart and mind: but to write verse for the sake of writing is a crime in a man of my years and experience. . . .

I have seen a many wonders, and have a good memory for them; and in spite of all grumblings have a hope that civilized people will grow weary of their worst follies and try to live a less muddled and unreasonable life; not of course that we shall see much of that change in the remnant that is left of our days.

Kelmscott

To Mrs Burne-Jones [?] [2] October 1879

I am sitting now, 10 p.m., in the tapestry-room, the moon rising red through the east-wind haze, and a cow lowing over the fields. I have been feeling chastened by many thoughts, and the beauty and quietness of the surroundings, which latter, as I hinted, I am, as it were, beginning to take leave of. That leave-taking will, I confess, though you may think it fantastic, seem a long step towards saying good-night to the world. . . .

To Edward or Georgiana Burne-Jones' 24 November 1879

Yes, the Memorial has flourished and Dizzy did actually sign it on Saturday [4]; I have had many a worrit over it and even now I am not quite sure what to do with it; for this morning is news from Italy that the Minister has sent word to the Prefect of Venice to stop the restoration of the Mosaic. What this means I don't quite know, but I hope it is the stopping of the work on the pavement, because I feel sure that we have saved the west front already. I suppose in any case, even if the Memorial is a mere formality, it will have to go; we have to hand it to the Ambassador here: I must say it seems to me extremely absurd that we can't send it by post as to an ordinary mortal. In truth what has really worried me in this matter has been all the ridiculous rigmarole and social hypocrisy one has to wade through....

[1] From Mackail, ii. 1-2. [2] From Mackail, ii. 2.

[3] From *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones,* by G. B- J., ii. 96.

[4] The Memorial to the Italian Minister of Works against the sweeping restorations that were proposed and already in progress at St Mark's, Venice. 'Morris was the soul of the movement of protest, as the public representative of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and spoke and wrote untiringly not only in London, but in Birmingham and Oxford. The Oxford meeting in the Sheldonian was the first occasion on which he appeared at his own University in any public capacity' (Mackail, ii. 5-6). Even Burne-Jones was prevailed upon to speak.

26 Queen Square
Bloomsbury, London
To Signor V. Saccardo 13 December 1879

Dear Sir

I beg to acknowledge with many thanks the receipt of your courteous letters and the interesting enclosed plan of the foundations of the Basilica. In reply I can only say that it would be presumptuous for me to argue on a matter of technical detail with a person of your experience in the matter, all the more as I am not a professional architect; at the same time I still hold to my opinion that when the public in Italy comes to acknowledge that any rebuilding or any restoration of their glorious Church would be a disaster to art and to them, the renowned engineers of Italy will not find it impossible under any circumstances to devise some scheme for keeping the Basilica standing for ages to come without any change in its external aspect.

Meantime, my dear Sir, will you allow me to trespass further on your courtesy by presenting to you my friend, Mr J. J. Stevenson, a distinguished English Architect, and a member of our Committee, who has been deputed by that Committee to report to us the present state of St Mark's Basilica. We believe that your intimate knowledge of the building will be of great use to him in his survey of it, and that you will not grudge him that help, as we cannot doubt that you fully understand the good-will which our Society bears both to the Italian People and to Venice, and permit me to add, since you have made us acquainted with you by your letters, to yourself also.

I am, Dear Sir, Yours Obediently
William Morris

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] 10 August 1880

Little things please little minds; therefore my mind must be little, so pleased am I this morning. That is not logic, though I suspect the conclusion to be true: but again I doubt if the 'Ark', which is veritably the name of our ship, can be considered a little thing, except relatively: item, it is scarcely a little thing that the sky is one sheet of pale warm blue, and that the earth is sucking up the sun rejoicingly.

Jenny and I went out before breakfast to see the craft. She is odd

[1] From Mackail, ii. 8-10.

but delightful: imagine a biggish company boat with a small omnibus on board, fitted up luxuriously inside with two shelves and a glass-rack, and a sort of boot behind this: room for two rowers in front, and I must say for not many more except in the cabin or omnibus. Still what joy (to a little mind) to see the landscape out of a square pane of glass, and to sleep a-nights with the stream rushing two inches past one's ear. Then after all, there is the romance of the bank, and outside the boat the world is wide: item, we can always hire a skiff for some of the party to row in and stretch their muscles, and in that way I propose to start this afternoon about *i* after dining here.

Rathbone can't come, being too hard at work after all; so our males will consist of Crom, Dick [the Hon. Richard Grosvenor], and Meorgan [a child's mispronunciation of De Morgan's name] besides myself. Yesterday morning, also a very beautiful one, I had qualms about leaving the garden here, which really, as De Morgan said on Sunday, is a very tolerable substitute for a garden: item, after doing a good deal of small necessary work at Queen Square I had qualms about leaving my business; but to-day I have none—I think I know now why I fatten so.

More and more I think people ought to live in one place—pilgrimages excepted. By the way, I give my third lecture to the Trade Guild of Learning in October; that will be my autumn work, writing it, if I have any quiet time away from home. Also I have promised to lecture next March at the London Institute—subject, the prospects of Architecture in modern civilization. I will be as serious as I can over them, and when I have these two last done, I think of making a book of the lot, as it will be about what I have to say on the subject, which still seems to me the most serious one that a man can think of; for 'tis no less than the chances of a calm, dignified, and therefore happy life for the mass of mankind.

I shall find my long carpet out of the loom when I come back—but I am not a bit anxious about it, now, the river will wash all that away.

Kelmscott
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] August 1880

. . . We came to our first lodging (Sunbury, some six miles above Hampton Court) very late, about half-past ten, and queer it was the

From Mackail, ii. 10-14.

next morning to note how different the place was to our imaginations of it in the dark: item, the commonplace inn was a blow to the romance of the river, as you may imagine. Crom and I slept on board the Ark that night; perforce. A cloudy morning when we started, which at first much disappointed me after the splendid evening we had come in by: nevertheless I was in spirits at the idea of getting out of the Cockney waters, and we were scarcely through the lock we had to pass at starting before the sun was out and hot again: the river was nearly new to me really hereabouts and much better than I expected, especially from Chertsey to Staines; it is full of strange character in many places; Laleham, for instance, with its enormous willows and queer suggestions (at any rate) of old houses on the banks: we dined luxuriously on the bank a little below this, and had tea on the grass of Runneymead which (as I remembered) is a most lovely place, on such an afternoon as one can scarcely hope to see again for brightness and clearness. When we had done tea, it became obvious that we should never get to Maidenhead (as we had intended) that night, so after much spilling of wisdom in a discussion of the kind where no one can see any plan but his own as possible, we agreed to make another day of it; Windsor on that night (Wednesday) and Marlow on Thursday. Well, we got to Windsor about eight, and beautiful it was coming into; and with all drawbacks even when one saw it next morning seemed a wonderful place: so we only made 17 miles this day. We all slept in the inn on the waterside: that was Wednesday.

Thursday, Dick took us up to Eton; and again in spite of drawbacks it is yet a glorious place. Once more the morning was grey and even threatening rain (wind N.N.E.), but very soon cleared up again into the brightest of days: a very pleasant morning we had, and dined just above Bray Lock; cook was I, and shut up in the Ark to do the job, appearing like the high-priest at the critical moment pot in hand,—but O the wasps about that osier bed! We got quite used to them at last and by dint of care did not swallow any with our food, nor were stung.

There was a regatta at Maidenhead and both banks crowded with spectators, so that we had to drop the tow-rope before our time, and as the Ark forged slowly along towards the Berkshire side with your servant steering on her roof, and De Morgan labouring at the sculls, you may think that we were chaffed a little. After Maidenhead you go under Cliefden woods, much admired by the world in general; I

confess to thinking them rather artificial; also eyeing Mr Dick with reference to their owner I couldn't help thinking of Mr Twemlow and Lord Snigsworthy. But at Cookham Lock how beautiful it was: you get out of the Snigsworthy woods there; the hills fall back from the river, which is very wide there, and you are in the real country, with cows and sheep and farm-houses, the work-a-day world again and not a lacquey's paradise: the country too has plenty of character there, and may even be called beautiful: it was beautiful enough that evening at any rate: the sun had set as we cleared Cookham Lock, and we went facing the west, which was cloudless and golden, till it got quite dark: by that same dark we had to get through the Marlow Lock, with no little trouble, as we had to skirt a huge weir which roared so that we couldn't hear each other speak, and so to our night's lodging: Crom and I in the Ark close to the roaring weir, Dick and De M. in the inn (a noisy one) and the ladies up town, over the bridge. We took them there, and as we left the little house, looked up the street, and saw the streamers of the Northern Lights flickering all across that part of the sky, just as I saw them in '71 (and not since) in the harbour of Thorshaven: it was very mysterious and almost frightening to see them over the summer leafage so unexpectedly in a place I at least had not seen by daylight.

So to bed we went, and again in the morning (Friday) a grey day that cleared presently into a very hot one: and once more the river all new to me, and very beautiful: at Hurley Lock we had to wait for a big steamer that plies regularly between Kingston and Oxford with passengers: as I stood up in the lock afterwards I had the surprise of seeing a long barn-like building, two Gothic arches and then a Norman church fitting on to it and joined into a quadrangle by other long roofs: this was Lady Place: once a monastery, then a Jacobean house, and now there is but a farm-house, somewhat gammoned, there: we all went ashore and spent an hour there in great enjoyment, for 'tis a lovely place: there is a huge dove-cot there with carefully moulded buttresses of the 15th century: the church has been miserably gammoned, but kept its old outline.

I played the cook again a little short of Henley; and we went on again in a burning afternoon through a river fuller and fuller of character as we got higher up: stuck in the mud for 20 minutes at Wargrave: past Shiplake, which is certainly one of the most beautiful parts of the Thames, and so to Sonning for the night: a village prepensely picturesque and somewhat stuffy that hot night, but really

pretty, with a nice inn where Crom was at home, having spent some time there when Boyce was painting on the river: but we scattered all over the village and Crom and I slept in the Ark. We started earlier on Saturday, as we had to get to Wallingford, a longer run than heretofore. We had got well used to the Ark by now, and there was Janey lying down and working quite at home: very hot and waspy it was at dinner, on the bank between Pangbourne and Goring, but when we were well past the last place the afternoon got much clouded over for the first time since our start: but now out of the over-rated half picturesque reach of Streatley and Goring here we were on the Thames that is the Thames, amidst the down-like country and all Cockneydom left far behind, and it *was* jolly.

We got to stuffy grubby little Wallingford rather early, and got lodging in a riverside pothouse partly and partly in the town. Here it rather tickled me that, an hour or so being to spare before supper, the girls proposed and did a row upon the water as a novel pastime. That was Saturday: well, Sunday morning it had rained in the night, and the look of the dull grey almost drizzling morning made me expect a regular wet day; but it was only dull and cool all day and we had a very pleasant day of it, and I cooked 'em their dinner just above Culham Lock; we got out at Dorchester to look [at] the Dykes which Sir J. Lubbock has tried to get into the schedule of his bill and failed; so that the dykes have been partly ploughed over to their hurt: then a bit higher I recognized the place where we stopped for victuals years ago when the Faulkners were with us: and so we got to Oxford a little after nightfall: the banks of the river near the town have been spoilt somewhat since my time; for I have been but thrice since I was an undergraduate. Well, at Oxford we left the Ark: and Janey the next day (Monday) went on by rail to Kelmscott: while we got up early and by dint of great exertions started from Medley Lock at 9 a.m., with Bossom and another man to tow us as far as New Bridge, where we sent them off, and muddled ourselves home somehow, dining at a lovely place about a mile above New Bridge, where I have stopped twice before for that end. One thing was very pleasant: they were hay-making on the flat flood-washed spits of ground and islets all about Tadpole; and the hay was gathered on punts and the like; odd stuff to look at, mostly sedge, but they told us it was the best stuff for milk.

Night fell on us long before we got to Radcot, and we fastened a lantern to the prow of our boat, after we had with much difficulty

got our boats through Radcot Bridge. Charles was waiting for us with a lantern at our bridge by the corner at 10 p.m., and presently the ancient house had me in its arms again: J. had lighted up all brilliantly, and sweet it all looked you may be sure... -[1]

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
August 1880

To Mrs Burne-Jones [2]

You may imagine that coming back to this beastly congregation of smoke-dried swindlers and their slaves (whom one hopes one day to make their rebels) under the present circumstances does not make me much more in love with London, though I must admit to feeling this morning a touch of the 'all by oneself' independence which you wot of as a thing I like. I found by the way De Morgan a complete sympathizer on the subject of London: however let that pass, since in London I am and must be. The few days we passed at Kelmscott made a fine time of it for me; our mornings were grey and dull, though we had several fine afternoons and two lovely evenings. Thursday we went to Fairford in the afternoon, and I was pleased to see the glass and the handsome church once more. Though the country that way is not remarkable, every turn of the road and every by-way set me a-longing to go afoot through the country, never stopping for a day; after all a fine harvest time is the crown of the year in England; there is so much to look at. On the Friday we went to Inglesham and above the Round House, on what might be called the upperest Thames, for half a mile, to look at Inglesham church, a lovely little building about like Kelmscott in size and style, but handsomer and with more old things left in it. Well, we parted on Sunday morning rather melancholy, but had a beautiful voyage to Medley Lock; such an evening, and the best of it at Godstow, where the moon began to show red over Wolvercot.

So here I am again on the lower Thames, finding it grimy; I have just been busy over my carpeteers; all going pretty well. The 'Orchard' being finished is a fair success as manufacture—lies flat on the whole—and as a work of art has points about it, but I can better it next time. . . .

[1] This journey up the Thames from Hammersmith to Kelmscott forms the basis of Chaps. XXII-XXVIII of *News from Nowhere,* written ten years later.
[2] From MackaiL ii. 14-15.

Kelmscott
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 1880

I can't pretend not to feel being out of this house and its surroundings as a great loss. I have more than ever at my heart the importance for people of living in beautiful places; I mean the sort of beauty which would be attainable by all, if people could but begin to long for it. I do most earnestly desire that something more startling could be done than mere constant private grumbling and occasional public speaking to lift the standard of revolt against the sordidness which people are so stupid as to think necessary. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Mrs William Morris 24 August [1880]

Breakfast is over, & I have been carpeteering: the Orchard, spread out on the drawing-room floor, though not perfect as a piece of manufacture is not amiss: as a work of art I am a *little* disappointed with it: if I do it again it shall have a wider border I think; otherwise I will somewhat alter the colour. The 4 X 4 [carpet?] is out and much improved by the alterations: the 3 yellow bordered pots are not so flat as they should be: I fear the worsted warp is to blame for this: I shall use cotton in future, & perhaps dye it blue roughly. The Polly is barking & singing out Annie till I don't know what I am writing. . . .

I shall be glad to get you back.

Bull Hotel
Burford, Oxon
Thursday morning
To Jane Alice Morris [August 1880?]

Dearest Jenny

We got here very comfortably yesterday, and found the Windrush valley very beautiful: we are going this morning to Fairford & Kelmscott by way of Northleach & Foss Bridge: I could write you a long letter my dearest child, but my pen my pen! a needle: and of ink a mere dearth: so it gives me the fidgets; so excuse me for this shabby little note & am Your loving father
William Morris

Burford is very nice & the Inn no worse than before, but why call it an Hotel?

[1] From Mackail, ii. 15-16.

PART FOUR

1881-90

Period of Greatest Political Activity; Social Democratic Federation; Socialist League; Hammersmith Socialist Society

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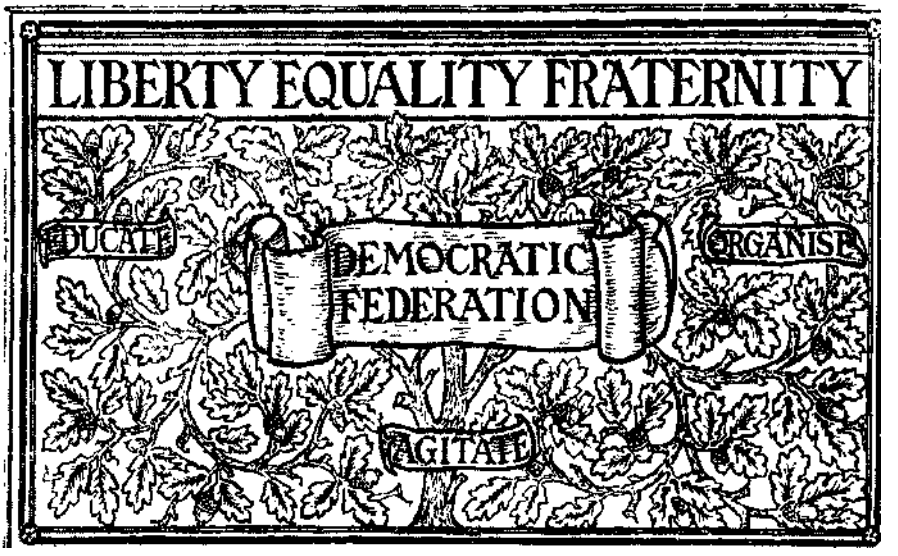

Membership card of the Democratic Federation, designed by William Morris in 1883.

To Mrs Burne-Jones [?] [1] *1* January 1881

I have of late been somewhat melancholy (rather too strong a word, but I don't know another), not so much so as not to enjoy life in a way, but just so much as a man of middle age who has met with rubs (though less than his share of them) may sometimes be allowed to be. When one is just so much subdued one is apt to turn more specially from thinking of one's own affairs to more worthy matters; and my mind is very full of the great change which I hope is slowly coming over the world, and of which surely this new year will be one of the landmarks. Though to me, as I suppose to you, every day begins and ends a year, I was fain to catch hold of ancient custom; nor perhaps will you think it ceremonious or superstitious if I try to join thoughts with you to-day in writing a word of hope for the new year, that it may do a good turn of work toward the abasement of the rich and the raising up of the poor, which is of all things most to be longed for, till people can at last rub out from their dictionaries altogether these dreadful words rich and poor. . . .

Hammersmith

To Mrs William Morris 10 February [1881]

... So Carlyle is off to learn the great secret at last: though his work was over it is a kind of a miss of him.[2]

I am afraid I have little to say: though I was going to write to you to-day anyhow, 1st weather: stormy & wild; sometimes disgusting, sometimes beautiful & sunny: to-day wettish but very warm.

2nd work: I am still on my lecture which bothers me sorely: I know what I want to say, but the cursed words go to water between my fingers: this is all along of those frogs & them making such fools of us.

3rd Politics—Not pleasant, & yet I suppose, properly speaking not unhopeful: if I say I don't trust the present government, I mean to say that I don't trust it to show as radical; Whig it is & will remain: [3] the Coercion bill [4] will soon be read now: it is a very bad

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 24.** [2] **Thomas Carlyle died 4 February, 1881.**

[3] **This was Gladstone's Second Ministry. He came to power on the wave of popular reaction to Disraeli's Jingoism and by vague democratic aspirations not yet formulated into any clear programme of social reform. 'I do so hate—this in spite of my accounts—everything vague in politics as well as in art', wrote Morris on resigning his Treasurership of the Liberal League at this time.**

[4] **The Irish Coercion Bill of 1881.**

bill, but I fancy the Government will give way a little in committee; and anyhow Forster don't *intend* to use it tyrannically. Then as to the land bill, my impression is that at first they intended a very poor affair, not worth fighting for: but that the aspect of the liberal party has shown them that they must flit at least a *moderately* good bill, & be in earnest to shove it through. There will be a great fight over it. . . . But I repeat the Government, i.e. Gladstone, is much stronger in the country than I thought for, and if he could only stop these damned little wars he might stop in till he had carried the regular liberal programme, and we should make a good step forward. But little wars with defeats & inglorious victories dovetailed into one another shake a Government terribly, & especially a Liberal one.... [1]

To Mrs William Morris 23 February 1881

. . . Tom Wardle is a heap of trouble to us; nothing will he do right, & he does write the longest winded letters containing lies of various kinds: we shall have to take to chintzes ourselves before long and are now daily looking about for premises. . . .

Politics: We are nervous about the Kandahar matter: I do think our side ought to start putting a little pressure on Government to make them do what they doubtless want to do in the matter.[2] The Coercion bill being now over, we are all looking for the land bill: I can't say I feel any confidence in the Government & only half-confidence in the Liberal Associations: what a pity it is that there is not a proper radical club properly organized for political purposes, who could act speedily in such junctures. Meantime, as I said in my last, the Government seems strong, & will do so till towards the time of the next General Election: if between that & now it doesn't do something to encourage its real supporters I fear we shall have another 1874 business. . . .[3]

I see George [i.e. the Hon. George Howard] has issued his manifesto: mighty official. I don't suppose he will get in: but one must needs hope that he may, if 'tis only for the sake of keeping J. Lowther out.

I am starting designing the long carpet for Naworth as Bell's gets on apace: 'tis rather a difficult job, & I am puffing & blowing over it

[1] **England was at war with the Boers in the Transvaal and there was righting in Afghanistan. On the other hand Gladstone's Land Act of this year was aimed at giving fair rents and security of tenure to the Irish farmers.**

[2] **That is *to* evacuate Kandahar, in conformity with their expressed intention.**

[3] **Date of Disraeli's Ministry.**

rather: hence and from our manufacture-hunting I suppose, a long dream I had: how we were making carpets by the river side & yet in Red Lion Sq. the rooms very large & desirable. . . .

To Mrs William Morris

Hammersmith
27 February [1881]

. . . I fancy my gout is quite gone now, and I feel myself: only I am scarcely drinking wine: not above a glass in 2 days: to the great advantage of the housekeeping. On Monday I went the long-promised voyage to Alice:[1] I went with Vinal starting one afternoon & coming back the next evening. The house is not a bad one: plan very fair, somewhat plain, but looks human:—all but the furniture which Gill would stick in it, & which I suppose he half repents of now, since he is getting me to do some things for him. The day was bright after the morning down there & Alice took me a beautiful walk down by the Tavy near where it runs into the Tamar: it was so hot! in fact beautiful as the place is it would be long before I got used to it: when it is at all warm one can scarcely drag one leg after the other—that Devonshire!

So George is come (by this time) back: I thought James Lowther's name would fetch him: I don't know what chance he has of getting in. I am at hard work for him at Palace Green[2]—work at St James's all finished & happily, with good profit:[3] so don't spare to ask for cash if you want it—when shall I send you some?

I am hard at work at my lecture which is giving me a great deal of trouble: I get nervous about what I say or rather how I say it: however I hope Saturday will about break the neck of it. Bell's carpet is well on, & I believe if it were not nearly dark to-day it would look well. Matthews [the gardener at Kelmscott House] is about again. I am after gravel, also I am going to get the paths bordered—1 inch thick oak planks is what I am going to use. . . .

Good-bye, my dear, take care of yourself: and *please* pay your way duly to Mrs Howard: I can't go owing money to Earl-kin.[4] Politics look a little more promising on the whole.

[1] **His sister, Mrs Gill.**

[2] **No. I Palace Green, Kensington, built by Philip Webb for the Hon. George Howard and decorated by Morris & Co.**

[3] **The decoration by Morris & Co. of the Throne and Reception rooms at St James's Palace included hangings of specially designed silk damask, the hand-painting of the ceiling and cornices, and the designing of a special paper for hanging in the main staircase.**

[4] **Mrs Morris was staying with the Howards at Bordighera. Henry James, meeting her again at this time, writes: 'I didn't fall in love with the strange, pale, livid, gaunt, silent and yet in a manner graceful and picturesque, wife of the poet and paper-maker.'**

To Mrs William Morris 3 March [1881]

I am at home today so I am breaking off working at G.H. [George Howard] carpet-design to write you a line, though 'tis like to be of the stupidest: Why have I not De Morgan's talent for jokes; he is inexhaustible. So George is in:[1] which on the whole is good; though things political are in a very queer condition: *the papers* are amusing to a cynic at present: so hard at work they are to discover some magic for explaining the all too natural drubbing we have caught at the hands of the Boers [at Majuba]. I am in hopes the matter will be taken up somewhat by people outside parliament for inside it all or nearly all people seem to be behaving ill enough: there is to be a meeting of the Transvaal Committee to-morrow & I imagine they will do something: the public meeting they called was a great success. Meantime you see the Government has 'kniecked down' to the Tories about the arms bill, & the Land Bill is put off again. I really begin to think it won't be brought in this Session—or by this Government.

I shall probably see George to-morrow morning, as I shall go to Palace Green to look after my work, which is getting on now. I go to the De M's tonight: W. De M is all agog about premises hunting now, & has just heard of some at Hemel Hemstead (nr St Albans).[2] Webb & [George] Wardle are going on Saturday to walk up a stream that runs into Thames at Isleworth.

Norton's eldest boy was at the Grange last night grown 6 ft high; a nice Yankee lad very naive & talkative. To-morrow I go down to Hadham to see the last of Arthur before he goes to India; lucky he, that he didn't have to run down hill at Majuba, though I see that his old battalion seem to have run the fastest & so lost fewest men. Isy is to be there & Alice, and the whole clamjamfry of them.[3] The babes seem very well: May at any rate refuses to plead guilty to a head-ache; we have played numberless games of dummy; at which Jenny don't at all like being beaten, & refuses to look upon it as a joke when I get the 4 honours in my hand. . . .

[1] The Hon. George Howard was returned as Liberal M.P. for the Cockermouth Division of East Cumberland.

[2] William De Morgan was about to set up a pottery works for the manufacture of his lustred tiles and majolica.

[3] Morris's brother Colonel Arthur Morris, and his sisters Isabella and Alice.

To Mrs William Morris 19 March [1881]

Wardle & Webb are gone to-day to have a look at those premises at Merton: you know they went before we did, & somehow saw the wrong place whereon they reported that it would never do & that it wasn't worth while my going to look at them: however De Morgan & I made ourselves into an opposition and went down there & saw the right place: whereon judge of our joy when we found that the 'two clever ones' had gone wrong. There are decided advantages about the real place: first, it would scarcely take me longer to get there from Hammersmith than it now does to Queen Sq: next it is already a print-works (for those hideous red & green table-cloths & so forth) so that the plant would be really useful to us: 3rd the buildings are not bad: 4th the rent *(£206)* can be managed, if we can settle all that, as at present what is offered for sale is the tail-end of a lease & the plant. 5 th the water is abundant and good. 6th though the suburb as such is woeful beyond conception, yet the place itself is even very pretty: Summa I think it will come to taking it, if we can get it on fair terms: —and then I shall be as aforesaid a London bird: if we don't get it, I don't quite know what we shall do: I expect such places are rare near London.

I have just come in from the garden, which is really looking nice now: the seeds mostly in, & the daffodils almost out in blossom: I am sorry to say though that the frost killed almost all the wallflowers; poor old Matthews is very slow; but I don't like sacking him; even on selfish grounds, a new system of horticulture will be more than the garden or I can stand. Politics seem getting much quieter here: it seems like we shall make peace with the Boers in spite of all the yells of the Jingoes & the colonists: that will be one good thing. The Tories are going to move a vote of censure for the quitting of Kandahar; they will be beat, as 'tis sure to be a party division, & that will be another good thing. The Irish seem now to be waiting to see what the land bill is to be; I hope they will behave decently about it, & that the bill is to be good: I suppose you saw Bright's letter to Karl Blind about the Boer War: it was hearty & like himself again, which was encouraging. As to the Czar's slaying —what can one say but that ill comes of ill? You will see about the gunpowder at the Mansion House: the Jingoes assume as a matter of course that it was a Fenian affair: I should think 'tis more like that it was a mere piece of craziness bred out of all these rumours and horrors.

Well I went to Nottingham & was entertained at the house of some good people, whereof the youngers were Ruskinites, & the elders stiffish religionists: my audience at the castle was polite & attentive; but I fear they were sorely puzzled at what I said; as might well be, since if they acted on it Nottingham trade would come to an end: strange to say while other places have been depressed Nottingham has fairly flourished these last few years: albeit it lives on producing a perfectly useless luxury: machine lace. Tis a finely situated town, and the great old market-place is a rarity in England, but it is spreading all over the valley & up the hills in a ghastly fashion.. . .

To Mrs William Morris 31 March [1881]

Dearest Janey

Did the babes tell you how I met Oscar Wilde at the Richmonds? I must admit that as the devil is painted blacker than he is, so it fares with O.W., not but what he is an ass: but he certainly is & clever too. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 1881

Last night I took me a book and read Carlyle on Mrs Carlyle, having read his James Carlyle and Jeffrey before [i.e. Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, 1881]. I think I never read anything that dispirited me so much; though read it through one must after having once begun it. What is one to say of such outrageous blues as this? As to what he says about this, that, and the other person now living, I can't see that he gives much offence, I mean to say personally; he is generally very unfair and narrow and whimsical about his likes and dislikes, but 'tis something in these days of hypocrisy that he makes distinctions at all—only one wishes his distinctions were something more than whims. But all that is nothing to the ferocity of his gloom: I confess I had no idea of it till I read the book: and yet I find it difficult to say that it ought not to have been printed, and I am sure it ought not to have been garbled, as some folk think it should. Only should it not have been called, The history of a great author's liver? Not to mention symptoms too much, I in a small way understand something of that: to look upon your natural work, which you have chosen out of all the work of the world, with a sick disgust, when you are not at it: to be sore and raw with your friends, distrustful of them, antagonistic to them, when you are not in their

[1] From Mackail, *ii.* 28-9.

company: to want society and to hate it when you've got it:—all these things are just as much a part of the disease as physical squeamishness: but you see, poor chap, he was so always bad that he scarcely had a chance of finding that out. But mind you, I don't believe he didn't enjoy writing his books more or less, even 'Frederick', the dullest of them and the one he groans over most. After all, my moral from it all is the excellence of art, its truth, and its power of expression. Set 'Sartor Resartus' by all this, and what a difference!

The story of the old father is touching in spite of its clannishness (which perhaps is not so bad a thing; holds the world together somewhat). He really must have been a good fellow not to have bullied his queer son. Only they wouldn't have been the worse for a touch of definite art up there; even among those beautiful mountains and moors. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] Kelmscott July 1881

I suppose you have seen about the sentence on Herr Most and read Coleridge's most dastardly speech to him:[2] just think of the mixture of tyranny and hypocrisy with which the world is governed! These are the sort of things that make thinking people so sick at heart that they are driven from all interest in politics save revolutionary politics: which I must say seems like to be my case. Indeed I have long known, or felt, say, that society in spite of its modern smoothness was founded on injustice and kept together by cowardice and tyranny: but the hope in me has been that matters would mend gradually, till the last struggle, which must needs be mingled with violence and madness, would be so short as scarcely to count. But I must say matters like this and people's apathy about them shake one's faith in gradual progress.

As to Anti-Scrape, I have little comfort there I must say: we have begun too late and our foes are too many; videlicet, almost all people, educated and uneducated. No, as to the buildings themselves, 'tis a lost cause; in fact the destruction is not far from being complete already. What people really say to themselves is this: I don't like the thing being done, but I can bear it maybe—or certainly, when I come to think of it—and to stir in it is such obvious suffering;

[1] From Mackail, ii. 25-6.

[2] Johann Most, editor of the German Socialist paper *Freiheit,* was charged at Bow Street Police Court with incitement to murder, because he extolled the assassination of Alexander II of Russia, and sentenced to sixteen months hard labour.

so I won't stir. Certainly to take that trouble in any degree it is needful that a man should be touched with a real love of the earth, a worship of it, no less; and I think that as things go, that is seldom felt except by very simple people, and by them, as would be likely, dimly enough. You know the most refined and cultured people, both those of the old religions and these of the new vague ones, have a sort of Manichean hatred of the world (I use the word in its proper sense, the home of man). Such people must be both the enemies of beauty and the slaves of necessity, and true it is that they lead the world at present, and I believe will do till all that is old is gone, and history has become a book from which the pictures have been torn. Now if you ask me why I kick against the pricks in this matter, all I can say is, first because I cannot help it, and secondly because I am encouraged by a sort of faith, that something will come of it, some kind of culture of which we know nothing at present.

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] August 1881

. . . On the whole the hazardous experiment of trying the same expedition twice over has succeeded. Our spirits sank somewhat I think as we neared Kelmscott last night; a thing done and over always does that for people, however well it has gone. For my part I didn't so much feel that as the coming into Oxford. A kind of terror always falls upon me as I near it; indignation at wanton or rash changes mingles curiously in me with all that I remember I have lost since I was a lad and dwelling there; not the least of losses the recognition that I didn't know in those days what a gain it was to be there. Perhaps if one dreads repeating a pleasure at my time of life it is because it marks too clearly how the time has gone since the last time, and certainly I feel more than one year older since I came up the water in 1880. At any rate the younger part of us have enjoyed themselves thoroughly; and indeed so have I. You know my faith, and how I feel I have no sort of right to revenge myself for any of my private troubles on the kind earth: and here I feel her kindness very specially and am bound not to meet it with a long face.

[1] From Mackail, ii. 16. The expedition by boat up the Thames from Hammersmith to Kelmscott, carried out for the first time the previous August. On this occasion the party included William De Morgan, Faulkner, De Morgan's sister and two girls, Miss Bessie Macleod and Miss Lisa Stillman. 'According to my recollection,' said De Morgan of these voyages, Ve none of us stopped laughing all the way.' They were, for instance, the occasion of De Morgan's witticism that Iffley-on-Thames was 'the original birth-place of the hypotheses.'

Kelmscott
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] August 1881

I don't quite agree with you in condemning grumbling against follies and ills that oppress the world at large, even among friends; for you see it is but now and then that one has a chance of speaking about the thing in public, and meantime one's heart is hot with it, and some expression of it is like to quicken the flame even in those one loves and respects most, and it is good to feel the air laden with the coming storm even as we go about our daily work or while away time in light matters. To do nothing but grumble and not to act—that is throwing away one's life: but I don't think that words on our cause that we have at heart do nothing but wound the air, even when spoken among friends: 'tis at worst like the music to which men go to battle. Of course if the thing is done egotistically 'tis bad so far; but that again, how to do it well or ill, is a matter of art like other things. . . .

Kelmscott
To Mrs Burne-Jones[2] September 1881

We went a most formal expedition on Saturday, by water to Lechlade: then took a trap there and drove to Cirencester, which turned out a pleasant country town, and to us country folk rather splendid and full of shops. There is a grand church there, mostly late Gothic, of the very biggest type of parish church, romantic to the last extent, with its many aisles and chapels: wall-painting there and stained glass and brasses also: and tacked on to it an elaborate house, now the town hall, but built doubtless for lodging the priests who served the many altars in the church. I could have spent a long day there; however, after mooning about the town a bit, we drove off again along the long stretches of the Foss-way (Roman) over a regular down country, the foot-hills of the Cotswolds, pleasant enough, till we came to the valley which the tiny Coin cuts through, where we set ourselves to seeking the Roman villa: said valley very beautiful, the meadows so sweet and wholesome. Two fields were grown all over with the autumn crocus, which I have not seen wild elsewhere in England, though there was plenty of it near Ems. The Roman villa was very interesting, for a show place with a gimcrack *cottage ornie* in front of it, and the place was lovely: we spent our

[1] From Mackail, ii. 26-7. [2] From Mackail, ii. 18-19.

time with the utmost recklessness, so that by then we had had tea at a nice little public by the bridge, and were ready to start down the Coin towards Fairford, it was 6.30, and getting towards twilight. However we saw the first two villages well enough and had some inkling of the others: the scale of everything of the smallest, but so sweet, and unusual even; it was like the background of an innocent fairy story. We didn't know our way till we had reached the last of the Coin villages, and kept asking and knocking at cottage doors and the like, and it was all very delightful and queer. Our trap put us down at St. John's Bridge, and we trudged thence into Kelmscott, on a night so dark that even Kelmscott lights made a kind of flare in the sky.

Kelmscott

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] September 1881

It has been a great pleasure to see man and maid so hard at work carrying at last. Hobbs began at it on Wednesday morning, and by the next morning the thatchers were putting on the bright straw cap to the new rick: yesterday they were carrying the wheat in the field along our causeway and stacking it in our yard: pretty as one sat in the tapestry-room to see the loads coming on between the stone walls—that was for the other rick though, just beyond the little three-cornered close in front of the house. I am afraid that last winter has killed us a great many birds here; small ones especially: I don't see the blue tits I look for at this time of the year. I have seen but one moor-hen (yesterday) and was glad to see him, as I feared they were all dead: plenty of rooks however; they have just left off making the parliament-noise they began about six this morning: starlings also, but they haven't begun to gather in our trees yet.

The other morning as I was coming up the river by our island I heard a great squealing of the swallows, and looking up saw a hawk hanging in the wind overhead, and the swallows gathered in a knot near him: presently two or three swallows left their knot and began skirting Mr Hawk, and one swept right down on him and fetched him a crack (or seemed to). He considered for a minute or two, then set his wings slant-wise and went down the wind like lightning, and in an instant was hanging over Eaton Hastings: I remember seeing something like this in the flats about the Arun before. . . .

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 17-18.**

To the Hon. George Howard 3 November 1881

Your carpet[1] has been finished for a week or two: I have been keeping it back to try for a fine day to spread it on our lawn, so that I might see it all at once: at present I have only been able to see it piecemeal. So seen, it looks very well, I think, and seems to be satisfactory as to manufacture. What are your orders about it? as I shall have to send some one down to Naworth to get it into its place: it weighs about a ton I fancy.

To the Editor', The Daily News 28 November 1881

ASHBURNHAM HOUSE

Sir,—Your correspondent of this morning, who states that 'the chief part of what was remarkable in the interior (of this house) was destroyed by a former Dean and Chapter' must surely have seen the interior from the exterior. Last summer I had the pleasure of seeing it in the way that most mortals see an interior, and I must assert as a fact, that the interior of the hall and staircase (with its quite remarkable lantern'), together with the reception rooms, was still 'remarkable' for something unusual in London, which I took to be architectural beauty, and which the architects and archaeologists, including the late Dean Stanley, who had been kind enough to ask me to accompany them, thought was still in pretty much the same condition as it had been left by its original builders.

I am, Sir, yours obediently
William Morris

To the Editor, The Athenaeum 10 December 1881

HIGH WYCOMBE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Sir,—A correspondent having written to our Committee informing us that the Charity Commissioners had agreed to a plan for pulling down and reconstruction of the buildings of High Wycombe Grammar School, we deputed one of our members to visit and report on them: the information we have received from him seems so important that I venture to address you on the subject.

The building that originally stood on the site was a leper hospital, founded in or before the twelfth century; at the Dissolution alterations were made in it to fit it for a grammar school. What building

[1] The carpet Morris had designed and pointed for the drawing-room at Naworth Castle was by far the largest he had then executed and had been nearly a year in hand.

was then done was modernized in the present century, but there still remains a late Norman hall, of about 64 ft. by 32 ft., of five bays, with piers and arches quite complete, the capitals well carved and in good condition; this has been turned into the head master's house, and has had a floor built at the level of the springing arches and been otherwise cut up into living rooms. There is a chapel built at right angles to this hall, which was shortened at the time of the Dissolution and otherwise modernized, but still retains some good Decorated windows.

Thus we have left us a Norman hall in good condition, except for its external walls, of little less importance as a work of art than the celebrated hall of Oakham Castle, and most valuable to archaeology, as showing the arrangement of an early mediaeval hospital, but which is apparently almost unknown to our architects and antiquaries, owing probably to its entanglement with a dwelling house.

Now this beautiful and interesting work of art, which in France would certainly have been scheduled as a national monument, and surely in England is nothing less than that, is to be pulled down simply for the value of the ground it stands on. This seems to me such a causeless loss of valuable property that I think the Charity Commissioners might be appealed to to reconsider the scheme they have sanctioned. Would not the help of a little thought and a good architect enable the school to make the ancient hall a part of their buildings? Or if this be impossible, could not the town and the neighbouring landowners, aided, if necessary, by a general subscription, buy the building and its site from the school, clear away the modern lumber from the hall, and use it as a library or museum or other public building for the town?

Surely if it were known that High Wycombe possessed one of the best of the very few domestic buildings of the Norman period yet left in England, many people would visit that town who are not at present likely to come near it.

William Morris

To the Hon. Mrs George Howard 15 December 1881

Ned and I duly went to Palace Green yesterday and our joint conclusion was that the best hanging for the walls of the boudoir would be the enclosed madder-printed cotton: it brings out the greys of the

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 53-4.**

picture better than anything else: also I think it would make a pretty room with the woodwork painted a light blue-green colour like a starling's egg; and if you wanted drapery about it, we have beautiful stuffs of shades of red that would brighten all up without fighting with the wall-hangings: if you could like this and would let me know some day this week, I could get all finished against you come home, but if you still have doubts we would leave the room in a forward state for finishing. To complete the business part of my letter I may as well give you the price of the red stuff: two shillings per yard, yard-wide, which would come to less than the gold sunflower would have done. . . .

Rottingdean

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] 10 January 1882

Here we are: having just come back from an expedition to Brighton: we spent an hour or more in the aquarium (where our presence caused astonishment, YE Old English Fair not having begun till the afternoon, nor the other damnations which are strung on the much neglected fish). I think I saw more ugly people in Brighton in the course of an hour than I have seen otherwise for the last twenty years: as you justly remark, serves me right for going into Brighton: but you see we went there to do a little shopping. Yesterday was a lovely day, and we took a trap and drove to Lewes: you have to go a long way round, as the wheel-roads across the downs are doubtful it seems: it is very beautiful when you get on to the brow of the hill above Falmer: a long way off to the right you can see Lewes lying like a box of toys under a great amphitheatre of chalk hills: the ride is very pleasant: Lewes when you get there lies on a ridge in its valley, the street winding down to the river (Ouse) which runs into the sea at Newhaven: on the whole it is set down better than any town I have seen in England: unluckily it is not a very interesting town in itself: there is a horrible workhouse or prison on the outskirts, and close by a hideous row of builders' houses: there are three old Churches in it, dismally restored, but none of them over-remarkable: there is the remains of a castle, 14th century: but it is not grand at all. Never the less it isn't a bad country town, only not up to its position.

The house [i.e. Burne-Jones's at Rottingdean] is very pleasant and

[1] From Mackail, ii. 66-7.

agreeable and suits me to a T; and I am in very good order, and quite satisfied, bating a little unavoidable anxiety, though J. has been hitherto quite well and seemingly very happy. I am hard at work on my Birmingham lecture: I don't feel as if I had much left to say, but must do all I can to say it decently, so as not to discredit the cause.[1]

Rottingdean
To the Hon. George Howard' 10 January 1882

My dear George

You see I am away for a few days, which accounts for my not answering your letter at once: we had a letter from the parson's wife of Brampton[3] asking for patterns for the same: I bid them send a big worsted pattern which I thought would be best, as 'tis mostly blue, which I fancy the Church wants: only you must think that under that very bright window all woven stuffs will look grey. If the blue looks grey, I fear there is nothing for it but the brightest red: we have a woollen stuff very bright and telling (3-ply pomegranate), or would red damask silk be too costly?

I suppose your election is the North Riding: I haven't seen a paper for four days, so don't know how it's going: so can only wish you good speed: I make, with all apologies for my impudence, the unpolitical remarks, that I hope you have got a good candidate: 'tis better to be beaten with a good one than be successful with a bad one. I guess there will be a fine procession of rats before this parliament is over: that will teach us, I hope, not to run the worst man possible on all occasions. Excuse the spleen of a kind of Radical cobbler.

With best wishes from Yours affectionately
William Morris

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Mrs Burne-Jones[4] 17 January 1882

I am just going to finish my day with a couple of hours' work on my lecture,[5] but will first write you a line, since pen, ink, and paper are at hand, and seeing withal that to-morrow I shall not have any time at all to myself.

[1] Delivered at the Midland Institute, Birmingham, on 23 January under the title of 'Some of the Minor Arts of Life', afterwards printed as 'The Lesser Arts of Life.'
[2] From Mackail, ii. 69-70.
[3] Philip Webb's only church.
[4] From Mackail, ii. 68-9.
[5] The History of Pattern-Designing.

May came to hand safely this morning, thank you kindly for having her. As to Jenny, she has been to my joy very well and in bright spirits all the week, so I have no doubt our sojourn there did her good: it was her birthday on Tuesday: 21 my dear old Jenny was.

I have perhaps rather more than enough of work to do, and for that reason or what not, am dwelling somewhat low down in the valley of humiliation—quite good enough for me doubtless. Yet it sometimes seems to me as if my lot was a strange one: you see, I work pretty hard, and on the whole very cheerfully, not altogether I hope for mere pudding, still less for praise; and while I work I have the cause always in mind, and yet I know that the cause for which I specially work is doomed to fail, at least in seeming; I mean that art must go under, where or how ever it may come up again. I don't know if I explain what I'm driving at, but it does sometimes seem to me a strange thing indeed that a man should be driven to work with energy and even with pleasure and enthusiasm at work which he knows will serve no end but amusing himself; am I doing nothing but make-believe then, something like Louis XVI's lock-making? There, I don't pretend to say that the conundrum is a very interesting one, as it certainly has not any practical importance as far as I am concerned, since I shall without doubt go on with my work, useful or useless, till I demit.

Well, one thing I long for which will certainly come, the sunshine and the spring. Meantime we are hard at work gardening here: making dry paths, and a sublimely tidy box edging: how I do love tidiness!

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
26 January [1882]

To Serjeant Simon, M.P.[1]

Dear Sir

May I ask the favour of a platform ticket for the meeting to be held next Wednesday at the Mansion House.

I have the greatest dislike to pushing myself forward in any matter, but when I remind you that I was actively engaged in the work of the Eastern Question Association some years back, I think you will understand why I wish to lose no opportunity of showing

[1] Afterwards Sir John Simon.

that tyranny and brutality are always hateful to me, whosoever the butchers and whosoever the victims may be.

I take the liberty of expressing a hope that the organizers of the movement will do their best to associate it with others of my colleagues of the E.Q.A. I feel sure that they will respond sympathetically to any invitation. It seems to me important to show the Russian Government, that those who were most anxious to keep this country out of a causeless quarrel with Russia, are as indignant as any at the crimes against civilization which are now being perpetrated.[1]

I am Dear Sir, Yours faithfully
William Morris

To Mrs Burne-Jones [2] 1882

... As to the poem [Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* I have the mood I suppose: nothing would lay hold of me at all. This is doubtless my own fault, since it certainly did seem very fine. But, to confess and be hanged, you know I never could really sympathize with Swinburne's work; it always seemed to me to be founded on literature, not on nature. In saying this I really cannot accuse myself of any jealousy on the subject, as I think also you will not. Now I believe that Swinburne's sympathy with literature is most genuine and complete; and it is a pleasure to hear him talk about it, which he does in the best vein possible; he is most steadily enthusiastic about it. Now time was when the poetry resulting merely from this intense study and love of literature might have been, if not the best, yet at any rate very worthy and enduring: but in these days when all the arts, even poetry, are like to be overwhelmed under the mass of material riches which civilization has made and is making more and more hastily every day; riches which the world has made indeed, but cannot use to any good purpose: in these days the issue between art, that is, the godlike part of man, and mere bestiality, is so momentous, and the surroundings of life are so stern and unplayful, that nothing can take serious hold of people, or should do so, but that which is rooted deepest in reality and is quite at first hand: there is no room for anything which is not forced out of a man of deep feeling, because of its innate strength and vision.

In all this I may be quite wrong, and the lack may be in myself:

[1] The meeting was held to protest against the persecution of the Jews in Russia. Browning and Tennyson also wrote to the same effect.
[2] From Mackail, 11. 74.

I only state my opinion, I don't defend it; still less do I my own poetry. . . .

Merton Abbey

To the Hon. George Howard[1] 16 March 1882

My dear George

I am in a fix for look here: I took this place muchly for the sake of its water-power, and for the water of the Wandle; and now the Wandle is going to be dried up—no less—there is a bill before a committee on Monday, as I hear suddenly, to enable the London and South Western Water Company to tap the head springs of the river at Carshalton: the river is almost wholly fed from these springs, and tapping them thus would reduce it to a muddy ditch. As to myself I don't much care, as I always said we ought to have gone into the country, but on public grounds I could burst when I think of it: the Wandle from here upwards is a most beautiful stream as perhaps you know. I shall try to see you on Saturday morning; but meantime can you do anything in the House to help to stop such a damned iniquity?

Yours affectionately

William Morris

To Mrs Bume-Jones[2] 23 August 1882

We went on Saturday to call on the De Morgans at Witley, and found them lodging in a newish red brick house, the surroundings of which rather reminded one of Mme Bodichon's Scalands: afterwards we drove down with them and the Allinghams through woodland lanes up on to the great commons and Hind Head Hill on the Portsmouth Road: covered it was, much of it, with heather and ling, all in blossom at this season, and seeming to me not the best chosen of colours though so very bright; but the place is very beautiful, and amazingly free from anything Cockney-base, considering how near it is to London: the best part of it the beauty of the oaks, now in their new foliage hanging about the rare cornfields; for the tilth is scanty in this sandy woodland country. Allingham's dwelling is in a very pleasant and beautiful spot, but the house highly uninteresting though not specially hideous, nor the get up inside of it very pleasant (though not very bad), as you might imagine: the garden too that discomforting sort of place that a new garden with no special natural gifts is apt to be: I should like to have made them better it. As to the country in general, in spite of all its beauty, it didn't quite

[1] **From** Mackail, ii. 70-1. [2] From Mackail, ii. 75-7.

touch me (except as pleasant hills and meadows and lanes). For one thing it is very thinly inhabited, and looks more than most country-sides as if it were kept for the pleasure of the rich, as indeed it is: but I don't know anything of it but this one visit. I must take a turn of walking through it one day: for this thing interests me in it, that if ever I am to live out of London (as I don't suppose I ever shall), and Mertongoes on, somewhere thereabouts I should have to pitch my tent.

I am much encouraged by your interest in our Merton Crafts, and shall do my best to make it pay so that we may keep it going, though, as I have told you, I can't hide from myself that there is a chance of failure (commercial I mean) in the matter: in which case I must draw in my horns, and try to shuffle out of the whole affair decently, and live thereafter small and certain if possible: little would be my grief at that same. This is looking at the worst side, which I think one ought to do; but I *think* we shall on the whole succeed; though a rich man (so-called) I never either can or will become: nay, I am trying in a feeble way to be more thrifty—whereof no more, lest I boast now and be disgraced at Christmas.

I have been reading more of Carlyle's life, and find it deeply interesting in spite of Froude; usually I find biographies dull to extremity, I suppose because they are generally a mass of insincerities and platitudes: but in this book is a man speaking who can say what he thinks even in a letter (I wish I could). I like him much the better for having read this book, after that other mass of moodiness, and I fare to feel as if he were on the right side in spite of all faults.

I have to go now to Oxford Street and then to the Mansion House to the Icelandic Relief Committee, which I am afraid owing to the time of the year is like to be a dead failure.

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] 29 August 1882

I have not been well, and there have been other troubles also of which I won't speak, and the sum of all has rather made me break down.

I hope I am not quite unhumble, or want to be the only person in the world untroubled; but I have been ever loth to think that there were no people going through life, not without pain indeed, but with simplicity and free from blinding entanglements. Such an one I want to be, and my faith is that it is possible for most men to be no worse. Yet indeed I am older, and the year is evil; the summerless

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 77.**

season, and famine and war, and the folly of peoples come back again, as it were, and the more and more obvious death of art before it rises again, are heavy matters to a small creature like me, who cannot choose but think about them, and can mend them scarce a whit.

However, to stand up for oneself and tip them Long Melford, as Miss Berners says (and also in his way old Carlyle), is the only cure; and indeed I try it at whiles. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] September 1882

I have had a bad time of it lately and feel ten years older than I did in June. I saw to-day about a book written by an Italian peasant (near Verona) complaining of their misery. How shocking it seemed to me that all the riches of rich lands should be wasted till they are no better than the poorest for most men. Think what the constitution of civilized society must be when the Italian peasant is not better off, but worse off (taking one year with another), than his brother of Iceland!

Kelmscott

To F. S. Ellis [2] 29 September 1882

I am so vexed that you should have had all this trouble; except for the circumstances which you know of, I would have made a point of staying in London and seeing the matter through. I cannot find that beastly letter. When I saw you on Monday week I put what letters I thought would be wanted into an envelope which I intended to give you, but was so muddled by my own troubles that I daresay I did not; nor can I be sure that the letter was in it. Meantime I have written a letter to the bloody Times which I also enclose; if you think it worth while please send it on: after which I really don't see what any of us can do till Magniisson comes back. I repeat I am so vexed that you should have been let in for such worrits—I am reminded of Swinburne's view of providence when he said that he never saw an old gentleman give a sixpence to a beggar, but he was straightway run over by a bus.

To the Hon. Mrs George Howard' Autumn 1882

Thank you for asking me personally about the patterns: I have been to Oxford Street to-day and told Smith to send off all our patterns that would be of any use to you; I have told him to write 'recommended' and 'specially recommended' on certain of them. As to

[1] From Mackail, ii. 78. [2] From Mackail, ii. 78-9. [3] Mackail, ii. 54-5.

the papers (sunflower and acorn), I will do what I can to soften the colour.

May I ask what you are going to do about the drawing-room at Palace Green? Ned tells me that you are going to keep the *Dies Domini* there, and want to hang the room accordingly; we don't like to do anything there till the ceiling is made safe: what do you think of hanging a piece of stuff behind it? I could get the colour better suited to it so, I believe.

Ned has been doing a great deal to the dining-room pictures and very much improving them: so that the room will be light and pleasant after all, and the pictures very beautiful.[1]

As to the red dove and rose, for a curtain, it will last as long as need be, since the cloth is really very strong: I can't answer so decidedly as to the colour; but the colours in it when looked at by themselves you will find rather full than not, 'tis the mixture that makes them look delicate: therefore I believe the stuff to be quite safe to use if you fancy it: of course I don't mean to say that any flat-woven stuff can stand sunlight as well as a piled material, and the velvet also is darker, though not so well dyed as the other stuff.

As to the other version of the dove and rose, if 'tis a smaller sized pattern in green and yellow, you can use it without hesitation; but if it be of the same size as the red, I should scarcely advise it, if the settees are to have heavy wear: you see we made this stuff for curtains and hangings: I have tried a piece of the purple, turquoise, and yellow as a cushion on a chair of my own on which everybody sits: it has worn better than I expected, but still not like stuff made for it would do. As to the red silk for curtains, what I am doing (for St. James's) is a very fine colour; but also you must not forget that I can do pretty well any colour you want, and of sober reds the resources are great. Item, I can do the most ravishing yellows, rather what people call amber: what would you say to a dullish pink shot with amber; like some of those chrysanthemums we see just now? I am going to try that after Christmas.

The gold and red sunflower is on my board at Queen Square and I will do my best to hit the due colour. . . .

To the Hon. George Howard[2] 1882

Borax is the name of the culprit: the colour-makers, finding that the glass-painters wanted a colour that would burn well at a lowish

[1] **A series of panels representing the story of Cupid and Psyche.** [2] **From Mackail, ii. 56.**

temperature, mixed borax with it, to that end; but unluckily glass of borax is soluble in water, and hence the tears wept by our windows —and our purses. We use harder colour now, so that if any window of ours goes now it must be from other causes; bad burning or the like; I don't think as things go that this is like to happen to us.

I am very glad indeed that you think the east window a success; I was very nervous about it, as the cartoons were so good that I should have been quite upset if I had not done them something like justice.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 30 January 1883

Dearest Jenny

What a queer business it was my running off to Paris, wasn't it? [1] I thought myself bound to go, & if I was wrong I had some revenge taken on me by the weather: We had to wait $^3/_4$ of an hour on the good pleasure of H.R.H. Prince of Whales [sic] who crossed in another boat that night: I had no idea it was going to be so rough a night, till a great dash of spray came right over the pier onto the boat as we were lying there: The only other crossing I have had as bad was on the occasion of your mother and I coming back from Ems: it was a sort of moonlit night however, though the rainy squalls kept coming on, so that we could see the waves at any rate, & they were very fine indeed: we got very wet, as water came in at every roll of the boat: Armstrong had ordered a *coupe-lit* carriage at Calais so we slept on the road to Paris after a fashion; but it was so cold that it was a sort of dog-sleep, and the inn room & wood-fire & coffee & rolls were sweet to us when we got there at about past 7. We put up at a little inn in the rue St Roch that connects the rue Rivoli with the rue St Honore: funny little rooms not bad but far from grand. Armstrong took me to dine at a simple place he knew, where we were welcome & paid but moderately having just as good a dinner as we should have had at a grand place: by the way seeing 'goujons[5] on the bill, I insisted on having them, & very good they were. The trees in the Tuilleries Gardens have suffered very much even since we were there: it is sad to see for I remember when I first came to Paris and was high up aloft with aunt Henrietta at Meurice's they were so thick they looked as if you could walk on their tops. There seemed to be no excitement political visible there: the man

[1] Morris went over to Paris with Armstrong, Director of South Kensington Museum, to consider the purchase for the Museum of an important collection of early textiles.

who took our commission, & who seemed a sensible man, said he could see no danger of revolution imminent; though the real danger was the Orleans princes and their creatures creeping into places & so corrupting the public service: wherein I agree with him. We were very busy over our proper business both days, but managed to see the Cluny, being close by: also a new museum of casts of Gothic sculpture at the Trocadero, very interesting: as to the sale, we were beat, as I told your mother, a sort of French S.K.M. [South Kensington Museum] bought the things over our heads, but Armstrong thinks he can borrow the best book of the pattern books, which was very good, had a lot of old Indian & Persian printed cloths in it——

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 28 February 1883

Dearest Jenny

As I am away such a long time I mustn't leave you quite without news of me—although everything has been going on in the quietest way. On Sunday no soul called, which is unusual: I wasn't very sorry for it gave me an opportunity of getting through my Manchester lecture, which had been rather hanging fire lately.

The garden to my cockney eyes is looking pretty well, though I daresay you would think Pig-End somewhat dreary; but the new little trees look pretty there and are coming out in bud: I am disappointed with the daffies: many of them are blind: some will be quite out in a day or two. At Merton there are some out already: the almond tree is blossoming there beautifully: some of these fine days the place *has* looked pretty, the water sparkling among the twigs. . . . item did I tell you that we had put down ballast, i.e. clay burnt red, for our paths there; it is rather 'bluggy' at present, but as grey gets into it I think it will look well: we are getting tidy now but haven't quite cleared up about the big filtering bed, which still wants something doing to it, as the tail was red with madder the other day.

We are not getting on as fast as we should with the printing: is very tough work getting everything in due order, the cloths seem to want so much doing to them before they can be printed & then so much doing to them after they are printed. By the way Tom Wardle of Leek is going to set up a shop in Bond St. I suppose chiefly for the pushing of his beloved Tusser silk: I dont think he will find it pay.

We have had a grand cleaning of the blue Persian carpet at Merton. My word wasn't it dirty: caked with dirt: I am sure your mother will be glad to hear of it: it looks very much better: the pattern being quite plain to see except just at the end for about a foot. I was frightened, though, at first: for after we first put it into the river it cockled up like a sheet of crumpled paper, the cotton warp shrinking with the wet: I thought my £80 had gone down the Wandle: but all came right when it was dry.

In about a fortnight we shall have finished the Goose Girl tapestry: ' Uncle Ned has done me two lovely figures for tapestry, but I have got to design a background for them: I shall probably bring that down next time I come for my holiday task: tell dear May that I have devoted about 20 minutes to the lace—it is a drawback to have to be always washing ones hands, for a fidgety person like me. Neither have I done much to the *Shah Nameh*[2]*:* you see the lecture has swallowed up my literary time. I have been reading some *Dombey* 'tis after all very amusing, but O, I don't think Mr Dombey was worth taking so much trouble about as his daughter took. . . .

To The Manchester Examiner 14 March 1883

Sir,—It was the purpose of my lecture to raise another question than one of 'mere art.'[3] I specially wished to point out that the question of popular art was a social question, involving the happiness or misery of the greater part of the community. The absence of popular art from modern times is more disquieting and grievous to bear for this reason than for any other, that it betokens that fatal division of men into the cultivated and the degraded classes which competitive commerce has bred and fosters; popular art has no chance of a healthy life, or, indeed, of a life at all, till we are on the way to fill up this terrible gulf between riches and poverty. Doubtless many things will go to filling it up, and if art must be one of those things, let it go. What business have we with art at all unless all can share it? I am not afraid but that art will rise from the dead, whatever else lies there. For, after all, what is the true end and aim of all politics and

[1] **The tapestry of the Goose-Girl, from a design by Walter Crane, was the first figure-subject executed at Merton on the high-warp loom. It was succeeded by the Flora and Pomona pieces, in which the figures were designed by Burne-Jones.**

[2] **Planned as part of die projected heroic cycle of Persia, to place beside hi' Greek and Scandinavian cycles.**

[3] **On 6 March, 1881, Morris gave a lecture on 'Art, Wealth, and Riches' at the Manchester Royal Institution. Tnis letter was written in reply to an indignant one in *The Manchester Examiner* complaining that his lecture raised 'another question than one of mere art**

commerce? Is it not to bring about a state of things in which all men may live at peace and free from over-burdensome anxiety, provided with work which is pleasant to them and produces results useful to their neighbours?

It may well be a burden to the conscience of an honest man who lives a more manlike life to think of the innumerable lives which are spent in toil unrelieved by hope and uncheered by praise; men who might as well, for all the good they are doing to their neighbours by their work, be turning a crank with nothing at the end of it; but this is the fate of those who are working at the bidding of blind competitive commerce, which still persists in looking at itself as an end, and not as a means.

It has been this burden on my conscience, I do in all sincerity believe, which has urged me on to speak of popular art in Manchester and elsewhere. I could never forget that in spite of all drawbacks my work is little else than pleasure to me; that under no conceivable circumstances would I give it up even if I could. Over and over again have I asked myself why should not my lot be the common lot. My work is simple work enough; much of it, nor that the least pleasant, any man of decent intelligence could do, if he could but get to care about the work and its results. Indeed I have been ashamed when I have thought of the contrast between my happy working hours and the unpraised, unrewarded, monotonous drudgery which most men are condemned to. Nothing shall convince me that such labour as this is good or necessary to civilization.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 14 March 1883

. . . I hope you will not be angry with me for putting off coming till next Tuesday: you must lay it on the gout my dear: you see we are not getting on so fast with the printing at Merton as we ought: I was away for a fortnight with gout, & Wardle was away more than usual: the colour mixer Kenyon is a good fellow, but rather a muddler, & often in order to be sure that the thing is properly done either Wardle or I have to stand over him all the time: this is specially the case with the madder dyeing which we are on now, and if I get next Monday as well as next Friday at Merton it will make a week's difference in pushing on the work, and I shall be able to stay with you till well over Easter with a good conscience: and I will take care to keep myself free from gout. . . .

I have just got back my lecture with the proofs, as they are going to print it: so I shall be able to bring it down & read it to you: a letter from one of my friends there says that the philistines are much moved by it, that there have been two leading articles about it in the papers already, and a correspondence beginning,—so you see one may yet arrive at the dignity of being hissed for a Socialist down there: all this is encouraging.

I am now about a new lecture for a club in connection with the Democratic Federation; if it turns out as I hope I am thinking of printing it for distribution to our members & others: of course it must to a great extent repeat the Manchester one: only I intend making this one more plain-spoken: I am tired of being mealy mouthed. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 2 April 1883

. . . I duly preached my sermon at Hampstead yesterday: the audience if not large was at least as large as the room would hold: they were very polite, and buttered me, as Mr Jorrocks would say, most plentifully; I didn't think that there were many working men there: the others seemed mostly very 'advanced' as the slang goes, & some very intelligent. It was rather a job getting there & back and I didn't get home till past midnight. By the way among the other *intelligent* people who should I stumble across but C. J. Faulkner who [had] been to call on his Orrin-Smiths. I preach at Clerkenwell on April 15th and shall do my best for them: I have already begun the lecture. . . .

Mistress Eliza went off to be married at Turnham Green on Saturday: she had had her wedding gown all ready but accepted the offer of a silk dress with gratitude; she was however afraid of our bright colours, so I wanting to please her, have promised to get her a good nice dirt coloured one. . . . Poor Annie Cook is much distressed at losing her comrade: they have been together 9 years.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 14 April 1883

. . . I thought the Goose Girl was not bad, my dear, on the whole: but when all is said it was not a design quite fit for tapestry, except for the landscape background, which looked very well indeed. . . . By the way, as to tapestries the S.K.M. have bought the 3 big pieces:

I was there last Saturday with Webb & they told me as much: they are very fine, & the study of them will do me much good.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
15 April 1883

To John Ruskin [1]

My dear Ruskin

I really feel very guilty for not having answered your question before[2]: & now I must add to my guilt by laying some blame on Ned who only gave me your note this morning: however I have got ready a sort of pattern-card of some of the glass we use which I will send you at once; and meantime answer your today's letter thus.

We *paint* on glass; first the lines of draperies, features & the like, with an opaque colour which when the glass is held up to the light is simply so much obscurity; with thinner washes and scumbles of the same colour we shade objects as much as we deem necessary, but always using this shading to explain form, and not as shadow proper.

2nd. Finding that it was difficult to get a flesh-coloured glass with tone enough for the flesh of figures, we use thin washes of a reddish enamel colour to stain white glass for flesh-colour & sometimes, though rarely, for other pale orange tints: N.B. this part of our practice is the only point in which we differ from that of the mediaeval glass-painters.

3rd. We use a yellow stain on white glass (or on blue to make greens): this is chiefly done by means of silver, is quite transparent & forms part of the glass after firing; it may therefore be considered rather a diffusion of the colour in the glass than a painting on it.

The body of the glass is of two kinds, first what is technically called pot-metal, in which the colouring matter is fused with the glass, & is essentially part of it: and 2ndly what is called flashed glass, in which a white body is covered with a coloured skin: this is done by the workman taking on the end of his hollow rod first a large lump of white metal, then a small dip of coloured metal; he then trundles the lot, making a disk like a small piece of crown glass. This kind of glass however is not much used except for the red

[1] May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* **i. 656.**

[2] Ruskin had written to Morris: 'You bad boy, why haven't I any bits of glass yet?' The envelope he inscribed: For the Rustic-Russet,'and Burly-Surly Carle,'Guillelmus **Mauritius.**

coloured by copper called technically 'ruby glass', this owing to its make is often curiously and beautifully striped & waved: this glass is, I must tell you, perilous to fire the painted colours upon, as the kiln generally changes it more or less, sometimes darkening it almost to blackness, sometimes carrying the colour away: to avoid this risk we are sometimes obliged to paint the necessary lines on a piece of thin white glass & lead up the two together: this, which is called plating I have sometimes done with two pieces of coloured glass, to get some peculiar tint: one must be careful not to overdo the process however, or you will get a piece of glass at once cumbrous & liable to accident.

I should mention that all the glass is very thick: and that in some of the pot-metals, notably the blues, the difference between one part of a sheet and another is very great. This variety is very useful to us in getting a jewel-like quality which is the chief charm of painted glass—when we *can* get it. You will understand that we rely almost entirely for our colour on the actual *colour of the glass* and the more the design will enable us to break up the pieces, and the more mosaic-like it is, the better we like it.

Well, you shall have the leaded-up glass in a day or two & if you want more please ask for them; & ask any questions that you please & I shall be delighted to answer them. I need not say that I should be very glad to see you at our place at Merton Abbey: though I fear it would be a grief to you to see the banks of the pretty Wandle so beset with the horrors of the Jerry-builders: there is still some beauty left about the place however, & the stream itself is not much befouled: I am doing my best to keep the place decent, & can do so in the seven acres our works command; but as to the rest can do but little.

I am Yours affectionately
William Morris

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
18 April [1883]

To William Allingham[1]

My dear Allingham,

Thanks much for the poem [on Disraeli] which is very good: one does owe a grudge to the idiot who first connected the violet with the rascal sham Caesar of a Napoleon, and the primrose with the

Printed in *Letters to William Allingham* (1911).

shifty sham statesman Ben, so that no honest man can ever (for the present) wear either in his buttonhole: however they will outlive the rascals.

As to *Justice* (not of the peace) I will send you one or two odd numbers which will give you all information.[1]

Yes, I am a rebel and even more of a rebel than some of my coadjutors know perhaps.

Certainly in some way or other this present society, or age of shoddy, is doomed to fall: nor can I see anything ahead of it as an organization save Socialism: meantime as to the present parties I say: damn Tweedle-dum and blast Tweedle-dee. Yours ever truly

William Morris

To Jane Alice Morris

Kelmscott House
Whitsun Monday [1883]

... I hope it won't be long before you are all up here: a *grass bachelor's* life is not very delightful amongst other things. I have ordered the house cleaning to begin on Wednesday whatever, so as to get ready for you. ... I was a great deal at Merton last week, though I didn't sleep there, anxiously superintending the first printing of the Strawberry Thief [one of Morris's most beautiful chintzes], which I think we shall manage this time.

The garden looks very nice here really; the apple-blossom is now getting rather past its best, but it is still beautiful: I had a large company to enjoy yesterday: old Dr Bock who is the man who set on foot all the lore of old woven stuffs; he could not talk English; so I had to talk English-French against his German-French; doubtless a concert to make the Gods laugh: also there was another German, Andreas Scheu a Vienna Socialist, who seems a very nice fellow, talks English well: also Middleton,[2] Benson,[3] & De Morgan. I gave & received presents of stuffs with Bock, for which I hope your mother won't scold.

I almost expect to see aunt Emma this week: she has come up to town on what I must irreverently call holy larks.[4]

[1] **'T[ennyson] was shocked to hear of Wm. Morris's Democratic Socialism, and asked to see a copy of *Justice* William Allingham, *A Diary.***

[2] **John Henry Middleton, Slade Professor at Cambridge and first Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum and then of the Victoria and Albert.**

[3] **W. A. S. Benson (1854-1924), architect and designer in metal-work and one of the originators of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.**

[4] **Emma Morris had married a clergyman named Gilmore.**

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Jane Alice Morris 7 May 1883

I had a comfortable journey in very bright sunlight up to town: all by myself in a 2nd class till *2* young mashers (no less) got in at Kingston—such fools they were! and hummed and whistled music-hall tunes: however that didn't last long.

I duly gave my lecture on Sunday, at the Irish National League rooms in Blackfriars Rd: all or most Irish there; and Parnellites to the backbone; but dear me! such quiet respectable people! I was able to please them by assuring them of my sympathy for their views, and also by telling them I had read and much admired translations of their ancient literature: one man whom I spoke with afterwards knew all about the old stories and could speak Irish well. One thing I could not praise them for, to wit that they kept dropping [in] all the time or nearly so, till the room, which was only half full when I began, was crowded at the end: but after all it was such a lovely evening that I could not really blame them for not being in a hurry to return to the horrors of Blackfriars Rd: I must tell you however that I behaved badly; for 2 young women close to me would keep whispering and giggling, which made me so nervous, that at last I laid down my MS and said 'I will go on when you have left off whispering and giggling.' At which, so polite were the audience, that they cheered, and the young women presently went out.

I have been to Merton to-day, and after a morning shower it turned out so beautiful! I had a pleasant day on the whole things going on fairly: the marsh marigolds are all out and are splendid; one clump by the tail-side is a picture.

Which reminds me, did you read the President's speech at the Royal Academy dinner? and if so didn't you think he a *little* over-did the floridity even of his florid office—Linnell[1] to wit.

Well, my dear, I hope you are duly impressed by the holiness and care for morality of the British House of Commons: ugh! the set of snobs! I suppose you saw Bradlaugh's speech; it was very good; as indeed it might well be his position being so strong in fact.

I really think (to return to home matters) that the grass at Pig-End has made a start, and I hope to present you with a tolerable suburban garden when you come up: the apple-trees are nearly in

[1] John Linnell (1792-1882), portrait and landscape painter, and friend of William Blake.

full blossom: at Merton, by the way, they are lovely: I got my first bundle of sparrow-grass there to-day, but I thought it too small to send to you: so I left it with Kate Faulkner, with whom I teaed this evening, knowing that she liked it.

My dear Jenny, good-bye; did you like the flowers I sent you from Axminster by the way? I will pluck a big bunch of wallflowers to-morrow and send them you somehow.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 19 May 1883

Whitsun week over and Derby week coming: the first holiday I don't grudge: tho the second I do; but I think I shall be able to get to Merton 2 days or 3 in the week: I hope it will rain hard on Derby day partly out of spite, partly because else we shall be choked with dust. On Tuesday & on Thursday I walked all the way to Merton by Roehampton Lane; really a pleasant walk: I am quite sick of the Underground & I think I shall often walk to or from Merton, it takes a long 2 hours; but you see it is not all pure waste like the sweltering train-business.[1] I came back in an open trap on Tuesday, and as I went through Roehampton Lane the driver told me about the nunnery there, & how he had heard the nuns singing angelically out in the garden on Whitsun Sunday night: So I stood up & looked over the fence, & lo, a lot of my holy dames, black & white just getting into boats to have a row on the lake there: for you must know that the grounds in there are quite splendid: it must be a very rich house. I went to the meeting of the Democratic Federation on Monday, and I found I was driven into joining its executive: so I am in for more work: however I don't like belonging to a body without knowing what they are doing: without feeling very sanguine about their doings they seem certainly to mean something: money is chiefly lacking as usual.

Apropos of Socialism, I have just been reading *Underground Russia,* which is written by one of the Nihilists [i.e. Sergius Stepniak] I must tell some one to send it to you: it is a most interesting book, though terrible reading too: it sounds perfectly genuine: I should think such a book ought to open people's eyes a bit here & do good. Item I have been reading some of Auerbach's *Little Tales:* have you

[1] **To reach Merton from Kelmscott House Morris had to go by the underground railway from Hammersmith to Farringdon Street, cross the City, and then go down to Merton from Ludgate Hill, a journey that took about two hours.**

read The Step-Mother? 'tis very dear & pretty: so another called Erdamutter (I think). Merton is really looking very pretty now, the hawthorn just coming out, but scarce any lilac; there is one pretty blossom-tree which is new to me [drawing] so with white blossoms something like the Portugal Laurel blossoms: Edgar says it is the Dog-Wood, but I can't find it in Gerard.

Kelmscott House
To C. E. Maurice[1] 22 June 1883

Dear Mr Maurice

I think you might be able to help a friend of mine with advice in the following case: A poor woman comes to her asking for a ticket for her son for the Consumptive Hospital: son obviously ill, but *not* with consumption: woman herself ill, sore throat and out-of-sorts: husband also ill: very bad smell in the house; the rent-collector or landlord, when asked to mend matters by the tenant, won't do anything; won't even give his address; inspector when written to by tenant don't answer: Can you tell me who is the proper inspector or board to apply to? and forgive my troubling you on such a simple question.

I should have been glad to have continued our conversation last Friday night; as I so much desire to convert all disinterested people of good will to what I should call active and general Socialism, and to have their help: I think that you, like myself, have really been a Socialist for a long time, and I know you have done your best, as you would be sure to do, to carry out your views. For my part I used to think that one might further real Socialistic progress by doing what one could on the lines of ordinary middle-class Radicalism: I have been driven of late into the conclusion that I was mistaken; that Radicalism is on the wrong line, so to say, and will never develope into anything more than Radicalism: in fact that it is made for and by the middle classes and will always be under the control of rich capitalists: they will have no objection to *its political* development, if they think they can stop it there: but as to real social changes, they will not allow them if they can help it: you may see almost any day such phrases as "this is the proper way to stop the spread of Socialism" in the Liberal papers, the writer of the phrase never having taken the trouble to find out what Socialism meant, and also choosing

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 102-4. Son of Frederick Denison Maurice.**

to ignore the discontent, dumb indeed for the most part, which is widely spread in England. Meantime I can see no use in people having political freedom unless they use it as an instrument for leading reasonable and manlike lives; no good even in education if, when they are educated, people have only slavish work to do, and have to live lives too much beset with sordid anxiety for them to be able to think and feel with the more fortunate people who produced art and poetry and great thought. This release from slavery it is clear cannot come to people so long as they are subjected to the bare subsistence wages which are a necessity for competitive commerce: and I cannot help thinking that the workmen will be soon finding out that for themselves: it is certain that Henry George's book [i.e. *Progress and Poverty*', 1879] has keen received in this country and in America as a new Gospel: I believe that Socialism is advancing, and will advance more and more as education spreads, and so believing, find my duty clear to do my best to further its advance, and in the same time, in what poor way I can, to soften the ruggedness, and refine the coarseness which centuries of oppression have hammered into it, so to say.

A word about the Democratic Federation: as far as I know it is the only active Socialist organization in England; under the above mentioned circumstances therefore I found myself bound to join it, although I had heard beforehand (to speak plainly) that it was a sort of Tory drag to take the scent off the fox. From all I can hear I believe that to be a calumny: or, to speak English, one of those curious lies for which no one seems responsible, but which stick very tight to the object they are thrown at. However that may be, I cannot see how a Society which has declared openly for Socialism, including Land Nationalization, can serve the Tory cause, whatever the Tory intention may be: for the rest, from what I can see from their proceedings the Executive seem to me to mean work; and if their opinions hurt the Liberal party (where is it by the way?) it is the fault of the Liberal party for allowing itself to stiffen into Whiggery or practical Toryism, as it seems to me it is fast doing.

I won't make any excuses for this long letter, as I know you are deeply interested in the matter, and I believe your uprightness of thought will see through my clumsy sentences into what I have in my mind. I am, dear Mr Maurice, Yours faithfully

William Morris

Kelmscott House
To C. E. Maurice[1] 1 July 1883

Dear Mr Maurice

I am sitting down to write my promised letter to you, but to begin with find it somewhat difficult to do more than define my own position a little more than I did in my last. You see I think we differ to start with in this, that you think that the present system of Society has certain hitches in it; certain wrongs resulting from blunders persisted in, till they have become very difficult to deal with, but which hitches and blunders are removable, and when removed will leave us a society which can be kept straight by careful attention to the general duties of good citizenship. I confess I go much further than that: true it is that I cannot help trying to remove obvious anomalies or helping what I can to palliate the effects of the obstinate blunders which we both see, but I do so with little hope, because I believe that the whole basis of Society, with its contrasts of rich and poor, is incurably vicious: I might be content that the change which I think must come about before this can be righted should be a gradual one—or say I *must* be content; but I do not see that those who are at the head of the political advance have any intention of making a real change in the social basis: for them it seems a part of the necessary and eternal order of things that the present supply and demand Capitalist system should last for ever: though the system of citizen and chattel slave under which the ancient civilizations lived, which no doubt once seemed also necessary and eternal, had to give place, after a long period of violence and anarchy, to the feudal system of seigneur and serf: which in its turn, though once thought necessary and eternal, has been swept away in favour of our present contract system between rich and poor. Of course I don't do you the injustice to suppose that you defend the finality of any system, but I am quite clear that the ordinary Radical of to-day does do so, and there I join issue with him.

Also of course, I do not believe in the world being saved by any system,—I only assert the necessity of attacking systems grown corrupt, and no longer leading any whither: that to my mind is the case with the present system of capital and labour: as all my lectures assert, I have personally been gradually driven to the conclusion that art has been handcuffed by it, and will die out of civilization if the system lasts. That of itself does to me carry with it the condemnation

[1] Mackail, ii. 105-9.

of the whole system, and I admit has been the thing which has drawn my attention to the subject in general: but furthermore in looking into matters social and political I have but one rule, that in thinking of the condition of any body of men I should ask myself, 'How could you bear it yourself? what would you feel if you were poor against the system under which you live?' I have always been uneasy when I had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often, that I have seldom had it out of my mind: and the answer to it has more and more made me ashamed of my own position, and more and more made me feel that if I had not been born rich or well-to-do I should have found my position zz,'zendurable, and should have been a mere rebel against what would have seemed to me a system of robbery and injustice. Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me: the contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor. Now it seems to me that, feeling this, I am bound to act for the destruction of the system which seems to me mere oppression and obstruction; such a system can only be destroyed, it seems to me, by the united discontent of numbers; isolated acts of a few persons of the middle and upper classes seeming to me (as I have said before) quite powerless against it: in other words the antagonism of classes, which the system has bred, is the natural and necessary instrument of its destruction. My aim therefore being to spread discontent among all classes, I feel myself bound to join any organization whose object seemed to me really to further this aim: nor in doing so should I be much troubled by consideration of who the leaders of such an organization might be, always supposing that one believes them genuine in their support of certain *principles.* It has always seemed to me that the worship of leaders has been a sign of the lifelessness of ordinary Radicalism of late, and that opinion has received fresh confirmation in my mind by last year's events in Ireland and Egypt (especially the latter, where the Liberal 'leaders' 'led' the party into mere Jingoism).

But further I earnestly wish that the middle classes, to whom hitherto I have personally addressed myself, should look to all these matters, and become discontented also, as they certainly should be, since they themselves suffer from the same system which oppresses the poor; their lives made barren and dull by it; their hopes for a higher standard of life repressed: besides I am quite sure that the change which will overthrow our present system will come sooner

or later: on the middle classes to a great extent it depends whether it will come peacefully or violently. If they can only learn the uselessness of mere overplus money, the poisonousness of luxury to all civilization, they will not be so likely to cry out 'confiscation and robbery and injustice' at a system which, while it proposes to give to every man what he really *needs,* will have no call to take from any man what he can really *use:* in short, what we of the middle classes have to do, if we can, is to show by our lives what is the proper type of a useful citizen, the type into which all classes should melt at last. I remember a little time ago meeting a clever man in a train who enlarged (without letting me get a word in edgeways) on the woes of the middle class, and how they suffered in comparison with the pampered working classes. I am sorry to say that I was not ready enough to say to him what I afterwards thought: 'my friend, if you would only allow yourself to become a member of this pampered working class, then would all your woes be at an end, by your own showing.' His line of argument is common enough, and is founded on the assumption that one class must be masters of the other: but to my mind no man is good enough to be any one's master without injuring himself, at least, whatever he does for the servant. Well, I don't know if I have explained myself at all; I daresay I haven't, but I have told you of certain things which were on my mind; and you will at least see that I am your ally in trying to deal with the lives of our own class.

I much agree with what you say about the shop-keeping class, and think with you that they have been very unjustly scolded at for a position which they cannot help, and which is I know very often hard enough for them: whatever political grievances they lack, I think they have a social grievance heavy enough: for instance, the more refined classes do usually assume in their dealings with them that they will as a matter of course cheat the buyer, though all the while the buyer is eager for what he calls a 'bargain', i.e. that he should cheat the seller. Doesn't this bring home to us all the waste and disgrace which is the essence of our present system of Commercial War?

Well, I have spun you a very long yarn, and have not attempted to answer your objections directly; because I saw from your letter that you could not be expected to join in such a Society as ours at present, though I cannot help thinking that one day you will take some such step.

Meantime I have begun a little essay on the subject you were good enough to suggest to me: when it is finished I will send it you, and if you approve of it I would read it somewhere and be prepared to answer further questions on the subject—which however I cannot help feeling will eventually lead us back to Socialism by another road.

By the way a friend sent me Hampstead paper cuttings, containing 1st, an irate letter from some one who was 'touched up' by my lecture; and 2nd, a very handsome answer to him by yourself, for which I thank you heartily, especially as it made clear to me that you quite understood what I had been saying on that occasion. You must remember by the way again that I was sent by the Democratic Federation to lecture there; so I thought I was acting within my rights in distributing their circular, and speaking for them.

I am, dear Mr Maurice, Yours faithfully
William Morris

To Jane Alice Morris

Kelmscott House
26 July 1883

I am so glad you are getting on well down in the wilds of Hertfordshire: of the two leaves you sent me the smaller is the Hornbeam: I came across a lot of it in the hedge a little after I left you the other day: I think the other is the Wych Elm also. As to that pink flowered plant 'tis called Rest Harrow, quasi *Arrest* I suppose. . . . Yesterday we saw the Tinworth sculpture, which you may have heard of: done by a wheelwright's son in Southwark, quite a young man still: they are very pictury sculpture not beautiful or decorative but certainly with genius in them: puritan works you understand akin to 15th century German; but certainly *alive.*

Dem: Fed: work going on pretty well: the manifesto spoken of in to-day's *Daily News* is not ours; nor is it Social Democratic, which is what we are, but anarchist: we consider them dangerous, for you see they have no programme but destruction, whereas we are re-constructive. People in general are quite ignorant of the whole matter. We had a great many people here on Sunday & quite a warm discussion on Socialism but friendly. . . .

I have just been down the garden to give you the last report of it. Sunflowers are coming into bloom fast, the biggest is a tolerably-sized flower now: the cloves are quite beautiful but everything is running to leaf somewhat. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 14 August **1883**

To-morrow (Wednesday) morning I go with Middleton to Witney & thence drive to Burford through Minster Lovell; sleep there, drive to Chipping Campden, on to the Tower & back to Kelmscott, where is Ellis & his Phyllis, on Thursday, & so back to London on Friday.

I can't say London looked pretty when I got there: item the house smelt of cat. . . . I was at Merton to-day & had visitors there in the afternoon, Benson, Middleton & Dr Bridges.

I told them about the grub-parcel at Merton: also Annie Cook was to pluck & send you some flowers. I hope you will get them in pretty good condition.

This is but a short note, my own dear, but we meet again soon, & my after breakfast letter-writing-time has been taken up by my writing to the *Daily News* about the tow-path ditch as there was a letter from a Mr Clare (query ours?) in this mornings *News* & I thought I ought to back him. . . .

To the Editor, The Daily News 14 August **1883**

Sir,—I beg leave to confirm the information given by your correspondent Dr Carpenter about the malodorous and insanitary condition of the ditch which runs along the towpath from the Soap Works by Hammersmith-bridge. This nuisance deprives those of us who value their health of the opportunity of walking in one of the most beautiful spots in the suburbs, I think I might almost say the most beautiful, Hampstead excepted, east of Kew: and for the rest the letter in your issue this morning from Dr Carpenter supplies a noteworthy commentary on the folly of leaving such nuisances untouched. I may add to the other historical reminiscences given by Mr Clare that William Cobbett lived and wrote for some time on the farm (still an untouched piece of country) just south of this foul ditch. One might well wish that the master of plain-speaking were alive to address a few words to our present stink-and-pest breeders.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully
William Morris

(The Daily News, 15 August 1883.)

Kelmscott House
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 21 August 1883

. . . I am touched by your kind anxiety about my poetry: but you see, my dear, there is first of all my anxiety, which I am bound to confess has made a sad coward of me;[2] and then, though I admit that I am a conceited man, yet I really don't think anything I have done (when I consider it as I should another man's work) of any value except to myself: except as showing my sympathy with history and the like. Poetry goes with the hand-arts I think, and like them has now become unreal: the arts have got to die, what is left of them, before they can be born again. You know my views on the matter; I apply them to myself as well as to others. This would not, I admit, prevent my writing poetry any more than it prevents my doing my pattern work, because the mere personal pleasure of it urges one to the work; but it prevents my looking at it as a sacred duty, and the grief aforesaid is too strong and disquieting to be overcome by a mere inclination to do what I *know* is unimportant work. Meantime the propaganda gives me work to do, which, unimportant as it seems, is part of a great whole which cannot be lost, and that ought to be enough for me. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 28 August 1883

. . . Sunday did turn out a quiet day & I did a bit of work: but Mr Watts called in the evening and I was glad to see him: I duly went to Merton yesterday, walked there, which was pleasant, though the glory of the weather has departed, as the wind 'backed' to N on Sunday, & was S.W. yesterday & still is this morning: however it didn't rain yesterday and is specially beautiful & soft this morning & no mist: so one must hope for the best as to the harvest weather. I was rather tired yesterday, as besides the walk I spent the afternoon dyeing tapestry wools, & finished by my usual Monday talk at Hyndman's, however dyeing is a good sport to me still.

I ordered the broches to be wound for my tapestry work at home & shall begin again when they come & you shall help me my dear if you please. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Mrs Burne-Jones' August 1883

I am like enough to have some trouble over my propagandist work, let alone that I am in for a many lectures: for small as our body

[1] **Mackail, ii. 109-10.** [2] **I.e. about Jenny's health.** [3] **Mackail, ii. 110-11.**

is, we are not without dissensions in it. Some of the more ardent disciples look upon Hyndman as too opportunist, and there is truth in that; he is sanguine of speedy change happening somehow, and is inclined to intrigue and the making of a party; towards which end compromise is needed, and the carrying people who don't really agree with us as far as they will go. As you know, I am not sanguine, and think the aim of Socialists should be the founding of a religion, towards which end compromise is no use, and we only want to have those with us who will be with us to the end. But then again, if the zealots don't take care they will blow the whole thing to the winds; all the more as the religious or theological difficulty is on us, or threatening to be so. In the midst of all this, I find myself drifting into the disgraceful position of a moderator and patcher up, which is much against my inclination.

Meantime it is obvious that the support to be looked for for constructive Socialism from the working classes at present is nought. Who can wonder, as things now are, when the lower classes are really lower? Of vague discontent and a spirit of revenge for the degradation in which they are kept there is plenty I think, but that seems all. What we want is real leaders themselves working men, and content to be so till classes are abolished. But you see when a man has gifts for that kind of thing he finds himself tending to rise out of his class before he has begun to think of class politics as a matter of principle, and too often he is just simply 'got at' by the governing classes, not formally, but by circumstances I mean. Education is the word doubtless; but then in comes the commercial system and defends itself against that in a terrible unconscious way with the struggle for bread, and lack of leisure, and squalid housing—and there we go, round and round the circle still. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] September 1883

. . . As to the D.F., you need not be anxious about me. I went into the affair quite with my eyes open, and suspecting worse things of it than are likely to happen: for you understand I by no means suppose Hyndman or any of the leaders not to be in earnest, though I may not always agree with them. I naturally find it harder work to understand the subject of Socialism in detail now I am alongside it, and often get beaten in argument when I know all the same I am really in the right: but of course this only means more study. Every

[1] From Mackail, ii. 112-13.

one who has thought over the matter must feel your dilemma about education; but think of many not uneducated people that you know and you will I am sure see that education will not cure people of the grossest social selfishness and tyranny unless Socialistic principles form part of it. Meantime I am sure it is right, whatever the apparent consequences may be, to stir up the lower classes (damn the word) to demand a higher standard of life for themselves, not merely for themselves or for the sake of the material comfort it will bring, but for the good of the whole world and the regeneration of the conscience of man: and this stirring up is part of the necessary education which must in good truth go before the reconstruction of society: but I repeat that without laying before people this reconstruction, our education will but breed tyrants and cowards, big, little and least, down to the smallest who can screw out money from standing by to see another man working for him.

The one thing I want you to be clear about is that I *cannot help* acting in the matter, and associating myself with any body which has the root of the matter; and you know, and it may ease your kind heart respecting me, that those who are in the thick of it, and trying to do something, are not likely to feel so much of the hope deferred which hangs about the cause as onlookers do. . . .

To T. C. Horsfall[1] September 1883

I have long felt sure that commercialism must be attacked at the root before we can be on the road for those improvements in life which you and I so much desire. A society which is founded on the system of *compelling* all well-to-do people to live on making the greatest possible profit out of the labour of others, must be wrong. For it means the perpetuating the division of society into civilized and uncivilized classes: I am far from being an anarchist, but even anarchy is better than this, which is in fact anarchy and despotism mixed: if there is no hope of conquering this—let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

Of course I do not discuss these matters with you or any person of good will in any bitterness of spirit: but there are people with whom it is hard to keep one's temper; such as the philistine middle-class Radicals; who think, or pretend to, that now at last all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

[1] From Mackail, ii. 113. Morris had first met T. C. Horsfall four years earlier in connection with the formation of the Manchester Art Museum.

Hammersmith

To Jane Alice Morris 4 September **[1883]**

. . . Item I have designed a membership card for the Dem: Fed: which I myself did not think much of, but which pleased our 'simple people'. Item I have made a little poem for them, a copy of which I would have sent you, my dear, but that it has gone to the printers straight.

I seem to have a panic on our not having chintz blocks enough, for I have two more on the stocks: one of them (I am working at it this afternoon) is such a big one that if it succeeds I shall call it Wandle: the connection may not seem obvious to you as the Wet Wandle is not big but small, but you see it will have to be very elaborate & splendid and so I want to honour our helpful stream. I really have begun the tapestry, but have only done the smallest bit, hour's work I should say.

I have got a lot of W. Cobbett's books; such queer things they are, but with plenty of stuff in them: somehow they remind me of old Borrow in style: I suppose it partly comes of there being a fashion in certain periods which vigorous writers fall into: though by the way if they had met they would have eaten each other up alive, so widely they differed. One little book called Cottage Economy is very amusing, and there is a chapter in it on the making of straw-plait: the article on the pig is touching. . . . I go to meet mother this evening you see.

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall

To Andreas Scheu [1] Hammersmith, 5 September 1883

I will ask about the brown cloth; perhaps it might be got from some Scotch warehouse: but I fear that such goods have become strange to England; we are got too clever by half to give people the real article when shoddy will do as well. As to the black dyeing the recipe would run something like this: pass your goods through a bath of *log-wood* (Fr. *bois de Campeche)* then through another bath of galls and sulphate of iron (trade name Copperas): goods so dyed would not stand the sun so well as if 'woaded' as the dyers used to call it, i.e. passed through the cloth-dyers' indigo-vat: they would

[1] **From *The Socialist Review*, March 1929. Andreas Scheu, described by May Morris as 'the Austrian revolutionary, fiery and eloquent speaker of striking aspect in his brown close-fitting Jaeger clothing, his fine head like nothing less than one of Durer's careful studies of a curly-bearded German warrior', became chief promoter of the Scottish Social Democratic Party. He died in 1927 and was the author of *Umstur keime (Seeds of Upheaval).* See p. 170.**

be apt to turn 'rusty', but it would be thought good dyeing nowadays.

As to the blankets: it is common to make the warps of cotton, and even to mix cotton with Australian wool for the weft: the best blankets made at Witney (a jolly little old town in Oxfordshire) have good worsted warps and their weft is all of pure English wool, which is firmer, though not so soft as the Australian: generally the inferior blankets have scarlet or some gaudy colour woven into their ends; the best ones have a dark indigo blue only: but of course this distinction is trivial.

If you want to know anything more in detail about dyeing, or any other matter *of* my work, I shall be very happy to tell you, or to show you what we do at Merton Abbey, where I am both a dyer and a cotton-printer: only you understand we only use the old methods that obtained before the apotheosis of shoddy, and the free exchange of adulterated wares which Gladstone praised so at Kirkwall t'other day.

I send you a rather long-winded sketch of my very uneventful life: but since you have that I venture to offer you the rest of my books if you won't think them too cumbrous, as they are a library in themselves and weigh about half a ton—Thor and Odin forgive me! (for I mustn't use the ugly word).

Make any use you please of said sketch: I shall try to get round to the meeting on Monday. I want to see the East-Enders; how I wish they would write and abuse us (the Executive) for not being busier to teach them Socialism! If they would only do that and give us a shilling a month! but we English are a lumpish lot. You see by the way that the Trades Unionists have thrown out the Land Nationalisation amendment: I knew they would, and I can't say that I'm sorry: how the bourgeois press will butter them.

I was born at Walthamstow in Essex in March 1834, a suburban village on the edge of Epping Forest, and once a pleasant place enough, but now terribly cocknified and choked up by the jerry-builder.

My Father was a business man in the city, and well-to-do; and we lived in the ordinary bourgeois style of comfort; and since we belonged to the evangelical section of the English Church I was brought up in what I should call rich establishmentarian puritanism; a religion which even as a boy I never took to.

I went to school at Marlborough College, which was then a new and very rough school. As far as my school instruction went, I think I may fairly say I learned next to nothing there, for indeed next to nothing was taught; but the place is in very beautiful country, thickly scattered over with prehistoric monuments, and I set myself eagerly to studying these and everything else that had any history in it, and so perhaps learned a good deal, especially as there was a good library at the school to which I sometimes had access. I should mention that ever since I could remember I was a great devourer of books. I don't remember being taught to read, and by the time I was 7 years old I had read a very great many books good, bad and indifferent.

My Father died in 1847 a few months before I went to Marlborough; but as he had engaged in a fortunate mining speculation before his death, we were left very well off, rich in fact.

I went to Oxford in 1853 as a member of Exeter College; I took very ill to the studies of the place; but fell to very vigorously on history and especially mediaeval history, all the more perhaps because at this time I fell under the influence of the High Church or Puseyite school; this latter phase however did not last me long, as it was corrected by the books of John Ruskin which were at the time a sort of revelation to me; I was also a good deal influenced by the works of Charles Kingsley, and got into my head therefrom some socio-political ideas which would have developed probably but for the attractions of art and poetry. While I was still an undergraduate, I discovered that I could write poetry, much to my own amazement; and about that time being very intimate with other young men of enthusiastic ideas, we got up a monthly paper which lasted (to my cost) for a year; it was called the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, and was *very young* indeed. When I had gone through my schools at Oxford, I who had been originally intended for the Church!!! made up my mind to take to art in some form, and so articled myself to G. E. Street (the architect of the new Law Courts afterwards) who was then practising in Oxford; I only stayed with him nine months however; when being in London and having been introduced by Burne-Jones, the painter, who was my great college friend, to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the leader of the Pre-Raphaelite School, I made up my mind to turn painter, and studied the art but in a very desultory way for some time.

At this time the revival of Gothic architecture was making great progress in England and naturally touched the Pre-Raphaelite move-

ment also; I threw myself into these movements with all my heart: got a friend to build me a house very mediaeval in spirit in which I lived for 5 years, and set myself to decorating it; we found, I and my friend the architect especially, that all the minor arts were in a state of complete degradation especially in England, and accordingly in 1861 with the conceited courage of a young man I set myself to reforming all that: and started a sort of firm for producing decorative articles. D. G. Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, Burne-Jones and P. Webb the architect of my house were the chief members of it as far as designing went. Burne-Jones was beginning to have a reputation at that time; he did a great many designs for us for stained glass, and entered very heartily into the matter; and we made some progress before long, though we were naturally much ridiculed. I took the matter up as a business and began in the teeth of difficulties not easy to imagine to make some money in it: about ten years ago the firm broke up, leaving me the only partner, though I still receive help and designs from P. Webb and Burne-Jones.

Meantime in 1858 I published a volume of poems *The Defence of Guenevere;* exceedingly young also and very mediaeval; and then after a lapse of some years conceived the idea of my *Earthly Paradise,* and fell to work very hard at it. I had about this time extended my historical reading by falling in with translations from the old Norse literature, and found it a good corrective to the maundering side of medievalism. In 1866 (I think) I published the *Life and Death of Jason,* which, originally intended for one of the tales of the *Earthly Paradise,* had got too long for the purpose. To my surprise the book was very well received both by reviewers and the public, who were kinder still to my next work, *The Earthly Paradise,* the first series of which I published in 1868. In 1872 I published a fantastic little book chiefly lyrical called *Love is Enough.* Meantime about 1870 I had made the acquaintance of an Icelandic gentleman, Mr E. Magnusson, of whom I learned to read the language of the North, and with whom I studied most of the works of that literature; the delightful freshness and independence of thought of them, the air of freedom which breathes through them, their worship of courage (the great virtue of the human race), their utter unconventionality took my heart by storm. I translated with Mr Magniisson's help, and published, *The Story ofGrettir the Strong,* a set of Sagas (about 6) under the title of *Northern Love Stories,* and finally the Icelandic version of the *Nibelung Tale,* called the *Volsunga Saga.*

In 1871 I went to Iceland with Mr Magmisson, and, apart from my pleasure in seeing that romantic desert, I learned one lesson there, thoroughly I hope, that the most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes. In 1873 ' went to Iceland again. In 1876 I published a translation of the ,'Eneid of Virgil, which was fairly well received. In 1877 I began my last poem, an Epic of the Niblung Story founded chiefly on the Icelandic version. I published this in 1878 under the title of *Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs.*

Through all this time I have been working hard at my business, in which I have had a considerable success even from the commercial side; I believe that if I had yielded on a few points of principle I might have become a positively rich man; but even as it is I have nothing to complain of, although the last few years have been so slack in business.

Almost all the designs we use for surface decoration, wallpapers, textiles, and the like, I design myself. I have had to learn the theory and to some extent the practice of weaving, dyeing, & textile printing: all of which I must admit has given me and still gives me a great deal of enjoyment.

But in spite of all the success I have had, I have not failed to be conscious that the art I have been helping to produce would fall with the death of a few of us who really care about it, that a reform in art which is founded on individualism must perish with the individuals who have set it going. Both my historical studies and my practical conflict with the philistinism of modern society have *forced* on me the conviction that art cannot have a real life and growth under the present system of commercialism and profit-mongering. I have tried to develope this view, which is in fact Socialism seen through the eyes of an artist, in various lectures, the first of which I delivered in 1878.

About the time when I was beginning to think so strongly on these points that I felt I must express myself publicly, came the crisis of the Eastern Question and the agitation which ended in the overthrow of the Disraeli government. I joined heartily in that agitation on the Liberal side, because it seemed to me that England risked drifting into a war which would have committed her to the party of reaction: I also thoroughly dreaded the outburst of Chauvinism which swept over the country, and feared that once we were amusing ourselves with an European war no one in this country would listen to anything of social questions; nor could I see in England at any time any party more advanced than the Radicals, who

were also it must be remembered hallowed as it were by being in opposition to the party which openly proclaimed themselves reactionists; I was under small illusion as to the result of a victory of the Liberals, except so far as it would stem the torrent of Chauvinism, and check the feeling of national hatred and prejudice for which I shall always feel the most profound contempt. I therefore took an active part in the anti-Turk agitation, was a member of the committee of the Eastern Question Association, and worked hard at it; I made the acquaintance of some of the Trades Union leaders at the time; but found that they were quite under the influence of the Capitalist politicians, and that, the General Election once gained, they would take no forward step whatever. The action and want of action of the new Liberal Parliament, especially the Coercion Bill and the Stockjobber's Egyptian War, quite destroyed any hope I might have had of any good being done by alliance with the Radical party, however advanced they might call themselves.

I joined a committee (of which Mr Herbert Burrows was Secretary) which tried to stir up some opposition to the course the Liberal government and party were taking in the early days of this parliament; but it speedily fell to pieces, having in fact no sort of practical principles to hold it together; I mention this to show that I was on the look out for joining any body which seemed likely to push forward matters.

It must be understood that I always intended to join any body who distinctly called themselves socialists, so when last year I was invited to join the Democratic Federation by Mr Hyndman, I accepted the invitation hoping that it would declare for Socialism, in spite of certain drawbacks that I expected to find in it; concerning which I find on the whole that there are fewer drawbacks than I expected.

I should have written above that I married in 1859 and have two daughters by that marriage very sympathetic with me as to my aims in life.

To C. J. Faulkner[1] 23 October 1883

... As to Hyndman lecturing in your hall I would ask you to lay before the Master the fact that I am quite as much a Socialist as he is; that I am an officer of the same Association, and am distinctly going

[1] **Mackail, ii. 119. Morris lectured in November to the Russell Club, in the hall of University College, on 'Democracy and Art', concluding with an appeal to the audience to join the Social Democratic Federation, which created a scandal. The authorities had found it difficult to believe that a Fellow of Exeter College could really be a Socialist. This lecture was later published as *Art under Plutocracy*,**

to lecture as a delegate from it: also that if the subject is to be stirred at all, it is surely worth while to listen to a man who is capable of giving a definite exposition of the whole doctrine. I am rather anxious about this matter, as if Hyndman is shut up I shall feel rather like a fool, and as if I were there on false pretences. For the rest, Hyndman is an educated man if Trin: Coll: Camb: is capable of educating (which is doubtful), and though he is perhaps not as polite as the Devil is usually said to be, is at least politer than I am: neither has he horns and hoofs, as I am prepared to swear: neither (as a Secretary of the S.P.A.B.) will I allow him to blow up any *old* building in Oxford. Would it be any good my writing to the Master stating these facts in conventional language; and also stating what seems to me to be true, that people do seem just at this moment to want to know something about Socialism? though to tell you the truth I misdoubt me that may be but a passing wind of fashion.

To Charles Rowley[1]

Kelmscott House
25 October 1883

I have only one subject to lecture on, the relation of Art to Labour: also I am an open and declared Socialist, or to be more specific, Collectivism and whatever I say would be coloured by my opinions on these matters: if you think under these circumstances a lecture from me would come within the scope of your scheme, and be acceptable as an expression of opinions for which of course you would not be responsible, I should be very happy to be one of those who lecture to you.

To T. C. Horsfall[2]

Kelmscott House
25 October 1883

In a few words what I have to say about the manifesto [i.e. the Manifesto of the Democratic Federation, issued in June of this year, and signed by Morris and the rest of the Executive Committee] is, that, though I may not like the taste of some of the wording, I do agree with the substance of it (or I should not have signed it). This does not however prevent me from agreeing with you that the rich do not act as they do in the matter from malice. Nevertheless their

[1] From Mackail, ii. 114. Charles Rowley, J.P., was a well-known figure in Manchester public life at this time, a courageous reformer, founder of the Ancoats Brotherhood, and author *of Fifty Years Work without Wages.* In the Ancoats district of Manchester he provided the poorest cotton workers with concerts of classical music, lectures by distinguished figures and exhibitions of Pre-Raphaelite pictures.

[2] From Mackail, ii. 116-17.

position (as a class) forces them to 'strive' (unconsciously most often I know) to keep the working men in ignorance of their rights and their power.

Where I think I differ from you of the means whereby revolution may be attained is this: if I do not misrepresent your views, you think that *individuals* of good will belonging to all classes of men can, if they be numerous and strenuous enough, bring about the change. I on the contrary think that the basis of all change must be, as it has always been, the antagonism of classes: I mean that though here and there a few men of the upper and middle classes, moved by their conscience and insight, may and doubtless will throw in their lot with the working classes, the upper and middle classes as a body will by the very nature of their existence, and like a plant grows, resist the abolition of classes: neither do I think that any amelioration of the condition of the poor on the only lines which the rich *can* go upon will advance us on the road; save that it will put more power into the hands of the lower class and so strengthen both their discontent and their means of showing it: for I do not believe that starvelings can bring about a revolution. I do not say that there is not a terrible side to this: but how can it be otherwise? Commercialism, competition, has sown the wind recklessly, and must reap the whirlwind: it has created the proletariat for its own interest, and its creation will and must destroy it: there is no other force which can do so. For my part I have never under-rated the power of the middle classes, whom, in spite of their individual good nature and banality, I look upon as a most terrible and implacable force: so terrible that I think it not unlikely that their resistance to inevitable change may, if the beginnings of change are too long delayed, ruin all civilization for a time. Meantime I must tell you that among the discontented, discontent unlighted by hope is in many places taking the form of a passionate desire for mere anarchy, so that it becomes a pressing duty for those who, not believing in the stability of the present system, have any hopes for the future, to lay before the world those hopes founded on *constructive* revolution.

To the Editor', The Standard November 1883

I think I may assume that your correspondent had no wish to cast any personal imputation on my motives, but wished to call attention to the position of those who, like myself, are well-to-do employers of labour (as I am) and hold Socialist views.

I freely admit that this position is a false one, but it seems to me that its falseness is first felt by an honest man, not when he begins to express his opinions openly, and to further openly the spread of Socialism, but when his conscience is first pricked by a sense of the injustice and stupidity of the present state of society. Your correspondent implies that, to be consistent, we should at once cast aside our position of capitalists, and take rank with the proletariat; but he must excuse my saying that he knows very well that we are not able to do so; that the most we can do is to palliate, as far as we can, the evils of the unjust system which we are forced to sustain; that we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible organization of competitive commerce, and that only the complete unrivetting of that chain will really free us. It is this very sense of the helplessness of our individual efforts which arms us against our own class, which compels us to take an active part in the agitation which, if it be successful, will deprive us of our capitalist position,

Merton Abbey
To Mrs Burne-Jones November 1883

I have been living in a sort of storm of newspaper brickbats, to some of which I had to reply: of course I don't mind a bit, nor even think the attack unfair. My own men here are very sympathetic, which pleases me hugely; and I find we shall get on much better for my having spoken my mind about things: seven of them would insist on joining the Democratic Federation, though I preached to them the necessity of really understanding it all. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To A. C. Swinburne[1] 17 November 1883

My dear Swinburne

A monthly paper called *To-Day* which has been going rather feebly for some time has been got hold of by some of my Socialist allies and they are going to continue it, start it afresh properly speaking, as a distinctly Socialist paper, the only one in England: they think and so do I, that it would give them a lift if you would undertake to write something for them, verse if possible, so I write to ask you to do so, assuring you at the same time that the paper will at

[1] Ashley Library 1218.

least advocate the soundest principles all round, and that not the tip of the tail of a bourgeois will defile it. At the same time I must confess that like all things Socialistic of which I know anything money is lacking, & that they won't be able to pay for articles.

Is it possible to get you to join our body, the Democratic Federation? We are really making some way, uphill work as it is: I should be proud to hand your name in if you would let me.

Yours ever
William Morris

P.S. You ought to write us a song, you know: that's what you ought to do: I mean to be set to music, for singing at meetings of the faithful.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Charles Rowley 2 December [1883?]

I am glad you shocked your respectable audience. I am sure it would do them good especially as coming from a person of your good will. I have asked our sub-editor about that speech of the mill-owner and he says that it was told him by a mill-hand who was standing by when the words were said: the occasion being that a man who had been ill had stayed away a day or two (after his convalescence I suppose) and on being blown up for it by the boss pleaded that he wanted a rest, and was answered as you know. Of course I can't mention names as the informant was a working man. After all the worst of it is that it was only the rough expression of a very sad truth.[1]

I shall be happy to read your paper if you would send it me. After [all] 'tis no use asking if the work we are doing is worth doing; I believe it is; but anyhow we can't help doing it.

Hammersmith

To Jane Alice Morris 1 January 1884

I write just a line to wish you a happy new year with my best love, my dearest child. ... Mr Scheu came on Sunday: he was rather silent; but sang a song to May's accompaniment: item Uncle Ned had supper with us.

[1] 'Morris had repeated a millowner's answer to a request from his workpeople for a holiday and a rest, "Rest be damned. Rest in your grave". A perfectly possible and probable answer from some millowners, who think it tho they don't say it. Things are mending tho.' Note by Charles Rowley.

I am off to-day on a sort of roaming journey to London: to see Hyndman first about the D.F. business: then Oxford St: then mother; then Faulkners, then Webb, and last the D.F. meeting in [the] evening; so in a way I shall have a day's work to do; but really a very grubby & yellow day to do it in. . . .

To Jane Alice Morris

Kelmscott House
16 January 1884

I write to hail you on your birthday, my dear, and to wish you many happy returns of the same, as the phrase runs, with a hundred thousand blessings on you my dear. I have just bought you a little old broach for keepsake, which the jeweller, an old gentleman (Jew I more than fear) just opposite our Oxford St. shop has promised to send on to you by registered letter. I hope you will get it safely and will think it pretty, as I did. Your mother came home last night, and was a good deal upset by the journey, and is still weak to-day, but I think she will pick up in a day or two.

I suppose May told you about the George meeting. As a demonstration of discontent it was fine. We had a sort of private meeting of our own last Friday, at which May assisted: some of our Merton folks were there; also Sanderson & Annie Cobb. S. [Cobden-Sanderson]. The latter is a very unregenerate person with a furious fad towards vegetarianism, in which I see no harm, if it didn't swallow up more important matters: We had a good quarrel last night telling each other our minds pretty plainly. Well, the meeting went off very well on the whole: the real subject in dispute was really whether or no we could drive the matter by means of supporting the parliamentary programme of the Radicals: of course I say no. Mr Scheu made an excellent speech on my side, but it stirred up some of the German element who take the other side, who tried to turn the question into personalities. However all went well in the end.. .. Our new paper *Justice* comes out on Saturday: I fear the element in which you are is altogether too respectable for me to send a copy down there; so that must keep.

I am going to lecture at Hampstead[x] tonight and to-morrow at Blackheath: on Friday Mr Joynes[2] is going to lecture to our Merton Abbey Branch. On Monday I go to Manchester and lecture at An-

[1] ***Useful Work* v. *Useless Toil*, delivered before the Hampstead Liberal Club.**

[2] **J. L. Joynes, formerly a classical master at Eton; he had resigned owing to the headmaster's attitude towards him over the publication of his views on Irish affairs, Joynes having written strongly in sympathy with the Irish tenantry and upholding Home Rule.**

coats the working suburb, & in the middle of the town to respectabilities on the Tuesday: on the Wednesday I lecture at Leicester; so I have [been] pretty hard at it at present. Give my best love to Granny & Henrietta: kind regards to Miss Bailey. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris *26* January 1884

. . . I can't say that Manchester seems good ground for us: the workmen are much patronized in various ways political and philanthropic, & seem on the whole to identify themselves with the middle-classes. . . . We had a good meeting of our Merton Abbey branch (don't it sound funny dear?) last night: Hyndman addressed them, & got on very well: the men are getting on well, & I hope we shall spread the light from there: there was a funny old ex-Chartist present: an old man of 70: he said it made him feel 20 years younger. . . . Mother is getting better now quickly & will soon be all right: she demands as a reward for getting well that I should hang the drawingroom with the blue Windrush as a summer change. I must consent I suppose & salve my conscience on the grounds of its being an advertisement for the goods. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Mrs William Morris 25 February [1884]

I will just write a line or two, but it can't be long, as I am just going off to West Bromwich, i.e. Birmingham. No, I didn't say much about the last trip did I? The Bradford lecture went off very well: a full house and all that: but they are mostly a sad set of Philistines there, and it will be long before we do anything with them: you see the workmen are pretty comfortable there because all the spinning and weaving is done by women and children; the latter go to the mill at 10 years old for 5 hours a day as half-timers: I don't think all my vigorous words (of a nature that you may imagine) shook the conviction of my entertainers that this was the way to make an Earthly Paradise. Well, I met Hyndman and our emissaries at Blackburn afterwards and we had a very good meeting in the big hall there, about 1500 people present; and a branch was formed: all likely to do well there.

I don't think I shall get gout, I haven't time for it; but I have a cold and what's more its got into my throat to make me hoarse for tonight. . . .

To Mrs William Morris 18 March 1884

. . . On Sunday I performed a religious function: I was loth to go, but did not dislike it when I did go: brief, I trudged all the way from Tottenham Court Rd. up to Highgate Cemetery (with a red-ribbon in my button-hole) at the tail of various banners and a very bad band to do honour to the memory of Karl Marx *and* the Commune:[x] the thing didn't look as absurd as it sounds, as we were a tidy number, I should think more than a thousand in the procession, and onlookers to the amount, when we got to the end, of some 2 or 3 thousand more I should say' Of course they wouldn't let us into the cemetery, and honoured us with a heavy guard of policemen; so we adjourned to an uncomfortable piece of waste ground near by and the song [presumably the Internationale] was sung and speeches made; only diversified by a rather feeble attempt by the hobblehoys to interrupt, which our people checked with the loss of one hat (Mr Williams'); after which we marched off the ground triumphant with policemen on each side of us like a royal procession. Mr Sanderson joined us at the cemetery, and we went home together along with Hyndman all hollow to the last degree, and finished the evening, Dick and Mr Gell and brother being there, with discussion and supper, fairly harmoniously. Well, to-morrow morning early I go to Edinburgh to lecture and shall be back on Friday.

All well with business: the new blocker is come and seems a good fellow: we are striking off a fend of 'Wandle' now: item, we are going to begin our velvet-weaving soon, it will be very grand. . . .

I am momentarily expecting Miss Mowcher as my wig is woefully long; so no more my dear from Your loving

W.M.

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Robert Thompson 9 May 1884

It is a very difficult task to give the kind of advice you ask for, as one knows really none of the circumstances. I could not venture to advise anyone to give up the employment he had got used to in order to try his chance at another, because it is so difficult to get employment in any trade unless you have grown into it so to say. Would it be possible for you to go on with your teaching and mean-

[1] **Karl Marx died on 14 March, 1883, and this year the London Socialists marched to Highgate Cemetery where he is buried, to do him honour. This ceremony has been performed almost yearly ever since.**

time to experiment as to what you could do otherwise? I am compelled much against my wish to have to say that your verses do not seem to me to show that kind of quality which forces people's attention. I mean on the metrical side. All this is but cold comfort for you, I know: but if you are inclined to think it hard that I can help you no more than by writing such commonplaces, I must ask you to remember how helpless any one man is in the present confusion and welter. I have every inclination to be useful to you if I can be: but naturally all places under my immediate control are filled up, and my recommendation in any case will as a matter of course go no further than to call anyone's attention to the fact (too common) that here is someone who wants work.

At the same time if you think it worth while to give me any details of what you purpose doing, I shall be very glad to help you as far as I can, which I fear will be very little indeed.

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] Sunday 1 June 1884

Dearest Georgie

Don't be alarmed: certain things occurred to me which being written you may pitch into the fire if you please.

The question of sharing profits in order to shake off the responsibility of exploitation is complicated by this fact, that the workman is exploited by others besides his own employer: for as things now go *everything* is made for a profit: i.e. everything has to pay toll to people who do not work, and whose idleness enforces over-work on those who are compelled to work: everyone of us therefore, workman and non-workman, is *forced* to support the present competitive system by merely living in the present society, and buying his ordinary daily necessaries: so that an employer by giving up his individual profit of the goods he gets made would not be able to put his workmen in their proper position: they would be exploited by others though not by him: this to explain partly why I said that co-operation to be real must be the rule and not the exception.

Now to be done with it I will put my own position, which I would not do to the public because it is by no means typical, and would therefore be useless as a matter of principle. Some of those who work for me share in the profits formally: I suppose I made the last year or two about £1800, Wardle about £1200, the Smiths about £600 each, Debny and West £400. All these share directly

[1] Walthamstow Public Library. Mrs J. W. Mackail Gift.

in the profits: Kenyon, the colour mixer, & Goodacre, the foreman dyer, have also a kind of bonus on the amount of goods turned out: the rest either work as day-workers, or are paid by the piece, mostly the latter: in both cases they get more than the market price of their labour: two or three people about the place are no use to the business and are kept on on the live-and-let-live principle, not a bad one I think as things go, in spite of the Charity Organization Society.

The business has of course a certain capital to work on, about £1500, which is very little for the turn-over of goods: this is nominally mine, but of course I can't touch it as long as the business is going, and if the business were wound up it is doubtful if it would realize more than enough to pay the debts, since goods always sell for less than their value at forced sales.

Now as you know I work at the business myself and it could not go on without me, or somebody like me: therefore my £1800 are pay for work done, and I should justly claim a maintainance for that work: shall we say *£4* per week (about Kenyon's screw) or £200 per annum; that leaves *£1600* for distribution among the 100 people I employ besides the profit sharers; *£16* a year each therefore: now that would I admit be a very nice thing for them, but it would not alter the position of any one of them, but leave them still members of the working class, with all the disadvantages of that position: further, if I were to die, or be otherwise disabled the business could not get anyone to do my work for £200 a year, and would in short at once take back the extra *£16 a* year from the workmen.

It seems to me therefore that the utmost I could do would be little enough, nor should I feel much satisfaction in thinking that a very small knot of working people were somewhat better off amidst the great ocean of economic slavery. I have left out 2 matters which complicate the position: 1st I have a small literary income, about £120, and 2nd there are those other partners called my family: Now you know we ought to be able to live upon *£4* a week, & give the literary income to the revolutionary agitation; but here comes the rub, and I feel the pinch of society, for which society I am only responsible in a very limited degree. And yet if Janey and Jenny were quite well and capable I think they ought not to grumble at living on the said *£4,* nor do I think they would.

Well, so far as to my position, which you will see is verj different from the ordinary manufacturer's so-called: since he not only gets high pay for 'organizing labour' but also claims plunder as a sleeping

partner on various absurdly transparent pretexts. On the other hand, I admit that it would be much easier for me to drop some of my iniquitous over-payment, than for him, because I have personal relations with my men, while his are only machines; many or most of my men are specialists like myself, whereas his are the ordinary material to be hired in every market; so that if he were to give up his gains to them, they would notice the fact of their discrepancy from their work, would set to work to save, & would become or try to become small capitalists & then larger ones: in effect this is what mostly happens in those few factories where division of profits has been tried. Now much as I want to see workmen escape from their slavish position, I don't at all want to see a few individuals more creep out of their class into the middle class; this will only make the poor poorer still: and this effect I repeat of multiplying the capitalist class (every member of which you must remember is engaged in fierce private commercial war with his fellows) is the utmost that could result from even a large number of the employers giving up their profits to their workmen—even supposing such a wild dream could be realised. The utmost, I say, because the greater number of the men kept down by years of slavery would not know how to spend their newly gained wealth but would let it slip through their fingers to swell the gains of the exploiting tradesman who are on the look out for such soft-heads. If you doubt this remember that even now there are at times artizans who receive very high wages, but that their exceptional good luck has no influence over the general army of wage earners, and that they themselves have in consequence only two choices: the first to rise out of their class as above, the second to squander their high earnings and remain in the long run at the ordinary low standard of life of their less lucky brethren: the really desirable thing that being still workmen they should rise in culture and refinement they can *only* attain to by their whole class rising.

This, as things go, especially since England has lost her monopoly of trade & manufacture is *impossible:* the competition for subsistence among workmen forbids the serious rise of the standard of life for any long period, taking labour all round: it is true that the Trades Unions by combination did manage to raise that standard for skilled labour; but their combination as on the one hand it was not international and so allowed other nations to undersell us and so reduce wages or threaten reduction of wages even for them (which will certainly come), so on the other hand it did not take in the unskilled

labourers, who are scarcely in any better position than they were 50 years ago—and in any case in a condition which makes one almost ashamed to live—in spite of the enormous increased wealth of the country in general.

Here then is a choice for a manufacturer ashamed of living on surplus value: shall he do his best to further a revolution of the basis of society (don't be afraid of the world, my friend) which would turn all people into workers, as it would give a chance for all workers to become refined and dignified in their life; or shall he ease his conscience by dropping a certain portion of his profits to bestow on his handful of workers,—for indeed it is but charity after all, since they don't claim it from *him* but from his class: (and here I must remind you that there is no possibility of working men getting at the *class* of employers by way of arbitration, even to the limited extent to which the employers can get at the workmen through the Trades Unions; since the employers, unless definitely attacked, are of their very nature as above said always at war with each other:) Well I say which shall he do? The second choice, if he takes it, may save a few individuals a certain amount of suffering & anxiety, therefore if he *can* do both things let him do so, and make his conscience surer; but if, as must generally be the case, he must choose between the furthering of a great principle, and the staunching of 'the pangs of conscience', I should think him right to choose the first course: because although it is *possible* that here & there a capitalist may be found who could & would be content to carry on his business at (say) foreman's wages, it is *impossible* that the capitalist class could do so: the very point of its existence is manufacturing for a profit and not for a livelihood: the instinct for a profit has made the class through a series of centuries what it is to-day, nor can anything destroy that instinct but the instinct for combination, for co-operation for the common good, the germ of which existed thousands of years ago, and is now under a new form struggling with the spirit of competition which has for so long overlaid it.

So you may be sure that the capitalist class as a class will struggle as the representative of the old or conservative idea against the working class as the representative of the new or reconstructive idea: will, nay does & I repeat cannot help doing so: what form that struggle may take before the new prevails over the old I don't pretend to say: but I suppose in this country where commercialism is most developed, it will wear out the soonest, and it will be commercial ruin

which will at once take away the strength of the capitalists and force the workmen into closer and more general combination: as you know some of us seem to see signs of this on the way, at which I admit that the flesh of this hanger-on [1] of the capitalist class trembles though his spirit is willing.

And now I want to explain once more this: that if these were ordinary times of peace I might be contented amidst my discontent, to settle down into an ascetic hermit of a hanger-on; such a man as I should respect even now: but I don't see the peace or feel it; on the contrary fate, or what not has forced me to feel war, and lays hands on me as a recruit: therefore do I find it not only lawful to my conscience but even compulsory on it to do what in times of peace would not perhaps be lawful, and certainly would not be compulsory: if I am wrong, I am wrong and there is an end of it: I can't expect pardon or consideration of anyone—and shan't ask it. Meantime to carry on the metaphor, to desert the regiment because the sergeants are sometimes drunk,[2] or the captain often swears, would not commend itself to my reason.

Well I don't mean to joke light-mindedly—'tis a serious matter enough: I cannot deny that if ever the D.F. were to break down, it would be a heavy thing to me, petty skirmish though it would make in the great war. Whatever hope or life there is in me is staked on the success of the cause: I believe you object to the word: but I know no other to express what I mean. Of course I don't mean to say that I necessarily expect to see much of it before I die, and yet something I hope to see.

Meantime take this scrawl which is hasty enough as token that I don't intend leaving my friends in the lurch: I shall offend you desperately some day I fear, meantime to think me quarrelsome is a misjudgement, for I commonly hold my tongue when my conscience (I don't like that ecclesiastical word) bids speak: so when at last I *do* speak it sounds quarrelsome you know.

By the way, I feel I have spun much too long a yarn about my d——d private position which really doesn't matter a bit.

I am your faithful
W.M.

P.S. I am dropping in on Tuesday you may remember instead of Wednesday this week.

[1] I am not a capitalist, my friend, I am but a hanger-on of that class like all professional men.

[2] I don't mean to say that the D.F. *is*—metaphor only.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Robert Thompson 20 June 1884

I ask your pardon for not answering your former letter before: I have been very busy which must excuse me. I can easily understand your wish to follow some other business than teaching boys what they don't want to learn: but since you ask my opinion about your chances as to getting employment as a draftsman I am bound to tell you that unless you have very special talents your chances of employment are very slender, more especially as business is flat at present, and I should think is likely to grow flatter. You see that this is one of the things which we Socialists complain of in the present state of things, that a man having once grown into an occupation he cannot change it, however unfit he may be for it: he is *forced* to stay where he is just as much as if he were chained up like a slave or a dog.

I must decline to argue theological points: I don't understand them: if there be a God, he, or it, is a very different thing from what religionists imagine.

Finally I beg you to do your best to get your livelihood by what you understand, and to grasp the fact that individualist effort to break the chains of society *must* fail.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 9 July 1884

Many thanks for your letter: I was glad to hear that you were knocking about the Freethinkers.[1] What a game for Mrs Besant [2] to see you jump up at Edinburgh after having had the last of you in London: she must have thought it a sort of nightmare. Then, I was much amused by the necessity of safeguarding Austria against my small poem.

As to affairs here, the important thing yesterday was that the Belgian Socialists want us to hold next year's International Conference at Antwerp. We had a long discussion about this, Hyndman favoured it and I did not resist, remembering your views as to pre-

[1] Bradlaugh, the Freethinker and Secularist, gave a series of lectures on Socialism at the Hall of Science, Mile End Road, this year, and Scheu, supported by Bernard Shaw, went along to put the Socialist case.

[2] Annie Besant (1847-1933), Social reformer and Theosophist.

matureness of the London Conference, considering our lack of organization. Bax, of course, was against it, and Banner who was there, it seems, much cast down at the turn things are taking: Quelch[1] and Williams also were against it. Finally we agreed to write to the French Collectivists (our inviters to Roubaix) and ask them what they thought of it. I cannot see that this would do any harm: and if the Antwerp plan is feasible I think both that we should run less risk of failure there, and that failure would be of less importance to us than in London: especially as of course we shouldn't have to organize the whole thing. What do you think? We are making arrangements for distributing handbills and selling *Justice* at the Franchise meeting next Monday week, the handbill appears in this week's *Justice* as an article: I thought it good. I had Bax here last night and had a long talk with him, and begged him to be more 'politic'; but in good truth I was afraid to say all I thought to him lest he should blab. To be 'politic' and not able to say exactly as one thinks is a beastly curse, and makes one hate the infernal bourgeois more for driving one to such stupidity in carrying on the war against him: but I cannot yet forgo the hope of our forming a Socialist,' a,'7y which shall begin to act in our own time, instead of a mere theatrical association in a private room with no hope but that of gradually permeating cultivated people with our aspirations. Banner is to come to me on Saturday. I want to encourage him and also keep him from running amuck. We had a good meeting at the Branch here on Sunday and two new members on Monday. I don't forget your greetings to them.

Here is a long letter with little in it save the matter of the International Conference: forgive the garrulity of age.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu *16* July 1884

I forgot if I told you yesterday that Burns and Williams held a Socialist meeting in Hyde Park after the London Government Bill meeting: they got together *five thousand* people who cheered them lustily: are going next Sunday and will take names I believe.

I asked Miss Taylor for money very civil by letter: she nay-said me, adding many hard words on the crimes of *Justice.* I don't think

[1] **Harry Quelch, Editor of *Justice,* formerly a cattle-drover, a packer in a warehouse, and a Trade Union Secretary.**

she is cut from the wood of the Socialist tree. Nothing much took place last night: chiefly arrangements for the sale of literature at the meeting in Hyde Park next Monday: encouraged by the success of last Sunday also we shall have a meeting of our own afterwards. Steyer was there and asked me about that matter of the money raised by the Marylebone Branch, of which I have never had one penny. Perhaps 'tis my bourgeois blood, but this un-straightness on money matters discourages me very much. However discouragement won't do. By the way 'tis I think very important that the Edinburgh Branch should send up a delegate to the Conference. Can't you come in that capacity? If you think I had better write to Mahon on the matter of the bill I will.

The Hammersmith Branch sends greetings.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
18 July 1884

To Andreas Scheu

I must say I don't quite like the new name for the Scotch body; it will be looked on here as a secession I am afraid; and whatever may be the discouragements I don't like to think that we have done nothing in London, and must throw the whole thing to the dogs, and begin again; while at the same time (as you know) I quite admit the necessity for real organization and don't quite see where it is to come from at present.

As to the Students I fear that the damned religion is at the bottom of their hanging back. As for myself and my position in the movement, I wish to write as frankly and seriously as I can: if I have any influence amongst our party (if party it be) it is because I am supposed to be straight and not to be ambitious, both which suppositions are, I hope, true; and feel sure that any appearance of pushing myself forward would injure my influence, such as it is, *very much;* therefore I will not secede for any mere matter of *tactics* however important I may think it, unless I am positively driven to it; but if I find myself opposed on a matter of principle, such for instance as a French war, to the people here I will secede if I am driven to it by the opposition embracing the false principle; and in that case of course will join any men if they be only two or three, or only yourself to push the real cause. Meantime I know enough of myself to be sure that I am not fit for the rudder; at least not yet; but I promise to

take my due share in all matters, and steadily to oppose all jingo business; but if I can with coolness, or I shall be bowled over, since I have not got hold yet of the strings that tie us to the working-class members; nor have I read as I should have. Also my habits are quiet and studious and if I am too much worried by 'polities', i.e. intrigue, I shall be no use to the cause as a writer. All this you will say shows a weak man; that is true, but I must be taken as I am, not as I am not. If in the long run I am pushed into a position of more importance, I will not refuse it from mere laziness or softness; but I think my real business is to prevent indispensable leaders from being . . . [?].

This is a long jaw about myself which please excuse.

Also I hope you won't think me indifferent to your personal matters, or unsympathetic on them; but please let me appeal to you to damp all that down in the interest of the cause; in other matters of less importance indeed I have had to do as much, and found it a dismal proceeding however necessary I thought it; so I don't speak quite as an outsider in such matters.

I am heartily glad that you are taking up the organization up there, and also that you find Mahon staunch; as to coming up here to the conference, you know how glad I should be to see you, but you yourself know whether you would be able to restrain yourself; in case you do come, please take your lodging here; in case you don't, get up a meeting, even if it be small, for me to address at Edinburgh as soon as may be to be of any use; and I will come; and then we can talk of all these matters better than we can write of them.

I have some doubts as to how the Conference will go, mind you.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
24 July 1884

To Robert Thompson

I write to you in a hurry, as 'tis my best chance of answering your letter to do so at once. You must understand 1st that though I have a great respect for Ruskin, and his works (beside personal friendship) he is not a Socialist, that is not a *practical* one. He does not expect to see any general scheme even begun: he mingles with certain sound ideas which he seems to have acquired instinctively, a great deal of mere whims, deduced probably from that early training of which he gives an amusing account: anyhow his idea of national workshops is one which could only be realised in a State (that is a

society) already socialised: nor could it ever take effect in the way that he thinks it could. You mustn't attach too much importance to what I said about the present Government doing something towards humanizing its own establishments: that together with the 'organization of labour' of our handbill or manifesto are merely transitional remedies for the present poverty. Neither could these two quite incomplete measures be taken unless the State, i.e. the people (for the 'Government' must abdicate its present position of a class Government first) unless the State, or people rather, has made up its mind to take over for the good of the community *all the means of production:* i.e. credit, railways, mines, factories, shipping, land, machinery, which at present are in the hands of private monopolists: this determination once come to by the people its execution will be easy, and the details of it will clear up one after the other: and the thing may be done gradually: but any partial scheme *elaborated as a scheme* which implies the existence with it side by side of the ordinary commercial competition is doomed to fail just as the co-operative scheme is failing; it will be sucked into the tremendous stream of commercial production and vanish into it, after having played its part as a red-herring to spoil the scent of revolution.

I believe (and have always done so) on the other hand that the most important thing to press upon the notice of the people at present is the legal reduction of the working day: every working man can see the immediate advantage to him of this: the Trades Unions *may* be got to take it up: and I doubt if the Government dare resist a strong cry for it: it is of all our stepping stones at once the most possible to carry within a reasonable time, and the most important, much more important than at first sight appears: all the more because it would at once become an international affair. I am glad to say that my colleagues quite agree with me in this view, as do the foreign Socialists.

As to the 'programme', I suppose you mean the political programme: I should think that this would in all probability be much shortened and simplified. But you must remember that though you may make a formula or maximum which carries Socialism with it, and which may be useful to impress our aims on people's minds, the subject is a difficult and intricate one, and to understand really requires a great deal of reading: I don't mean to say that everybody who joins our ranks must understand it in this way; but some must, and everybody must know something of its elements,

Petitions to Parliament, I must tell you, have long been considered by all parties as very poor instruments of agitation; although they are used in default of better sometimes: you see the fact is that Parliament is a dying thing.

We will by all means have a mass meeting in Hyde Park of employed and unemployed, when we can: but it would be a great mistake to be in a hurry with such a demonstration; a fact which the Liberals may find out even about Monday's if they don't take care. That is, if they don't work hard at it now. A great demonstration by us must be nothing but the sign of our having a great and closely knit *organization*, otherwise even its apparent success would bring about languor and reaction. To make really convinced converts if only one by one: to show even the most ignorant of the 'poor' that we are on their side, and that we are striving to make them gain a better condition of life for themselves—themselves now living, you understand, not the generations a thousand years to come: to infuse hope into the oppressed in fact—that is our business: and I don't think it is possible for us to fail in it, in spite of our own mistakes and weaknesses. You see what we Socialists aim at is to remove from people the weight of overwork and anxiety which now crushes them: we know that a condition of poverty has not always meant overwork and anxiety, but under modern civilization it does, and with modern civilization we have to deal: we cannot turn our people back into Catholic English peasants and Guild craftsmen, or into heathen Norse bonders, much as may be said for such conditions of life: we have no choice but to accept the task which the centuries have laid on us of using the corruption of 300 years of profit-mongering for the overthrow of that very corruption: commerce has bred the Proletariat and uses it quite blindly, and is still blind to the next move in the game, which will be that the Proletariat will say: We will be *used* no longer, you have organized us for *our own* use. Again it is our business to make people hope that they can be organized into saying this as if they meant it: in the course of their gathering that hope, it may well be that rough things may befall: but I say plainly that I shrink from no consequences of that gathering hope: for when it begins to realize itself (as it will) there will be an end of overwork and anxiety—and *then* people will find out what kind of education and morals they need and will have them: not unlikely that they may be somewhat different from our preconceptions of them. Meantime to try to settle amidst our present corruption

what that education, those morals shall be, except in the most general way seems to me a putting of the cart before the horse.

Second—Whatever Socialism may lead to, our aim, to be always steadily kept in view, is, to obtain for the whole people, duly organized, the possession and control of all the means of production and exchange, destroying at the same time all national rivalries.

The means whereby this is to be brought about is first, educating people into desiring it, next organizing them into claiming it effectually. Whatever happens in the course of this education and organization must be accepted coolly and as a necessary incident, and not disclosed as a matter of essential principle, even if those incidents should mean ruin and war. I mean that we must not say 'We must drop our purpose rather than carry it across this river of violence'. To say that means casting the whole thing into the hands of chance, and we can't do that: we *cant* say, if this is the evolution of history, let it evolve itself, we won't help. The evolution will force us to help: will breed in us passionate desire for action, which will quench the dread of consequences.

You see you have drawn a long, and I fear rambling letter from me: you had better join us in any case, since you can learn while working with us, and feeling as strongly as you seem to do will help to keep us straight.

To Andreas Scheu 25 July 1884

Now, it seems to me you are angry with me, who am your friend. I am sorry for this, but you see it must come from writing instead of speaking, or you would have understood that I did not mean that you were *consciously* actuated by personal motives even amongst other motives, but that unconsciously personal matters make you exaggerate, as who can help; however if you are angry, please to let it out, my friend, according to Blake's profound maxim;—

> I was angry with my friend,
> I told my wrath; my wrath did end—
> I was angry with my foe,
> I told it not: my wrath did grow.

Meantime I repeat that you may depend on me to let nothing pass which I think wrong as long as we hold together; and if by any chance there should be a split, that I will join the body which seems to me the true Socialist one; is not this straight-forward, and what

more can I say or do? I am so troubled by your seeming to think me scarce up to the mark that I send this off in a hurry with the acknowledgement of the £$ received, with many thanks to you for getting it in. I will write again to-morrow telling you all the news, merely saying now that no one was hurt at the rough and tumble in Hyde Park on Monday.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
26 July 1884

To Andreas Scheu

As to Monday this is what happened: we settled that Parkes should find us a dozen of out of work East-enders to sell *Justice* at the mustering places, they to get the trade discount; I saw Parkes' cart in the Strand with a red flag and a *Justice* poster; and I believe they did what they could, which I don't think was much: as the demonstrators were excited about their own tin-pot affair: well, the volunteers of whom there were a good few were to distribute the Use of the Franchise Bill and sell the Manifesto: we found it easy work getting rid of the gratis literature, but hard to sell anything. We met some dozen of us at the offices about 2 p.m. and then went up to the Park where we had agreed to hold a meeting if we could after the Platform Meetings were over; we had no platform among the others and took no part in the procession; this as a matter of course. Well everything seemed quiet enough; we sold a good few Manifestoes in the Park, and might I think have done well with *Justice* there if our salesmen had got there in any numbers, which it seemed they didn't. Lane was to lend us the L.E.L. banners for our meeting and duly came with them, but his people didn't roll up to any extent and Burns and Williams who were to speak didn't come till after the meeting had begun: altogether we hadn't of people we knew above a dozen to stand round the speakers when we began. We took our stand on the top of the mound of the reservoir, a steepish place crowned with high iron railings. Well Champion[1] began speaking to a smallish knot of people; but they soon began to gather, and by when he had done and Hyndman got up there was a fairish crowd; H. went ahead and was pretty well received, though there was a good deal of hooting when he attacked Fawcett by name, which was a mistake in him by the way. So he got down and Burns

[1] H. H. Champion, son of General Champion, who had resigned his commission in the army because of his disapproval of the Egyptian war of 1882.

took his place, but by then there *was* a crowd, much too big to be manageable I could clearly see: say 4 or 5 thousand people. However Burns began very well and was a good deal cheered till in an unlucky moment he began to abuse J. Bright whom of course our Franchise friends had been worshipping all day. So then they fell to hooting and howling, but Burns stuck to it, not being handy to glide on to the next subject; we were at the corner of the mound, and by this time the malcontents began to take us in flank and shove on against the speakers; then whether our people were pushed down partly or wholly or whether they charged down hill I don't rightly know, but down hill they went in a lump banners and all; goodbye to the latter by the way. I stuck to the hill, because I saw that some fellows seemed to be going for Burns, and there was rush that way and I was afraid he might be hurt: so I bored through the crowd somehow and got up to him and saw a few friends about us, Cooper of Merton Abbey, Champion, Sanderson, Burns' brothers and others. However off the hill we were shoved in spite of our shoulders. But at the bottom of the hill we managed to make a ring again and Burns began again and spoke for 3 or 4 minutes; but we were too near the hill, there was another ugly rush which broke up our ring, and we were shoved away again. I heard say that they were for putting Burns in the Serpentine, but it didn't come to that, for the police had been sent for and they took charge of B. and off we went in state, the bold Franchisers hustling all the way. I was insulted by one of our friends, a German of the Marylebone branch I think, telling me in his anxiety for my safety that I was *an old man* and lugging at me to get me away; so seeing that Burns was all safe, I e'en turned off with Sanderson, none the worse in body or raiment, but very much vexed at what seemed to promise a good meeting being so spoiled. I made some remarks to some of the knots of Mr Bright's lambs, but they kept hands off, and only hooted, being not so many as they had been. It seems after all though our defeat was only partial, as Williams and one or two others kept their ground and spoke till nightfall, departing with cheers.

I wouldn't have troubled you with all this jaw about it, only from what I hear the matter has been exaggerated in some of the papers. On Tuesday in talking over the matter we agreed that we ought to have organized supporters for our speakers in places where big meetings were like to be, and some of us seemed to think that this was arranged for; but I don't think it was. Hyndman and Champion

speak in Hyde Park to-morrow, but I don't suppose there will be a row there, as both last Sunday meetings have been good.

So much for that—Shaw gave us a very good lecture here last Sunday, and we got 3 new members; and I think shall get a good many more soon.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Robert Thompson *26* July 1884

Many thanks for your kind enquiries, and for your information about the end of the affair. I was not damaged in any way either in clothes or body. I saw Mr Williams and one other friend last night, and was pleased to hear that we practically carried off the victory: it was vexatious that we lost the opportunity of addressing such a multitude as were gathered about us when the ugly rush came: on the whole I fancy the actual interruption ofthe said rush was merely the horse-play of the rough element which I hear from other sources was rather to the fore at that time.

I don't find our friends were either dispirited or ill-tempered at the affair: but I think we ought to guard against such accidents in the future by having some organized body guard round the speaker when we speak in doubtful places.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 13 August 1884

Private and confidential.

I daresay Bax or someone else will give you an account of yester-eve's meeting; but I promised to write so here goes. Hyndman excused himself from coming by formal note to Sec.; so I was moved into the chair; so I spoke to them (poorly enough as far as manner went) pointing out to them that if they so much as discussed the question of the Chairmanship they were striking a blow at the roots of the Federation; that we (the Council) were the creation of the Conference, and that in attacking its authority we were attacking our own; and I finished by saying that I could not as chairman put any resolution for setting aside the decision of the Conference. Aveling supported me very well, saying that we had no power even to discuss the question as a matter of order. Burns also supported vigorously,

Burrows assented. Banner was ready to jump down anyone's throat. Well, Frost proposed a motion that a Special Conference should be summoned in 3 months; the rules seem doubtful as to whether such a Conference could be called for the purpose, but I let the matter be discussed. Williams (I think) seconded Frost's motion; Quelch and another attacked it, and moved the previous question. Finally the sense of the meeting being obviously against Frost, Aveling appealed to him to withdraw it which he did good-temperedly enough: in fact there was nobody on his side except Williams and Murray, who came in late, and I suppose Mrs A. who took no part or little in the proceedings. Champion also took no part or little.

We passed the new programme, which had been seen to by Champion, Lane, Bax (in Hyndman's absence) and self; I am sorry to say I could not hinder two ineptitudes creeping into it; Disestablishment moved by Aveling: and the Irish matter by Frost (Aveling supported this also); at any rate it is better than the old one, and is not parliamentary. About the report of the Conference: Mahon's letter to Champion (the last) was read, excuses were made for not inserting it in *Justice* before, and it was promised to be inserted: much dissatisfaction was expressed at the report: and I suggested that it should be moved that at the next Conference a verbatim report should be provided for and published; which was done in due form. So much for all that. I am afraid we are but at the beginning of our troubles: I tried to do as well as I could; but am not up to much as a Chairman: however will learn. All the intelligence of the Committee is with us: the meeting was a full one, scarce anyone absent, our branch is doing well here I think.

I go back to Kelmscott for two days: I have been seedy; slipped on the grass and strained my ankle and obliged to lay up for two days: then a touch of gout, not over yet: hobbled downstairs into the Federation at the rate of a mile in two hours.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 20 August 1884

Nothing much to tell of; Hyndman was there last night; asked me to write something for *Justice* said I would; he seemed rather sulky at me all the same. I was in the Chair again, H. coming late. I don't feel comfortable in the Chair at all; can't say what I like in it so well as if I were a mere member. I feel myself weak as to the Science of

Socialism on many points; I wish I knew German, as I see I must certainly learn it. Confound you chaps! what do you mean by being foreigners? Why did you allow our (no *their* for I am not a Saxon) forefathers to corrupt their low German tongue with that blooming French-Latin? Then, I want statistics terribly: you see I am but a poet and artist, good for nothing but sentiment.

The Hammersmith Branch makes good progress; the Costermongers, who have been used to hold a curbstone market in King Street from time immemorial are being threatened with ejection by the Board of Works, and are agitating against that nefarious body: we, the S.D.F. have been helping them and gaining credit and recruits thereby. I lectured last Sunday, good audience: someone gave me the opportunity of speaking of peace and war so I wound up with a short oration on the wickedness of using the word 'foreigner' and the impossibility of workers of different countries having any cause of quarrel. This was cheered to the echo, as such sentiments always are.

By the way, as to the German, do you know any Socialist who knows English who would read with me, say in about a month from now to begin with; it might be convenient to some one. I feel to say the truth down in the mouth about things, probably because my liver is not right: but it all comes in the day's work, and I well knew that such things would happen—then why grumble.

Thank you very much for your kind letter, I wish I had more backbone, or not to mince the matter, more courage. By the way, my engagement with the Philosophical Society is off. The idiots had the cheek to dictate my subject to me 'Art in the Household', or some such twaddle, to be free from Socialism: didn't see the connection between art and Socialism—Yah! However I'll come this winter all the same if you will arrange a meeting for me.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith

To Andreas Scheu 28 August 1884

All going fairly well here, I think; a row and secessions we may have, but I think that the days of personal dictation are over: most of the members of the Executive seem quite determined to think for themselves: Quelch for instance: all this is good. What do you think of Mrs Aveling in the Chair, as she was last Tuesday? As to me and

my backbone, or lack of it, you must put up with me, and I will do the best I can.

Thank you very much for the book, which I will really read attentively.

I am very sorry (of course) to hear of Mahon's failure: I confess I expected nothing else, all things considered. I was going to write a letter of condolence to him, but since he is away in Leeds I suppose the temporary address he sent me is no use. I will write again soon. I am behind hand with my ordinary work just now, and am rather confused in my wits with a multiplicity of business: please to remember that I am getting to be an old man.

A member of our branch wants an introduction to the Edinburgh branch, as he is going to Scotland for his holiday: as he seems a useful man, I will with your leave give him an introduction to you. I am getting very full of lecture engagements now; I don't like to say no to them at present.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Charles Rowley 13 September [1884]

I have just had a letter from Madox Brown asking me to share my Sojourn between you and him, and have answered him that I will go to him on the Sunday evening: I know you won't object, as you are aware that there has been a cloud between him and me, and that I am more than rejoiced it should be cleared off in such a pleasant way by my old friend himself, for whom I have always had the greatest respect and affection.[1]

P.S. You see that the Police Magistrates, egged on by I don't know who, have declared War against the Socialists in London. What fools they are! We couldn't have asked them to [do] anything better for us.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith

To Andreas Scheu 8 October 1884

Nothing special took place at yesterday's meeting except an absurd shindy between the Labour Emancipation League and the Tottenham Branch of the S.D.F. The Aveling matter is blown over

[1] 'Morris and Madox Brown had not met for years owing to Brown's misapprehension on some points connected with "The Firm". I brought them together, and very happy we all were.' Note by Charles Rowley.

ART EVENINGS.

Social-Democratic Federation.

Programme.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21st, 1884.

AT

NEUMEYER HALL,

HART STREET BLOOMSBURY.

TO COMMENCE AT 8 P.M.

PART 1.

PIANOFORTE DUET. {Overture to Ruy Blas} *Mendelssohn.*
KATHLEEN INA and G. BERNARD SHAW

SONG "Sonnie.' *Bchrends.*
ALICE KEAN

READING. "Men of England.' *Shelby.*
EDWARU AVELING.

PIANO SOLO "Capriccio" A minor. *Mendelssohu.*
W. S. SUMMERS.

READING "Mrs. Poyserhasher say out." *Ceo. Eliot*
MRS THEODORE WRIGHT.

SONG "Kissmg Time. *Pinsuit.*
ALICE KEAN.

PIANO SOLO. "Carnival." *Schumann.*
ERNEST BELFORT BAX.

READING. "The Passing of Brynhtld." ll'm. *Moms*
WILLIAM MORRIS.

PART SONG. . . . . .
By THE CHOIR OF THE GERMAN COMMCMSTISCUER VEREIN

Art Evenings at the S.D.F.
(About $^{2}/_{3}$ original size.)

apparently for the present. A certain Carruthers ' joined us, a steady-going man I think, and not at all likely to belong to the paddle-your-own-canoe sort. He has been a close Socialist till at present: he has written a book called *Commercial and Communal Economy:* in which there are many good things: is prepared to show *how* distribution of goods can be managed, is writing in next *To-day* on the subject. Also yesterday I was told off alongwithAvelingto prepare a new manifesto: my flesh creeps at the difficulties. The 23rd November is arranged for Glasgow: on December nth I address the L.R.L. at Greenock.

Carpenter[2] seems a very trusty person: he tells me he is going to Edinburgh: I shall get into regular communication with him.

I dont know whether you will be pleased, shocked or amused to hear that Oscar Wilde has gone in for Jaeger with enthusiasm.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To William Allingham 26 November [1884]

I have started to answer yours two or three times and have failed to get on with the answer: fact is 'tis hardly civil to a man of your attainments and, I suppose, leisure, to deal with such a serious matter in the limits of a letter, but please take what you can get till you make up your mind to look into the matter seriously with books and the rest of it to aid.

Imprimis, I don't touch on matters theological, which I never could understand, except to say that a God who stood in the way of man making himself comfortable on the earth would be no God for me, nor doubtless for you: I am fain when I am asked my views on these points to reply like Dickens's Deputy—'Find out!'—which is more than I can do.

You have got together a funny menagerie in George [Henry George, *Progress and Poverty],* Wallace[3] *[Land Nationalisation* Bradlaugh, and Harrison[4]: of course the last two curse Socialism; and George and Wallace think, or seem to, that a man wants nothing but a bit of land and his teeth and nails in order to set to work to produce. Bradlaugh's politics are in short 'Let Bradlaugh flourish!'

[1] John Carruthers, a distinguished consulting engineer and student of economics, who became a close supporter of Morris and accompanied him on his last voyage to Norway in 1896. Two of his pamphlets, *Socialism and Radicalism* and *The Political Economy of Socialism* were published by the Hammersmith Socialist Society.

[8] Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), poet and sociologist, author of *Towards Democracy; England's Ideal; Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure;* and *Love's Coming of Age,*

[3] Alfred Russel Wallace, the Darwinian.

[4] Frederic Harrison, leader of the London Positivists—*Order and Progress.*

About Harrison and his Positivism I daresay you know more than I do, but though he has some wholesome views against the exploitage of barbarous countries, he is no more advanced than Lord Salisbury is, or say than Lord J. Manners, a much better fellow. However I ought not to cut up rough at being coupled-up by you with such queer dogs, as heaven only knows I'm queer enough.

Your own programme is pretty extensive, and of course goes far beyond the ordinary democrat's; but you see these sort of reforms could never be brought about without a deeper change having grown up and ripened; a change which would mean producing for livelihood and not for profit, and which would be so far from being utilitarian that it would give all people of special capacity opportunity to work hard at their special gifts without sordid trouble or anxiety. Your views about the Stock Exchange and recovery of debts show that you somewhat sympathise with this I think: but I also think I could show you that the Stock Exchange is only the ugliest manifestation of that gambling which is in fact modern commerce. For all wares now sold are not mere goods, which pass from one hand to another with remuneration for his trouble to the producer, and usefulness to the consumer; but they are *market wares* in which the use is cumbered by a super-added exchange-value or profit, which sometimes indeed is the only value they have and utterly extinguishes their use-value. It is this profit which curses all modern society and prevents any noble enterprise, while it *compels* us (even the peaceable Gladstone) to market-wars which bring forth "murders great and grim". Now further we Socialists contend that this state of society is getting rotten-ripe and is changing into something else, which something else *can* be nothing save a new development of that tendency to co-operation which has always gone on in some form or another side by side with competition: as to how this change will come about it seems to us it will be by the workers becoming conscious of the fact that they are the only organic part of society, and the other classes are parasitical really. When they have learned this they will abolish all other classes and become themselves the State, and will organize themselves for getting the greatest possible good out of nature for the benefit of the State, that is for all and each.[1] This movement must of necessity be international (a socialist does not recognise a possible enemy in a foreigner as such), but in all

[1] Morris is here following Marx closely: 'the expropriation of the expropriators', 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', and the struggle between classes becoming 'the struggle against nature', etc.

probability England will go first—will give the signal, though she is at present so backward: Germany with her 700,000 Socialists is pretty nearly ready: France, sick of her republic of stock-jobbers and pirates, is nearly as far on though on different lines: Austria is ready any moment to shake off her Government of Jew bankers and police spies: America is as you truly say finding out that mere radicalism is bringing her into a *culde sac.* Everywhere the tale is the same: the profit-mongers are finding the game too vast and intricate to keep up. The old party politics are being openly jeered at, and this autumn's farce is adding its ounce of dangerous weight to the tottering load which the liberal jackass bears; I have heard the G.O.M. [Gladstone] mentioned in crowded meetings of working men without a cheer being raised for him, over and over again within the last month: even Chamberlain is looked upon with doubt as a dark horse. You may be sure the thing is moving, though of course I make no prophecies as to the beginning of the end. Like enough it will come with attempts at palliatives: tubs to the whale cast out first by one party then the other: every one of which we shall take without misgivings, for the better the condition of the working class grows, the more capable they will be of effecting a revolution. Starvelings can only riot.[1] I don't know that any one of these palliatives is much better than another: good housing is the most difficult as it is I think the most crying need: you will find that a bourgeois government cannot deal with it. Legal limitation of the labour-day is good as a cry, but again how can a bourgeois government ever think of that? I think we must be content with pressing all the claims in the lump, and console ourselves for the slowness with which things move by listening to the wails of Herbert Spencer on the advance of Socialism.

Well, I have spun a yarn about twice as long as I intended and told you next to nothing in it—please take it as a sign of friendship even if it bores you: the first is next your hand these cold days.[2]

[1] **In spite of the first two lines of The Internationale', which Morris probably sung at meetings: ' Arise, ye starvelings, from your slumbers, Arise, ye criminals of want!'**

[2] **We spoke of William Morris (from whom I had just had a long letter.) Tennyson: 'He's gone crazy!' I said I agreed with many of Morris's notions. Labour does not get its fair share.**

T. There's brain labour as well as hand labour.

W.A. And there are many who get money without any labour. The question, how to hinder money from accumulating into lumps, is a puzzling one.

T. You must let a man leave money to his children. I was once in a coffee-shop in the Westminster Road at 4 o'clock in the morning. A man was raging 'Why has so-and-so a hundred pounds, and I haven't a shilling?' I said to him 'If your father had left you £100 you wouldn't give it away to somebody else.' He hadn't a word to answer. I knew he hadn't. William Allingham: *A Diary* (1906).

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu *6* December 1884

Many thanks for your letter and the warning—damn all rich men, Smiths, Browns and the lot of them—also all gentlemen. How I can see and hear the interview between H. and M.! The first can't help it you know. I really begin to think he *willbz* Prime Minister before he dies. The attack on W.J. comes off *next* Tuesday: will try to flit a line to you on same. ' Anarchist' by the way is a kind of sacramental word with H. I shall soon share the distinction with W.J. I expect. As to Saturday, I make a formal engagement with you and shall so declare it to Miller for Saturday afternoon.

Aveling is doing well. I hear on all sides that his Socialist lessons are a great success: on Wednesday he led the opposition at a very successful 'hot' which he gave to that humbug G. Howell who was representing Sir T. Brassey, who had condescended to promise to address the working man on the deuce knows what, and also (which was unimportant) not to keep his promise. The Manifesto got passed on Tuesday but was declared disappointing: I don't think it what a *Manifesto* should be myself, and am sure I could do a better one, if not now, yet soon: however it don't prevent a more distinctly explanatory one being done. You may imagine how *frank* friend Mahon was on the subject. However I owe him no grudge: yet he should make *some* allowances for the weaknesses of human nature. Now I must to polishing my Glasgow preachment, so adieu with good luck.

14 Montgomerie Crescent
Kelvinside, Glasgow
To Jane Alice Morris 14 December 1884

My dearest Jenny

I found it was no use writing to you on Saturday (yesterday) as you would none the more have got the letter before Monday; so herewith a line, which they tell me you will get that morning.

Wet weather in Glasgow, and my impressions of that den by no means pleasant; though some of the country one runs through from Edinburgh is beautiful: I went a long walk with Scheu yesterday afternoon which brought us (after dark) to Newhaven: we took the omnibus there to Edinburgh, & the said vehicle was half full offish-wives and their babies: they were not beautiful ones like Christie

Johnson, but were clean and neat, and were dressed in the proper style with jackets of bright chintz, and were a relief from the usual dullness of Scotch street life. Scheu's little meeting place was cram full last night with a very good audience, and we fished two additional members, not much you will say, but things go slowly in Edinburgh. I am to meet a new branch which has been just started here after the lecture; they want to see me, partly I believe about some unpleasantness on hanging back from joining the Edinburgh branch. I hope I shall be able to set matters right between them, as Scheu is getting on at Edinburgh. The house building is terrible both here & at Edinburgh, & in short almost wherever one comes across a house in Scotland: so coarse and *raw,* so to say: it seems so wretched that they should spoil the lovely country with them. Well, my dear, you will see me on Wednesday morning (so please the pigs!) & we will talk of many things (like the carpenter). Meantime best love my own dear from your loving father. William Morris

Merton Abbey
Surrey
To Andreas Scheu 17 December 1884

You will probably hear from others how things went last night, but I send a line according to promise. I found Aveling and all quite ready for battle: they all promised to stick together, and we arranged our parts as well as we could. Everybody felt when we came in that something was going to happen. H. was very much the boss from the first. After the reading of your letter I gave my report as straightforwardly as I could and I hope did not mince matters. Fitzgerald of course lied about the letters by the way: well H. said he would stand by all he had said in the letter to Glasgow, and when I asked for urgency to move the vote of confidence in you he refused on the ground that he would answer my challenge in writing (to the Executive). Then came Clarke's matter: he read a longish paper with much unction and prodigious enjoyment: accusing nobody but Hyndman: hope and rage really made his style far from bad. Burns, the seconder of the expulsion, then spoke with his usual claptrap style: then came I think myself. I spoke very badly but I hope quite plainly. H. followed, long, plausible, slimy: finishing by saying that he had never attacked anybody's private character. I jumped up and gave Glasse's story: his Highness' jaw dropped at that and it obviously made an impression, though he tried to bluster it off and said Glasse must

come up to town to prove it, and said that he (H.) had heard the story from someone else (name not given) then came Aveling, spoke well as usual: then Champion I think (whom Bax begged in an interruption not to be so sensitive) then Quelch (the stupid)! then Mahon who gave some nice facts about letters and dates; then Williams gave us a rant; H. trying to stop him (as he well might) then Banner, who spoke very badly: then came the division 7 for the expulsion 9 against, Murray who was in the Chair would certainly have voted against us if he had not been. So ends our first victory. I have some doubt about carrying the motions on Tuesday next. I have just been talking to Cooper but I have some fear of the effect of H.'s oratory on him, though he seems to agree with me: if I doubt him at the last I think I will get him to stay away. I daresay you would have thought us rather mealy-mouthed, but H. knew well enough what we meant —certainly, what ,' meant, he spoke of me 'more in sorrow than in anger'.

We (the cabal) meet at Aveling's on Thursday (to-morrow). Now I want your. . . .

[The rest is missing.]

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Mrs William Morris 18 December [1884]

Excuse me for not writing before: I forgot to carry off your address: & since I came back (on Tuesday night) I have had a lot to do; for when I got up north there I found that Hyndman had been behaving so atrociously, that I was determined to stand it no longer. I got our friends together an hour before last Tuesday's meeting, and we agreed to stand by each other: & at the meeting I opposed him in very plain and set terms; so that he could not fail to understand that I would have no more to do with him: the fact is he is a precious rascal: he has been back-biting Scheu up there, & telling more absurd lies about his dealings with Aveling to Glasse: I suppose he thought Glasse wouldn't tell me. There was a motion on Tuesday to expel W. J. Clarke, a stupid but honest opponent of H. who has shewn his hand too soon, & whom he was determined to crush in any way foul or fair: I defended poor Clarke, & we outvoted Hyndman by 9 to 7.

The question only is now whether we shall go out of the S.D.F.

or Hyndman: we are now only fighting for the possession of the name and the adherence of the honest people who don't know the ins and outs of the quarrel. On Tuesday next we move confidence in Scheu, and the paper *Justice* is to be handed over to the executive under a joint editorship excluding Hyndman: if these are carried I don't see how the beggar can stay in the Federation.

All this is foul work: yet it is a pleasure to be able to say what one thinks at last: and if once we get rid of H. I am sure plenty of people will join us who now hang back. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
18 December [1884]

To Andreas Scheu

My dear Scheu

Banner says he has written to you to come up to meet the Hyndman infamy; I don't myself think there is any need for it, though I should be delighted to see you as you very well know; perhaps even as a matter of policy you had better not be present at the meeting but I leave that to you, as I don't think it greatly matters now war is declared! 1 believe you may trust me to speak out next Tuesday. I send you the Hammersmith card. Friend Walker[1] is delighted at the shaking off of Hyndman and I hear on all sides that this is likely to be the case widely. On the other hand I find Clarke is not liked; but I shall stand up for him and try to shove him into his right place, an organizer on the smaller scale, and keep him here.

I've found a letter of Mavor's at home with his address:

James Mavor, 134 St Vincent Street, Glasgow.

I am going to put the spur into Aveling's side this evening by telling him one or two things he doesn't know, or I think not.

From what Mahon says I don't think I did wrong to speak temperately on Tuesday last; it seems to have had a good effect in some quarters; it was like a man compelled by his conscience to attack an old associate, don't you see; however I mustn't write as if I were defending myself, for I feel sure you would have approved if you had been there.

I feel ever so much better from having relieved myself of the burden which was on my mind; what a pleasure not to have to shake hands with H. again. In haste your affectionate friend

William Morris

[1] **Emery Walker (1856-1933).**

55 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.
To Andreas Scheu 18 December 1884

Dear Scheu

We are now sitting in Council and have resolved that you must attend the Council at Palace Chambers on Tuesday next.

You must leave Edinburgh on Monday night, to arrive here on Tuesday morning. You then proceed to Morris's house, and stay there until evening when you meet us here (Aveling's house) before the Council meets.

You are not to tell anyone in Edinburgh that you are coming. And you are not to let anyone here know that you are coming; except whatever answer you send to this.

Hyndman and Fitzgerald will answer your charges in writing—so be prepared for every possible contingency.

Banner cannot be present to-night but he fully agrees with us,

William Morris (Shall be delighted to see you and quite agree).
E. Belfort Bax.
W. J. Clarke.
Eleanor Marx Aveling.
Edward Aveling.
Sam Mainwaring.
J. Lane.
John L. Mahon.

Kelmscott House
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 24 December 1884

My merry Christmas is like to be enlivened by a scene or two at all events. Last night came off to the full as damned as I expected, which seldom happens: and the worst of it is that the debate is adjourned till Saturday, as we couldn't sit any later than midnight yesterday. It was a piece of degradation, only illumined by Scheu's really noble and skilful defence of his character against Hyndman: all the rest was a mere exposition of backbiting, mixed with some melancholy and to me touching examples of faith. However, Saturday I *will* be out of it. Our lot agreed beforehand, being I must say moved by me, that it is not worth fighting for the name of the S.D.F. and the sad remains of 'Justice'[5] at the expense of a month or two of wrangling: so as Hyndman considers the S.D.F. his property, let him take it and make what he can of it, and try if he can really make

[1] From Mackail, ii. 127-8.

up a bogie of it to frighten the Government, which I really think is about all his scheme; and we will begin again quite clean-handed to try the more humdrum method of quiet propaganda, and start a new paper of our own. The worst of the new body, as far as I am concerned, is that for the present at least I have to be editor of the paper, which I by no means bargained for, but it seems nobody else will do.

I went to Chesterfield and saw Carpenter on Monday and found him very sympathetic and sensible at the same time. I listened with longing heart to his account of his patch of ground, seven acres: he says that he and his fellow can almost live on it: they grow their own wheat, and send flowers and fruit to Chesterfield and Sheffield markets: all that sounds very agreeable to me.[1] It seems to me that the real way to enjoy life is to accept all its necessary ordinary details and turn them into pleasures by taking interest in them: whereas modern civilization huddles them out of the way, has them done in a venal and slovenly manner till they become real drudgery which people can't help trying to avoid. Whiles I think, as in a vision, of a decent community as a refuge from our mean squabbles and corrupt society; but I am too old now, even if it were not dastardly to desert. . . .

Merton Abbey

To Mrs Burne-Jones[2] 28 December 1884

Saturday evening did see the end. We began at 6 and ended at 10.30. I don't think it would interest you to go through the affair in detail, and to say the truth I am so sick of it that I don't think I could write it all down. There was a good deal of speaking, mostly on their side, for Hyndman had brought up supporters, who spouted away without the least understanding what the quarrel was about. It finished by H. making a long and clever and lawyer-like speech: all of which, as in the House of Commons, might just as well have been left out, as either side had made up their minds how to vote from the first. Accordingly we voted, and the result was as expected, ten to eight, majority of two on our side. Whereon I got up and after a word or two of defence of my honour, honesty, and all that, which had been somewhat torn ragged in the debate, I read our resignation from the paper prepared thereto, and we solemnly walked

[1] On his small farm near Sheffield Edward Carpenter also worked at other manual occupations such as sandal-making on the plaited Kashmiri pattern. He was the first to introduce the sandal into England. In 1886 he founded the group of Sheffield Socialists.

[2] From Mackail, ii. 129-30.

out. This seemed to produce what penny-a-liners call 'a revulsion of feeling', and most of the other side came round me and assured me that they had the best opinion of me and didn't mean all those hard things: poor little Williams cried heartily and took a most affectionate farewell of us. Of course we did right to resign; the alternative would have been a general meeting, and after a month's squabble for the amusement of the rest of the world that cared to notice us, would have landed us first in deadlock and ultimately where we are now, two separate bodies. This morning I hired very humble quarters for the Socialist League, and authorized the purchase of the due amount of Windsor chairs and a kitchen table: so there I am really once more like a young bear with all my troubles before me. We meet to inaugurate the League to-morrow evening. There now, I really don't think I have strength to say anything more about the matter just now. I find my room here and a view of the winter garden, with the men spreading some pieces of chintz on the bleaching ground, somewhat of a consolation. But I promise myself to work as hard as I can in the new body, which I think will be but a small one for some time to come. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
28 December, 1884

To Andreas Scheu

We didn't get done till quite 10.30: too late therefore to wire. The result was 10 to 8, majority of 2 for us; Hyndman not voting, but Quelch the Chairman allowed to vote. Burrows was there voting against us. I got up after the vote and after a very few words read a written paper of resignation, signed by all the 10, much to the astonishment of the Hyndmans. H. had packed the room with his adherents, who were very noisy: people who were not on the Executive spoke all on Hyndman's side: Suter amongst others made a tirade of balderdash in the true debating-society style. Champion spoke well enough, but quite off the point; interrupted by Bax Very smart, but not argument.' Burrows made a disgraceful speech—what *we* have done for the Cause—before you came in, etc.; and incited to personal violence against Mahon. Burrows is a bad beast, the worst of the H. party. Banner spoke badly and not much to the point; the Taylor letter no good. Mainwaring began well, but rather broke down. Lane spoke clearly, sensibly and damagingly. Aveling spoke short and well; then up gets my great man, after Quelch had got up

to call me many bad names (water off a duck's back) up gets H. and delivers a crafty and effective speech, mostly lies in form, all lies in substance.

Burns was as usual after the voting friendly enough in appearance; the resignation was unexpected and seemed to win us favour; poor little Williams cried heartily afterwards and took an affectionate farewell of me: I really think he is an innocent: what a rascal a man must be to delude such innocents! H.'s party had loudly called on a general meeting, and H. himself said point-blank that he would not go out, how many soever votes were given against him: so you see even Bax had to allow that we were quite right to go.

Well, all that is 'ancient history' now. As to modern history, Aveling summoned me to go up to Engels on Saturday—important business. I was uncomfortable rather wondering what it was. Aveling told me it was about the *Commonweal,* that Engels thought we should have no chance of carrying on a weekly, and had better try a monthly, at first at any rate. Aveling seemed rather inclined to stick to the weekly. I saw Engels who said that we were weak in *political* knowledge and journalistic skill, and that we should find it very difficult to carry on a weekly paper really well, without stuffing it with rubbish and so on. I must confess that though I don't intend to give way to Engels, his advice is valuable; and on this point I am inclined to agree: all the more as 1 don't see where the money is to come from for a weekly, unless we sell a great many more than *Justice*: and I am sure we could make a 2d. or 3d. *paper,* not magazine, very good, and it would be worth doing on the understanding that it was to lead to a weekly one. You see we are in a poorish condition just after a split: I see clearly that we shall not *at first* get many adherents among the branches, and we shall have to work very hard at other things besides the paper; and I do dread having to drop the weekly, whereas I am sure we could carry on a monthly. I am afraid you will be disappointed at this, and I want to have your opinion: at any rate please don't think it is laziness on my part, for I assure you I will in any case do my very best to push things on. Anything you write about the paper or things in general I had better read at our meeting. Again I repeat, we are safe with a monthly even if our progress as an organization be slow: with a weekly it would be always doubtful: let's try the monthly first. I haven't heard from Carpenter again. I hope 'tis all right with him still: he said he was coming up at the end of the year so I expect to see him in a day or two. Mahon has found tern-

porary premises for us, and we intend meeting there on Tuesday evening to inaugurate the Socialist League. I will never tell you in my letters that I am in bad spirits even when I am. But in truth I am now in good fair working spirits, not very sanguine but quite determined and not at all dejected.

I hope you were not quite knocked up by your journey.

Good luck.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Robert Thompson 1 January 1885

In answer to your note, I will first give you the notice of our resignation which was handed in last Saturday.

'Since discord has arisen in this Council owing to the attempt to substitute arbitrary rule therein for fraternal co-operation contrary to the principles of Socialism, and since it seems to us impossible to heal this discord, we the undersigned think it better in the interests of the cause of Socialism to cease to belong to this Council and accordingly hand in our resignations,' This was signed by

E. Aveling	W. J. Clarke
Eleanor Marx Aveling	J. Lane
Belfort Bax	J. L. Mahon
Robert Banner	Sam Mainwaring
— Cooper	William Morris

The whole thing really lies in this statement: the attempt to establish absolutism led to its usual results and had to be backed by the usual means. But the immediate causes which led to the actual split were two-fold.

1 st. It was attempted to expel Mr W. J. Clarke from the Federation, the charge alleged against him being that he had in conversation with certain members of the Council made or hinted charges of self-seeking against Mr Hyndman, and on one or two of his known supporters.

Now it may be admitted that Mr Clarke had been injudicious in his remarks, but surely expulsion was much too heavy a penalty to inflict on a useful and energetic member of the Federation for the crime of a little incautious talk to *members of the Council.* Moreover others had notably been guilty of the crime such as it was, probably we all had, more or less: certainly Messrs Frost, Champion and Hyndman had.

In short the attack on Clarke was made because he, like others of us, had objected to Mr Hyndman's tendencies and had had the courage to let it be known: while his injudicious way of doing this gave a handle against him. I was quite prepared to vote against Mr Clarke's expulsion, and if need be to follow him out of the Federation, as I thought he had been treated very unfairly.

The second matter relates to our comrade Scheu, who has been ever since I joined an able, devoted, and trusted member. Briefly the facts are these. Scheu, when he left London last summer for Edinburgh set himself vigorously to getting the Branch there, which was very weak, into a good state: for reasons of policy, such as not wishing to alienate the Land-restoration people there, the Branch thought it better to call themselves 'The Scottish Land and Labour League, being the Scottish Section of the Social Democratic Federation'. I can easily understand exception being taken to this additional name: But the Branch under that name was accepted as an affiliated body by the Council, and at the Annual Conference Scheu represented it, and explained in the open meeting which followed the Conference why they had added to the name of the Branch, and no objection was made to it either by Mr Hyndman or anybody else.

Well, some three or four weeks ago Hyndman gave an address at Glasgow which resulted in the forming of a new Branch of the S.D.F. in that city: the Edinburgh Branch sent a deputation of their consenting, as of course the Edinburgh people must have known, the result would certainly have been that Glasgow would have led as the more important body: however the Glasgow Branch demurred, as they had full right to do, and some of the members seemed to have written to Hyndman for *orders* as to what to do. Accordingly when I came to Glasgow about three weeks ago, I found the executive divided, and in fact quarrelling: at the meeting I attended a letter from Hyndman was read attacking Scheu in what I am compelled to call a treacherous manner: accusing him of being an anarchist, a friend of Johann Most, and disloyal to the cause of Socialism, in short saying just what the writer thought would injure Scheu the most with the Glasgow people. These charges I knew to be untrue and I saw, therefore, that it was no longer any use trying to smother the smouldering discontent in the Federation.

I was bound, you see, either to accept Hyndman's charges against Scheu whom I knew to be trustworthy, or to declare against Hyndman. I did not hesitate, and in the meeting of last Tuesday fortnight,

at which the motion for Clarke's expulsion was thrown out, I plainly expressed my opinion as to Hyndman's absolutism and self-seeking. I need go no further into this matter in detail, except to say that on Tuesday week Scheu vindicated his conduct and position triumphantly: though even that was scarcely needed, as his antecedents, whatever they were, had been known to Hyndman all along, and yet he had treated him as trustworthy till the moment when he found it convenient to attack him, Scheu having done nothing fresh in the meantime to inspire any want of confidence.

I will be frank with you and say that though I have called these two cases the cause of the split, I should rather have called them its *occasion:* to my mind Hyndman's tendencies have led the S.D.F. or at least were leading it into a futile and even dangerous policy, nor could I in any case have worked with him long in carrying out that policy. It has meant adventure, show and advertisement, which would have found us out in the long run, and shown us to be a small party without organization and with no very clear aims.

Hence all these theatrical boasts and warnings about immediate violent revolution, which frighten those who are ignorant of our condition away from us, and disgust those who know how weak we are; many of whom are just the men who would be the staunchest if occasion offered. Hence also the perpetual sneers at, and abuse of the radicals who, deluded as we must think them, are after all the men from whom our recruits must come. Hence attacks on foreigners as foreigners or at least sneers at them: coquetting also with jingoism in various forms, all of which mean waiting about to see what can be made of the political situation, if perhaps at the best one may attain to a sort of Bismarckian State Socialism, or as near it as we can get in England. I cannot stand all this, it is not what I mean by Socialism either in aim or in means: I want a real revolution, a real change in Society: Society a great organic mass of well-regulated forces used for the bringing about a happy life for all. And means for attaining it are simple enough, education in Socialism and organization for the time when the crisis shall force action upon us: nothing else will do us any good at present: the revolution cannot be a mechanical one, though the last act of it may be civil war, or it will end in reaction after all.

Nothing hinders us from this education and organizing work: if there are laws against it we know nobody will dare to put them in force: why then should we swagger about violence which we know

we cannot use: when the time comes to use it we shall not need to tell everybody beforehand.

I finish by saying that whatever faults I have I am by no means a quarrelsome man: and if I could have avoided this quarrel I would have done so. In fact I have gone on hoping against hope for the last six months that the differences might heal up: but the truth is that Hyndman is determined to be master, and will not accept any other place, and he cannot change his nature and be otherwise than a jingo and a politician even if he tries. I can only hope that some of his friends may keep him straight for a while: but I believe that in time they will be driven to the same conclusion as we have been—that they cannot work with him.

As you may have heard, we have formed another body, the Socialist League, from which you will shortly hear: I can only say of it that it begins at all events with the distinct aim of making Socialists by educating them, and of organizing them to deal with politics in the end; that it expects single-heartedness from its members and fraternal co-operation, and that it will not suffer any absolutism amongst it.

Asking you to give my kind regards to our other comrades.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 4 January 1885

Thank you for your letter: I quite agree with your point of view of not letting the League degenerate into a mere opinion-society and will do my best to keep it lively: as to the paper please understand that I intend, as far as I go, to turn it into a weekly if possible: but paying for *Justice* has somewhat crippled me, and I shall have to find money for other expenses of the League at first. I am not quite sure of Carpenter yet, but expect to see him in a day or two. Faulkner will give us £100 also which is something. I can be sure of giving £300 altogether and hope for more. The point always is that we cannot risk having to stop the paper once started; at least that is my view.

I fear we shall find it difficult to persuade the Branches to join us en bloc even when we agree. I am pretty sure of Merton Abbey and Hammersmith of course. I think we ought to start new branches, wherever we can get someone to work them at once. I am anxious to hear what you think of the Manifesto, it is Bax and I conjointly.

Sketchley called on Thursday and had a long talk with me: he had already had the story from the other side: but it was obvious that he agreed with us. I have a note from Joynes friendly but vague; he is going to stay in Germany some time longer: in short keep out of the way. I will write again after Tuesday.

To May Morris Kelmscott
[At Bordighera] 20 February 1885

I am writing to you in the last (waking) hour of my two days holiday, which I rather wish were longer; not that it has been quite workless: for the floods being out, I have been in, & have designed a carpet and prepared a speech.

Let me see, you have been away nearly three weeks; what has happened in that time? Kartoum fallen—into the hands of the people it belongs to—and what else? the S.L. [Socialist League] in full conclave last Monday week expressed its pleasure at that event and sent a resolution to the papers which some of them, to wit *Standard, Pall Mall, St James s Gazette,* published. Bax has also been allowed a free hand on that subject in the *Commonweal* and has written a very good article for the March No. The radical press is waking up a little, and some people outside the S.L. seem somewhat ashamed of the whole dirty job—which will go on all the same. Well on the due Saturday we had our meeting at South Place and it went off very well; there were about 200 people there; this not much, but they were all our supporters. Aveling gave his first lecture or lesson rather this day was-a-week, and it was very successful 150 audience all attentive many taking notes and answering very well. The Leeds Branch of the S.D.F. has come over to us; not a big one but good to begin with. Item the Labour Emancipation League has formally joined us now; they are in very good humour. Item we are starting 3 new branches in London. Item the Hammersmith Branch is starting its reading room: we have got a moveable partition put up, and shall start a full news room in the worser end keeping the better for the reading room: old Craig[1] is in great force now: he took the chair for me last Sunday. The S.D.F. had their meeting of the unemployed last Monday: you may see about it in the papers: there were some 5000 people there so it was something of a success. But yet no good: very likely it will lead to some relief works being started, but that won't bring people any nearer Socialism. And if Government won't

[1] **E. T. Craig, an old Chartist and Co-operator.**

listen to them, what is their next move to be? On the whole things are moving on, and the S.L. is moving with them I think. Did you hear that Faulkner made his coup d'etat, and his radical association have turned Socialist Leaguers? Aveling & I are to go down to address them next Tuesday. Meantime F. has got himself most heartily abused for his share in the proceedings chiefly I believe, for calling the deceased Burnaby a scoundrel. The Telegraph gave him the honour of an abusive leader: I suspect our friend is somewhat downright in his oratory. On Saturday last I dined at the Richmonds (the Saturday before they had auguster company in the shape of Mr & Mrs Lome). I found Richmond[1] seriously excited as to the success of the British arms and had to enlighten him on the subject of patriotism. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[2] Kelmscott House February 1885

Wednesday I went to Oxford with the Avelings: we went by the early train, and all turned out well, and even amusing: we walked about Oxford a good deal, and even with all the horrors done to it, it looks very well and beautiful on such a bright morning as we had. There were terrible threats about what the lads were going to do, which I didn't suppose would come to much: we met, some of us, in University Common Room to settle the meeting, and it seems the enemy sent in a spy, which however we survived. Charley [Faulkner] had asked a great many very young persons to dinner, and their ingenuous visages made me feel rather old. So to the meeting we went, in a room in Holywell, which I daresay you have forgotten: it used to be the room of the Architectural Society when I was a boy, and is now a music room: it is just opposite where Janey used to live—Lord, how old I am![3] Well, we had a fine lot of supporters, town and gown both, who put on red ribbons and acted as stewards, but the 'enemy' got in in some numbers, and prepared for some enjoyment. Charley was in the chair and led off well, and they heard him with only an average amount of howling: you must understand that there were but some 20 or 30 of those enemies, and perhaps 100 declared friends, and some 250 indifferents who really came to listen to us: the hall was quite full. I had to get up when Charley sat

[1] Sir W. B. Richmond, R.A. (1842-1921), of Beavor Lodge, Hammersmith, Slade Professor at Oxford, 1878-83.

[2] From Mackail, ii. 141-3.

[3] Jane Morris was the daughter of Robert Burden of Holywell, described in the register of St Michael's Parish Church, Oxford, as 'groom'.

down: I was rather nervous before I began, as it was my first long speech without book, but the noise and life braced me up, and after all I knew my subject, so I fired off my speech fairly well I think: if I hadn't, our friends the enemy would have found it out and chaffed me with all the mercilessness of boys. Of course they howled and stamped at certain catchwords, and our people cheered, so that it was very good fun. Aveling came next: they had really listened to me, even the noisy ones: but it seems they had agreed that A. at any rate should not be allowed to speak; but he began very cleverly and won their ingenuous hearts so that they listened to him better than they did to me. Then came question-time, and that was more than they could bear; after two or three questions asked and answered, the joke of the evening came off by one young gentleman letting off a bottle of chemical which made a horrible stink, and the respectables began to leave and both the fighting [bodies] to draw nearer to the platform. Then by Aveling's advice Charley, who was by the way getting a bit nervous, broke off the meeting, and we 'got'; which I suppose was the best thing to do, as more horse-play might have made what was serious enough ridiculous. After all the best joke was what we heard next day, viz. that the disturbers were so angry with their ringleader for not making a better job of it that they broke all his windows that same night. I hope this piece of frankness touches your hard heart as it did mine. We had some serious talk at our inn after the meeting with the best of the lads; and then some of them took us into New College cloisters to see their loveliness under the moon. . . .

To May Morris Kelmscott House
[At Bordighera] 11 March 1885

My dearest May

It is so long since I have written to you that I really quite forget what news there is to tell: but I'm pretty sure that I did not say anything about the Oxford skirmish. I am bound to state that apart from any good it did (and I think it did some) it was very amusing: the organized opposition quite failed: so much so that in dudgeon against the incapacity of their leader, the malcontents broke his windows that same night; a frankness quite charming. Still some of the young gentlemen were very rude, especially to Faulkner. They have a donkey-race on this week or last, and have dubbed one of the donkeys 'Socialist' and another 'Comrade Faulkner'. How-

Hammersmith Socialist Society,

KELMSCOTT HOUSE, UPPER MALL,
HAMMERSMITH, W

Lectures on Sunday Evenings

AT 8 O'CLOCK

June 9—Rev. PERCY DEARMER, " Why you want us."
(Sec (London) Christian Social Union)
" 16.—E BELFORT BAX, " Luxury. Ease and Vice under Socialism "
" 23.-JOHN CARRUTHERS, " Sham Science "
" 30.— ANDREAS SCHEU. " The Ways and Means of Revolution "
July 7.—SIDNEY WEBB, LL.B. L C C, "What Stops the Way "
(Fabian)
,, 14.—GRAHAM WALLAS, M.A . M L S B. "The Democratic Mach.ne."
(Fabian)
,, 2! —HAROLD COX, B A . 'The Population Question."
,, 28—S M WARD, 'Sir Thomas More."
Aug. 4—A. BEASLEY, "Local Government in the Sixteenth Century "
,, 11 —GRANT ALLEN, "The Man of Lettersas Prophet "
„ 18.—Mrs SPARLING —" Patient Grisel "
„ 25 —A Lecture-
Sept. 1.—CHARLES CHARRINGTON, "What to do with the Theatre "

ADMISSION FREE.
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION INVITED

Out-door Meetings every Sunday Morning at 11 30 at the foot of Hammersmith Bridge.

Hammersmith Socialist Society. A programme of Lectures, with, on the reverse, Morris's original notes and designs.

(About ½ original size).

ever F. is doing very good service there, and we have a strong branch now, considering. I went to Bristol last week and had a good audience there: earning £4 besides expenses: the socialists there were mostly of the S.D.F. branch: they would not break off from that body, but were very friendly and we shall I hope have a branch at Bath which will join them. I saw Middleton at Oxford for a few minutes by the way: he had come over because his father was dead: he looked very ill, & has grown a thin woeful-looking beard. Webb is not back yet, nor have I heard from him, nor to say the truth written to him. The Hammersmith Branch is rather languishing: poor Walker is so over-worked that we practically have no sec: you must be assistant sec: when you come back, my dear, if I can't get another. I am going to make a dead lift to try if I can't wake them up. The Anarchist has appeared, a poor little sheet with, it seems to me, very little raison d'etre. I send you the Soudan manifesto which has a pretty ornament of Crane's on it: he has also done one for the Commonweal.[1]

I have been and am woefully busy, or I would have written before: I am pounding away at a continuation of my March poem [i.e. "The Message of the March Wind"]: I want to make a sort of lyrical romance of it: next time I shall try my hand at a versified Socialist meeting. But what shall I do with my couple in the long run? Scheu is here to-day: he hopes to establish himself as a Jaeger agent. Tell your mother that Jenny keeps remarkably well and is very little troubled: she seems to like the house-keeping and I think it does her good to have it to do. They are going to Kelmscott for a week or so Monday.

This is a short shabby letter, my dear, but I will write you again. Best love to Mother. Your loving father
William Morris

To Jane Alice Morris

Hammersmith
24 March 1885

... I have had to go to call on that tiresome Mrs Clark at Brentford this morning to talk to her about her curtains: really when one sells a baby porridge one should not be expected to put it into their mouths with a spoon. So my dear Jenny good-bye as I am behind with my Croydon lecture.

[1] **I.e. of a manual worker and a brain worker clasping hands and united by the winged figure *of* Liberty.**

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Robert Thompson 6 April 1885

Your letter only reached me this morning, too late therefore for me to write to you in time for the Conference. However in any case the answer must have been the same, as there would not have been time to lay the matter before our Council. I now write only my private and personal views on the matter. From that point 1 must say that I think matters had better be left where they are: Of course I know very well that there are plenty of good and enthusiastic men in the S.D.F. to whom I wish every success. But it cannot be denied that we are on different lines, and most lines seem now to be diverging more and more: and I think it is a mistake to ignore these differences as long as they exist. As to the 'personal factor', you understand, I hope, that there is nothing in it of a private nature as far as I am concerned at any rate: but I will always resist to the utmost any attempt at warping an organization towards the satisfaction of any one man's ambition, whoever he may be: such a man I cannot look upon as a Socialist at all.

At all events it is far better that there should be two (or more) bodies of Socialists each working harmoniously internally, whatever the differences of opinion may be between the bodies, than that there should be in the bodies themselves that constant bickering and mistrust which would come of trying to keep together artificially men who have different ideas certainly about the means and perhaps about the aims of their association.

At the same [time] I applaud your good will and the spirit of your letter, and thank you for your kind expressions about myself.

About the Embankment meeting, I do not agree with the tactics of the S.D.F. about unemployed, nor did I when I was in that body: it seems to me that they smell of parliamentarism which [I] wholly dissent from.

Millthorp [2]

To Mrs Burne-Jones [x] 28 April 1885

. . . I have been getting on pretty well in Scotland, but whether pock-pudding prejudice or not I can't bring myself to love that country, 'tis so raw-boned. But I had my reward by the journey (the first time in daylight) from Carlisle to Settle: 'tis true that the day

[1] From Mackail, ii. 143-4. [2] Edward Carpenter's house.

was most splendid, but at any rate 'tis the pick of all England for beauty. I fared to feel as if I must live there, say somewhere near Kirkby Stephen, for a year or two before I die: even the building there is not bad; necessitous and rude, but looking like shelter and quiet. There is a good deal of this lovely country: the railway goes right up into the mountains among the sheep walks: there was a little snow lying in bights of the highest crags. I needn't enlarge on an entry into the Yorkshire manufacturing country after this; but I was so elated by the beauty we had passed through that I did not feel it as much as usual. I read a queer book called 'After London' [by Richard JefFeries] coming down: I rather liked it: absurd hopes curled round my heart as I read it. I rather wish I were thirty years younger: I want to see the game played out. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones [x] 13 May 1885

I am in low spirits about the prospects of our 'party', if I can dignify a little knot of men by such a word. Scheu is, I fear, leaving London again, which is a great disappointment to me, but he must get work where he can. You see we are such a few, and hard as we work we don't seem to pick up people to take our places when we demit. All this you understand is only said about the petty skirmish of outposts, the fight of a corporal's guard, in which I am immediately concerned: I have [no] more faith than a grain of mustard seed in the future history of 'civilization', which I *know* now is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies. With this thought in my mind all the history of the past is lighted up and lives again to me. I used really to despair once because I thought what the idiots of our day call progress would go on perfecting itself: happily I know now that all that will have a sudden check—sudden in appearance I mean—'as it was in the days of Noe' . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones [2] 27 May 1885

On Sunday I went a-preaching Stepney way. My visit intensely depressed me, as these Eastward visits always do: the mere stretch of houses, the vast mass of utter shabbiness and uneventfulness, sits upon one like a nightmare: of course what slums there are one doesn't

[1] From Mackail, ii. 144-5.

[1] From Mackail, ii. **145.**

see. You would perhaps have smiled at my congregation; some twenty people in a little room, as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal. It took the fire out of my fine periods, I can tell you: it is a great drawback that I can't *talk* to them roughly and unaffectedly. Also I would like to know what amount of real feeling underlies their bombastic revolutionary talk when they get to that. I don't seem to have got at them yet—you see this great class gulf lies between us. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mali, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 16 July 1885

Your MS. and note to hand, the article is very good *but* if you don't mind I will hold it over till the September number; the August one is much filled up with the report of meeting which is well done; and Gronlund's book *must* be reviewed, and the *Pall Mall* Scandals dealt with: there will be nothing of mine save 'Pilgrims', Joynes' 1st *Freiligrath* I will publish in September: on Monday we passed a resolution to send to the *Pall Mall* taking their side and saying that nothing but the abolition of Capitalism can cure such evils: of course the article (Eleanor Marx) must take this line: I laid down the lines it must take; but really had not the time to write it myself. 'What do I think of the P.M.?' Why, that it is worth half a ton of dynamite. I will write as much as I can for next number, September. Last Monday it was settled that Binning should print the *Com.* though he doesn't think it possible to get out the September one as it takes time to prepare. He is to be my man you understand, and I am to be the capitalist printer: this he insisted on. We shall scheme out for beginning the weekly in January 1886, but think it would be rash to attempt it before. Monday's meeting was harmonious and a lot of work was schemed out; I hope some of it will be done. I am going to have a talk with Sparling to-morrow morning.

Manchester and Oldham. I met the members of the Soc. Union and had a long talk with them: the best men want to join us, but think they can make their body into a branch instead of a mere affiliated body: the difficulty with the doubters is the question of parliamentarianism. I thought it best not to shirk the matter, but stuck to my text, and I think I made some impression on them. My lecture in the evening: hall not full (about 250), fine evening and great cricket match on. Feeling good on the whole: very eager

discussion of the usual kind: lecture fully reported in *Guardian* and *Examiner*.

Oldham (next day, Sunday) 1st lecture in hall of tea-gardens, good attendance, men mostly young: much astonished at the attack on capitalism: radical opposition: on the whole not bad for a beginning: Oldham open air in the evening: the authorities had forbidden meeting in the usual place (old market) we [sat] in a coffee house watching a big crowd assemble to see the fun and police wandering around: going out received with cheers by the crowd, and went to present market place all the crowd trailing after us about 1500 or rather more listened very attentively. I spoke for about 45 minutes, rather well I think, and liked it but found my voice failing at last. Ewing, the best man of the Soc. Union spoke afterwards, well: resolution passed unanimously against police interference with right of public meeting. Oldham a *good* place if properly worked, strike threatened, business very bad: radicals not so hard-boiled as in some places: a kind of Cobbettism welcome to them: the Soc. Union is really doing good work and is very active: I shall write to them and keep them up to scratch.

Tuesday. Desborough, Northamptonshire. A shoe-making and iron-stone quarrying village: spoke (extern:) in evening to a meeting in a hall about 100 quarry men and shoe-makers, with some dozen radical middle-class from Kettering: working-men part very sympathetic: opposition from 2 middle-class (man and woman) both stupider than usual: working-men growling noes like dogs at them which did my heart good to hear. Class-feeling strong here among the workers: wages pretty bad, work precarious; shoe-makers tyrannized over by sweaters. I think we shall get a branch here: one woman is very good here: she and her husband have come to it through co-operation: I and others should go down here again and try to make it headquarters among the shoe-makers, who are all about. This is all the news I think: 'Comrade' May is very anxious about the choir.

Hope you stand the camp pretty well: I want to come and see you there if I can.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
17 August 1885

To Robert Thompson

I only got your letter late last night after post time. I am afraid I shall not be able to get to Enfield in time: but I expect to see some of

our comrades at the Patriotic Club tonight and I will lay the matter before them. It seems to me that they cannot *legally* do more than bind you over to keep the peace, if I can be of use to you as a security I will do that for you.

It seems to me that you have been very unfairly treated: but I suppose we cannot expect to be fairly treated at present: therefore we ought to be prudent.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Mrs William Morris Tuesday [22 September 1885]

. . . I did not go either to the East End meeting or the Parks on Sunday: but, as you will see by the papers, I felt bound to go to the police court yesterday. My adventure there is pretty well told by the Daily News and the Pall Mall I send you [see Appendix]: I need only add that anything more preposterous than the charge made against me it is impossible to imagine: the police simply hustled me and others out with shoves and pushes; when I got to the door I turned round and expostulated with the policeman for his shoving, and the beggar immediately collared me and swore I hit him and had broken his helmet: I had never lifted my hands above my elbow and his helmet breaking was the breaking of its chin-strap which I suppose he himself had done: there was a funny scene in the police station where they charged me, the inspector and the constable gravely discussing whether the damage done to the helmet was 2d or 1|d. They kept me there all the afternoon before they brought me up again. As to Saunders and his 'justice' the old wretch gave poor Lyons who had done just the same as the others 2 months 'hard', and let off Mowbray altogether who had really done the most. The behaviour of the police, their bullying and hectoring, was quite beyond belief, and I have no doubt they mostly 'swore through a kitchen-table'. Kiss my dear Jenny and give her the news. I am afraid in no case could I come to Kelmscott this week: yet I wish I could if it were only for one day. I go to Birmingham to-morrow Wednesday: but must call at Merton afterwards to order alterations in the window.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 16 October 1885

It's all right; I am to lecture on Sunday next. I suppose we shall try the Park again, and I will go if I am well enough; but I can't get

rid of my sciatica and now I have a cold to boot. Thank you for writing to me at length from Oxford; I don't wonder at your enjoying it so much. I wish the deuce we could go into business together, but you see our business is really wholly retail, and I am afraid we could not alter it now; especially in these bad times; but of course I will give it a thought.

I don't know if you saw about Sunday's Victoria Park meeting; I suppose it might be called a success; but after all as far as the League was concerned we were taken in; for 'twas a Federation meeting and there was I in a van with the whole gang—including Hyndman; of course I couldn't make a scene as I was caught; it is better to let it alone now it is over, but I was rather riled. One joke is that the *Chronicle* and I think the *Tele*, the two papers which reported the meeting well, gave my speech and Williams' but did not so much as mention that Hyndman spoke. Literature did not sell well there, neither ours nor *Justice;* however *Comm.* is nearly sold out. Hammersmith Branch has sold 13 quires and more. We sent in our resolution to the S.D.F. about the Hyndman-Aveling affair with a civil letter to the Fed. assuming *that* Justice *was the representative* of that body; which will act as a kind of bombshell I fancy; since many of the S.D.F. are not best-pleased with his boss-ship. Shall I come to see you on Sunday? You come over for such a little time when you do come.

I have just come back (last night) from Preston where I have been on the stump; the people there are a little better than last year; but very wooden. I think of making some arrangement for a stumping tour in the North in early spring next—make a fortnight of it. I wish you could come with me if I did go.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Jane Alice Morris *26* October 1885

I am sorry, but I shall not get to you to-morrow. My gout has not been bad, but it has leg-tied me completely, since it is in both feet. I am mending, but slowly, and I know my only chance of throwing it off for this bout is to keep very quiet. I have been reading trashy novels, my dear, but having tried Ouida's *Strathmore* I found I really couldn't, not even with gout to help me. We had a pretty good meeting here last night; of course I couldn't go to it, as I have really not

been able to put a foot to the ground: I am wheeled to the dining-room & back here on the sofa. We had also a good meeting in Hyde Park, as we always seem to do now. I don't at all like not being able to get about: even one wooden leg would be better than this if it were to last—which however it will not. It was a beautiful day here yesterday: & I lay in the morning sun very contentedly for an hour or two I must confess. Richmond called just back from Cairo: he fired my longing to go see the desert there by telling me about his experiences there. Goodbye my dear. I hope to see you on Friday at all events.

Kelmscott House
To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 31 October 1885

Here I am still more or less on my back, though I am getting better; I have not had any very bad pain, but have been so dead lame that till yesterday it has been a month of wheeling me in on a sofa from my room to the dining-room. I think I was much like this in Venice, only not so lame. There, enough of symptoms. It has been beautiful weather here till to-day, and I am glad of that for your holidays' sake: also I have enjoyed it myself: it was quite a luxury to lie here in the morning and let the sun creep over me and watch the clouds. I am afraid that when I get about again I shall find myself very lazy; I have picked up terrible habits of novel-reading and doing nothing this spell. I don't think it comes from my knocking about to meetings and the like, but rather from incaution as to diet, which I really must look after. You see, having joined a movement, I must do what I can while I last, that is a matter of duty. Besides, in spite of all the self-denying ordinances of us semi-anarchists, I grieve to have to say that some sort of leadership is required, and that in our section I unfortunately supply that want; it seems I was missed last Monday, and stupid quarrels about nothing took place, which it was thought I could have stopped. All this work I have pulled upon my own head, and though in detail much of it is repulsive to the last degree, I still hold that I did not do so without due consideration. Anyhow, it seems to me that I can be of use, therefore I am impelled to make myself useful.

It is true, as I think I have said before, that I have no great confidence in the stability of our party: but in the stability of the movement I have every confidence; and this I have always said to myself,

[1] From Mackail, ii. 149-51.

that on the morrow of the League breaking up I and some half-dozen must directly begin a new organization; and I believe we should do so.

You see, my dear, I can't help it. The ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest: nor can I see anything else worth thinking of. How can it be otherwise, when to me society, which to many seems an orderly arrangement for allowing decent people to get through their lives creditably and with some pleasure, seems mere cannibalism; nay worse, (for there might be hope in that,) is grown so corrupt, so steeped in hypocrisy and lies, that one turns from one stratum of it to another with hopeless loathing. One must turn to hope, and only in one direction do I see it—on the road to Revolution: everything else is gone now. And now at last when the corruption of society seems complete, there is arising a definite conception of a new order, with its demands in some sort formulated. In the details of that I do not myself feel any great confidence, but that they have taken so much form is hopeful, because unless the new is near to the birth, however rotten the old may be, rebellion against it is mere hopeless grumbling and railing, such as you used to reproach me with.

Meantime what a little ruffles me is this, that if I do a little fail in my duty some of my friends will praise me for failing instead of blaming me. I have a pile of worry about the party ahead of me when I am about again, which must excuse me for dwelling on these things so much.

To the Editor', The Daily News

THE VULGARIZATION OF OXFORD

I have just read your too true article on the vulgarization of Oxford, and I wish to ask if it is too late to appeal to the mercy of the [4]Dons' to spare the few specimens of ancient town architecture which they have not yet had time to destroy, such, for example, as the little plaster houses in front of Trinity College or the beautiful houses left on the north side of Holywell Street. These are in their way as important as the more majestic buildings to which all the world makes pilgrimage. Oxford thirty years ago, when I first knew it, was full of these treasures; but Oxford 'culture', cynically contemptuous of the knowledge which it does not know, and steeped to the lips in the commercialism of the day, has made a clean sweep of most of them;

but those that are left are of infinite value, and still give some character above that of Victoria Street or Bayswater to modern Oxford. Is it impossible, Sir, to make the authorities of Oxford, town and gown, see this, and stop the destruction? The present theory of the use to which Oxford should be put appears to be that it should be used as a huge upper public school for fitting lads of the upper and middle class for their laborious future of living on other people's labour. For my part I do not think this a lofty conception of the function of a University; but if it be the only admissible one nowadays, it is at least clear that it does not need the history and art of our forefathers which Oxford still holds to develop it. London, Manchester, Birmingham, or perhaps a rising city of Australia would be a fitter place for the experiment, which it seems to me is too rough a one for Oxford. In sober truth, what speciality has Oxford if it is not the genius loci which our modern commercial dons are doing their best to destroy? One word on the subject of Dr Hornby and Eton. Is there no appeal against a brutality of which I dare not trust myself to write further? Is it impossible that the opinions of distinguished men of all kinds might move him? Surely a memorial might be got up which would express those opinions.[1]

(The Daily News, 20 November 1885.)

Rottingdean

To Jane Alice Morris 27 November 1885

My tale is not likely to be a long one, as not much happens here, except yesterday's rain: my word how it rained! but I managed to get out and stumble about for some 10 minutes. To-day is quite fine and sunny, and I have been out more, but am still rather stiff; mother seems to have a cold on her which tires her. We tried cribbage for a change yesterday, but whether it was that we had no proper board or that we were demoralized by the excitement of back-gammon I can't say, but we found it dull: so we tried draughts: this as a game of skill played by two persons not *wholly* skilful rather turned out a failure: so we got back to back-gammon again. . . .

Well, my dear, now I am going for another hobble up and down in the sun while it lasts. I do long for the sun: I think yesterday we were both inclined to send for a fly & set off home again.

[1] Dr Hornby, the Provost of Eton, had decided to pull down the school library and the old houses on the western side of Weston's Yard, among which was the fine sixteenth-century Headmaster's house.

Rottingdean

To May Morris Thursday [3 December 1885]

Thank you for sending on Gimson's[1] letter: though I will say this for him

> There is a young person named Gimson
> I could wish that he never had limbs on
> For then, do you see,
> His writing to me
> Would have been a tough matter to Gimson.

Yes it was a ruffianly day yesterday: when I got here I perceived that the true manly way to treat such meanness was to go to bed & read Boisgobey to the accompaniment of hot grog: that would have been something like a holiday! but the deceitfulness of ambition tempted one to sit up all day doing Homer: and at last the day was mean enough to clear up about 4.30 and I got an hour by the sea-side. This morning has been very bright, though mighty cold: wind N.E. but London smoke has now come & made it murky. However I am enjoying myself hugely: had oysters to supper last night, and all the delicacies of the season.

There is nothing to tell you except the history of the weather and my debauchery. Best love to all round and let the others know all goes well. I write to you because you write to me: let 'em take it in common.

To the Editor, The Pall Mall Gazette 2 Feb. 1886

I answer your letter[2] with much pleasure. Like my friend Mr Swinburne, I do not pretend to prescribe reading for other people: the list I give you is of books which have profoundly impressed myself: I hope I shall be acquitted of egotism or conceit for having ventured to add a few notes to the list; in some cases I felt explanation was necessary: in all, it seemed to me that my opinion could be of no value unless it were given quite frankly; so I ask your readers to accept my list and notes as a confession such as might chance to fall from me in friendly conversation; and, after all, these are matters

[1] Sydney Gimson was usually Morris's host when he went to Leicester to lecture for the Secular Society. Gimson relates that after the lecture, *Art and Socialism,* on 23 Jan. 1884, the Rev. Page Hopps said to Morris at supper: 'That's an impossible dream of yours, Mr Morris, such a society would need God Almighty himself to manage it', to which Morris replied: 'Well, damn it man, you catch your God Almighty. We'll have him!'

[2] In February 1886, following on a lecture of Sir John Lubbock's at the Working Men's College, the *Pall Mall Gazette* printed this provisional list of the Best Hundred Books. The questionnaire was sent to many other men of letters.

about which one must have an opinion, though it may, I feel too well, be sometimes prudent to conceal it.

My list seems a short one, but it includes a huge mass of reading. Also there is a kind of book which I think might be excluded in such lists, or at least put in a quite separate one. Such books are rather tools than books; one reads them for a definite purpose, for extracting information from them of some special kind. Among such books I should include works on philosophy, economics, and modern or critical history. I by no means intend to undervalue such books, but they are not, to my mind, works of art; their manner may be good, or even excellent, but it is not essential to them; their matter is a question of fact, not of taste. My list comprises only what I consider works of art.

LIST

1. Hebrew Bible (excluding some twice done parts and some pieces of mere Jewish ecclesiasticism).
2. Homer.
3. Hesiod.
4. The Edda (including some of the early Norse romantic genealogical poems).
5. Beowulf.
6. Kalevala, Shahnameh, Mahabharata.
7. Collections of folk tales, headed by Grimm & the Norse ones.
8. Irish & Welsh traditional poems.

These are the kind of book which Mazzini called 'Bibles'; they cannot always be measured by a literary standard, but to me are far more important than any literature. They are in no sense the work of individuals but have grown up from the very hearts of the *people.* Some other books further down share in the nature of these 'Bibles'. I have marked them with a star.'

*9. Herodotus.
10. Plato.
11. Aeschylus.
12. Sophocles.
13. Aristophanes
14. Theocritus.
15. Lucretius.
16. Catullus.

Real ancient imaginative works. I have left out others of which (to confess *8c* be hanged) I know little or nothing. The greater part of the Latins I should call *sham* classics, I suppose they have some good literary qualities; but I cannot help thinking that it is difficult to find out how much. I suspect superstition and authority have influenced our estimate of them till it has become a mere matter of convention. Of course I admit the archaeological value of some of them, especially Virgil and Ovid.

17. Plutarch's Lives.
***18.** Heimskringla (the tales of the Norse Kings).
***19.** Some half-dozen of the best Icelandic Sagas.
20. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.
21. William of Malmesbury.
22. Froissart.

Uncritical or traditional history: almost all these books are admirable pieces of tale-telling: some of them rise into the dignity of prose epics, so to say, especially in parts. Note, for instance, the last battle of Olaf Tryggvason in Heimskringla; and the great rally of the rebels of Ghent in Froissart.

23. Anglo-Saxon lyrical pieces (like the Ruin & the Exile).
24. Dante.
25. Chaucer.
26. Piers Plowman.
***27.** Nibelungennot.
***28.** The Danish and Scotch-English
29. Border Ballads.
30. Omar Khayyam (though I don't know how much the charm of this lovely poem is due to Fitz-Gerald, the translator).
31. Other Arab and Persian poetry.
32. Renard the Fox.
33. A few of the best rhymed romances.

Mediaeval poetry. I am sorry to say that I can only read even old German with great difficulty and labour; so I miss much good mediaeval poetry —Hans Sachs, for instance.

***34.** The Morte d'Arthur (Mallory's). I know this is an ill-digested collection of fragments, but some of the best of the books it is made from (Lancelot is the best of them) are so long & so cumbered with unnecessary matter that one is thankful to Mallory after all.
***35.** The Thousand & One Nights.
36. Boccaccio's Decameron.
37. The Mabinogion.

Mediaeval story-books.

38. Shakespeare.
39. Blake (the part of him which a mortal can understand).
40. Coleridge.
41. Shelley.
42. Keats.

Modern poets. I omit those of this generation whether dead or alive. Goethe & Heine I cannot read, since I don't know German & they cannot be translated. I hope I shall escape boycotting at the hands of

43. Byron.	my countrymen for leaving out Milton; but the union in his work of cold classicalism with Puritanism (the two things which I hate most in the world) repels me so that I *cannot* read him.
44 Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. 45 Defoe: Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton, Voyage Round the World. 46 Scott's novels (except the one or two which he wrote when he was hardly alive. 47. Dumas the Elder (his good novels). 48. Victor Hugo (his novels). 49. Dickens. 50. George Borrow (Lavengro, & Romany Rye). 51. Sir Thomas More's Utopia.	Modern fiction. I should like to say here that I yield to no one, not even Ruskin, in my love and admiration for Scott: also that to my mind of the novelists of our generation Dickens is immeasurably ahead.
52. Ruskin's works (especially the ethical and politico-economical parts of them). 53. Thomas Carlyle's works. 54. Grimm's Teutonic Mythology.	I don't know how to class these works.

Though this last book is of the nature of the "tools" above-mentioned, it is so crammed with the material for imagination, & has in itself such a flavour of imagination, that I feel bound to put it down. I should note that I have by no means intended to put down these books in their order of merit or importance, even in their own divisions.

To Edward Burne-Jones [1] February 1886

Many thanks, my dear Ned, for your anxiety, but lay it aside for the present. I shall not shove myself into assemblies that are likely to turn into riots; and for the rest I don't think that the Government

[1] From Mackail, ii. 155. This letter, in reply to an anxious one from Burne-Jones, refers to the rioting on 'Black Monday', 8 February, described at length in the letter to John Carruthcrs of 25 March, 1886.

will be such doited fools as to attack mere *opinion.* If they do, all liberal-minded persons will be on our side and they will be ignominiously beaten. At the worst as far as I am concerned it cannot come to much more than a mere joke of a Police Court case; and that not till the summer. I think the present excitement (it is little more) will die out; or rather be flattened out into a sort of dull discontent favourable to our propaganda, but not likely to lead people into mere aimless rioting. So I am not a bit anxious about myself. My mind is quite made up as to my position; I daresay you would not agree with me as to my views on that matter, but you would have to admit that I was right, judging the thing from my starting point, namely that I am impelled to take action of some sort.

I will talk of this matter when we meet: meantime, old chap, I send my best love to you for troubling about me.

I wish I were not so damned old. If I were but twenty years younger. But then you know there would be the Female complication somewhere. Best as it is after all.

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] February 1886

I have often thought that we should be overtaken by the course of events—overtaken unprepared I mean. It will happen again and again: and some of us will cut sorry figures in the confusion. I myself shall be glad when this ferment sinks down again. Things industrial are bad—I wish they would better: their doing so would not interfere with our propaganda, and would give us some chance of getting at working men with intelligence and some share of leisure. Yet if that will not come about, and the dominating classes *will* push revolution on us, let it be! the upshot must be good in the end. If you had only suffered as I have from the apathy of the English lower classes (woe's me how low!) you would rejoice at their awakening, however ugly the forms it took. As to my capacity for leadership in this turmoil, believe me, I feel as humble as could be wished; yet after all it is my life, and the work of it, and I must do my best.

To F. S. Ellis[2] February 1886

The Odyssey is to my mind much the most interesting of the two, but I may do the Iliad afterwards. It is hard work, much more so than the Virgil, owing to the great simplicity of the original, which

[1] From Mackail, ii. 155-6. [2] From Mackail, ii. 165.

never has a redundant word in it, or a word without a meaning: however it is very pleasant work. . . .

Kelmscott House, Hammersmith
To John Carruthers 25 March [1886]

I am ashamed of not having written to you before; but there did never seem to be a day when it was possible, till at last your letter has compelled me. Well I think the times have been eventful since you left: ist there was the general election the results of which of course you know in general. As to us of the League the election rather flattened us down: people could only see two parties while it lasted, and would not listen to us at all: our meetings fell off, and in fact we were in a poor way. But the Federation had much more to do with them, and Hyndman got into a mess, as I was sure he would.

John Burns stood for Nottingham: his candidature was genuine, and though he had no chance of being elected he had a chance of making a good fight of it. Well in the midst of this a go-between offered Champion money from the Tories to put up candidates in two places at least: the same were of course only to 'make running' for the Tory candidates. Hyndman couldn't resist this and so J. E. Williams stood for Hampstead and Fielding for Bermondsey (I think it was) and moreover there was a Federationist named Parker standing for Hackney: none of these men had the faintest chance; but Hyndman seems to have lost his head and committed the folly on the strength of this help of going to Chamberlain and threatening him with Socialist opposition to the Liberal Candidates (John Bright of Birmingham amidst others) if he Ch: did not promise to support an eight hours bill in the forthcoming house. Well of course Chamberlain showed him the door; also the whole thing got about and offended the Radicals mortally, and injured such chances as Burns had at Nottingham. Moreover many of the members of the S.D.F. were much displeased, as the whole transaction had been done over their heads. The result was that Burns was badly beaten at Nottingham, got about 560 votes, and the others were absurdly beaten, only polling some 50 votes amidst the tee-hees of the Bourgeois press. The Socialists generally were much discredited, and there has been a split in the Federation, some of the branches remaining independent, one joining us, and some members setting up a new organization under the name of the Socialist Union: which latter I don't think will do much.

Meantime, as you probably know, the distress in this country has gone on increasing, till at last it has been recognized by the 'authorities,' Making demands for State work for the unemployed was always a cheval de bataille for the S.D.F. and after the split they went into this matter with special ardour, partly no doubt to try to recover the ground they had lost by this election intrigue: a few days before Feb. 8th they had an excited meeting at Holborn Town Hall where it was determined to meet again and take fresh action. For amidst all this a set of discredited 10th rate politicians had been (backed up by Tory money) busy in making capital for the so-called Fair Traders out of this unemployed business: they called a meeting for Feb. 8th to Trafalgar Square and the S.D.F. determined to try to take the meeting from them: we determined to take no part officially in what seemed likely to be a mere faction fight; though many of our members went there. The meeting came off, and was very big, the people were clearly very much excited: the S.D.F. completely beat the Fair Traders, and Hyndman, Williams and (specially Burns) spoke in their usual way—not over wisely I fear. One or two of our people also spoke. As far as the speeches went they were (as I hear, for I wasn't there) of the usual type. However the result was widely different from the usual one—nothing to wit: Burns and the others led the mob up to Hyde Park, doubtless meaning nothing more than an ordinary demonstration by it: all went well till they got to the Carlton, where they stopped to hoot, and where some fools in the windows fell to jeering [at] them: this led to stoning the windows, and the crowd got quite unmanageable and in Piccadilly they turned out two or 3 shops. Well they got up to Hyde Park where the others including Champion addressed them again, bade them go home quietly and so forth. There some of the crowd behaved very ill frightening old ladies upsetting carriages and the like, but the more part seem to have listened quietly. And so the Socialist leaders went home. But meantime a return wave of the crowd went back from Hyde Park down Audley Street where they broke nearly all the windows and so into Oxford Street where they sacked several shops (as also in Audley St) and broke much plate-glass (my own, 449, only escaping by about a minute). Well this was all the rioting but the next day and the next, foggy dreary weather by the way, the shopkeepers and others had a regular panic, and behaved as though London were on the point of being carried by storm: nothing can be conceived more absurd than their cowardice: all sorts of 'shaves' fly-

ing about, and the police bidding people in King Street, Hammersmith, to put up their shutters: people at Kilburn even shutting up. The only foundation for this was that no doubt the East End was excited and if it had been anybody's business to do so a dozen eager resolute men could have got up a very serious riot: as it was people were far more frightened than hurt. The next Sunday the S.D.F. held a very orderly meeting in Hyde Park attended by 50 to 60 thousand people. But the police behaved very ill and did their best to get up a row, the mounted ones charging the people who were there merely as spectators. Next act was the arrest of the leaders and after a wearisome time before the Bow Street magistrate in which I assisted as bail for Burns and Williams (Bax bailing Champion, and Joseph Cowen, Hyndman) they were committed for trial which comes off on April 5 th. Burns and Hyndman will I think be cast, Champion probably not and Williams certainly not.

Well this matter has rather drawn us and the Federation together, though some of us hardly approve of their defending themselves by law quibbles.

For the rest, contemptible as the riot was, as a riot, it no doubt has had a great effect, both here and on the continent: in fact the surprise of people in finding that the British workman will not stand everything is extreme. As for the League we are out of it at present: but the times seem to me both helpful and rough; I fancy there will be another attempt on our meetings this summer and I rather expect to learn one more new craft—oakum-picking to wit, though I assure you I don't want to—far from it.

The League itself is going on pretty well; our Branch is much livelier than it was and our meetings have been well attended through the winter.

We are going to make the rash venture of publishing the *Commonweal.* I cannot say that I am sanguine as to its success as a selling paper, though I think we shall make it a good one. However our people would have it, and it will certainly wake them up a bit. On March 18th we had a meeting in Commemoration of the Commune at South Place: that was a great success, the place crowded. Kropotkine new come from prison spoke, and I made his acquaintance there: I like him very much: had a long talk with him yesterday evening at a gathering of the S.D.F. So you see as far as meeting goes the old quarrel is patched up.

I have been about and about lecturing: and am going to Dublin

in a fortnight. The Irish matter is hanging in the wind by the by very queerly: our Statesmen fairly don't know what to do: would be so glad to be able to say yes and no at the same time. As for Socialism I must say that in spite of all faults and follies of the *party* I am encouraged about the *movement:* the dry bones are certainly stirring: I wish only I was more able in dealing with men; I am fit for little but looking on. I will see that you have the *Commonweal;* I will send it on from October. Kind regards to Miss Carruthers from myself and May. Having once written I believe I shall write again: and also I shall be glad to know how you are getting on: so ask any questions that occur to you.

Kelmscott House
To Mrs William Morris 3 April 1886

We had a very crowded meeting here on Sunday. I am going to Croydon to-morrow. Murray is in town, come back to Graham's sale: I saw him at Charing Cross the other day. I go to Dublin on Thursday evening. I see people are making a great fuss about Walker's pictures: I don't *much* sympathize, but the one that they have bought for the National Gallery is the best he did. Ned's and Gabriel's are to be sold to-day. Millais's Vale of Rest fetched a long price: but at any rate 'tis worth a cartload of the wretched daubs he turns out now. . . .

Ashby, Rathmines
Co. Dublin
To Jane Alice Morris 9 April [1886]

Got here all right this morning not sick, the night not particularly rough but when I got up at 5.30 A.M. very cold, blew my spectacles off, though I got them again; the clouds were rising off the Wicklow mountains, & the sun presently began to shine from under; the sea deep green with plenty of 'white horses'. I have not much to tell you: only that people here are in great excitement about the Home Rule business: when we got to Kingston we found that the news was there before us, Gladstone's speech all in full in the Irish papers. It was as I supposed it would be—a piece of constitution making of the most ingenious kind.

The place here about is not unpleasant, looks over towards Wicklow & the pleasant hills. I am mortal sleepy as I did not sleep much last night & have been walking about all day so you must excuse a

long letter. ... I forgot to say that 6 or 7 members of the branch met me with much (too sleepy to spell) fidelity at 7 o'clock this morning.[1]

Kelmscott House
To Mrs William Morris 15 April 1886

I came back from the Irishry all safe last night, but I am off to Leeds and Bradford on Saturday and shall not be back thence till Tuesday: after that, peace as far as travelling is concerned till the end of June. I had a good passage back, and did 50 lines of Homer on the boat. Dublin on the whole I rather like: there is a sort of cosy shabbiness about it which, joined to the clear air, is pleasant. The last meeting on the Tuesday evening was peaceful and even enthusiastic. The day I had spent up among the Wicklow mountains, and found it very beautiful. On whatever other points the Irishry are wild, they are quite cool, sensible, and determined on the Home Rule question. I met some very agreeable middle-classers there and had much talk—far too much in fact; I doubt if there is an iron pot in Dublin with a leg on it by this time.

I was very glad to get home and am very loth to leave it I can tell you. However, the wine is drawn and must be drunk. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
T. J. Bruce Glasier 24 April [1886]

Thanks for your note. Perhaps an extra lecture or lectures could be managed on my return from Dundee, which is the last place where I give my lecture for those folk. See how it can be done and make proposals; as the Ind. Rem. people *pay* me, it would be well to use the occasion.

As to your letter *re* Bax, I am not quite sure that it would be wise to put it in as it would be cutting the dam of the waters of controversy, since, of course, Bax must be allowed to reply. I will consult with him next Wednesday, and do you please consider the matter yourself. The letter is well written and there is of course much reason in it, but on the whole I agree with Bax. The religion-education-family question is a difficult one, if one looks at it from the point of view of transitional Socialism, and we might, I think (not

[1] Morris went to Ireland to lecture to the Dublin branch of the S.D.F.

agreeing with Bax here) be content to let it alone in that stage. But when Socialism is complete the new economics will have transformed the *family,* and this will clear up the difficulty; nor do I believe there will be any necessity for using compulsion towards rational education. Meantime we must be clear about one thing, that, in opposition to the present bourgeois view, we hold that children *axe persons,* not *property,* and so have a right to claim all the advantages which the community provides for every citizen. Again, as to the woman matter, it seems to me that there is more to be said on Bax's side than you suppose. For my part, being a male man, I naturally think more of the female man than I do of my own sex; but you must not forget that child-bearing makes women inferior to men, since a certain time of their lives they must be dependent on them. Of course we must claim absolute equality of condition between women and men, as between other groups, but it would be poor economy setting women to do men's work (as unluckily they often do now) or *vice versa.*

However, this is rambling. I hope you will do all you can to push *Commonweal,* and have a little patience if it is not all you could desire at first. I think the May ist number will be a good one. *Notes* especially of Labour questions are much looked for from the branches; we want to keep alongside the times as much as possible.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 21 May 1886

. . . The meeting (my lecture here) was not well-attended but it went off otherwise well. I worked hard with Bax all Tuesday and laid the foundations of another article. Fancy, by the way, Bax has a brother! Our Bax brought me with some pride a paper by him on the accounts of a yeoman ancestor of the Bax in Surrey. Fancy Bax with ancestors! Now I am so hard-driven for news that I must tell you a dream of last night: to wit that we were all together in the High-street near the end of River Court Road, and watching shooting stars which were red & green & yellow like the lights on the new Hammersmith bridge, when all at once one fell to earth in the middle of the road and we all bolted for fear it should burst like a shell; taking it rather coldly though: why the deuce should one dream such nonsense?[1] Mother seems better: the weather is so delightful now

[1] This dream would seem to show that Morris was afraid of his own idealism coming down to earth: i.e. that Socialism might be realised in his time and prove dangerous to himself and his family.

that I daresay it does her good. You won't forget will you dear to write to our granny on her birthday, that's Monday next. . . .

To Jane Alice Morris 2 June 1886

(Yes I was going to spell it with a G) I have perhaps more news for you than you for me: but I have scant time to write it in as I am just off to Merton to lecture. Such a knockabout as I had on Monday! I saw in the Daily News that our men had been 'run in' at Stratford, and expected what followed: namely that as soon as I got home I had to go off to West Ham Police Court (which is the Lord knows where) and see about cash for paying their fines; for we foolishly let too many men be run in, so that though the fines were small, it came to £5-175. in all. I dined luxuriously off 2 Abernethy biscuits, but on the top of a tram, which was rather nice. ... I am very busy lecturing all this week, and have plenty of regrets for the rest of Kelmscott and your dear company: but what will you? It is part of the day's work, and it would be wrong of me to shirk it wouldn't it my dear? . . . This is a very shabby note for you, my Jenny, but you know how busy I am. Thank you my dear for writing to your 'old Proossian Blue'. . . .

Kelmscott House

To Jane Alice Morris 5 June [1886]

I write my little scrap just to send love, my dear: and as for stories I have none to tell you. Tis all meeting and lecture, lecture & meeting with a little writing interspersed. Yesterday though I had a business with Rev[d] Furmthorpe at that training college at Chelsea, and I think I shall be able to persuade him to have some of that pretty raised gold-work which Kate Faulkner does so well. Such a job as it was to get to Merton afterwards! I think the Chelsea-ites must suppose that nobody w[r]ho comes there can ever want to go away again. However I got a tram car on the other side of Pimlico bridge and had a long ride to Clapham Junction for a penny though was some time over it. . . .

A lady who came on Thursday with Mrs Rodney, Isabella's friend, sent us yesterday a lot of peonies, single ones of various kinds very handsome: they are Chinese flowers & look just like the flowers on their embroideries. . . .

I am (if you will permit it) your old Prooshian Blue (only 'tis Indigo)

W.M.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 15 June [1886]

There is a good deal to tell you about since I wrote last: Though I forget if I told you how I went to speak on the disputed place at Stratford on Saturday week. Well I went there rather expecting the police 'to run me in' in which case I should have been fined on the following Monday after a wearisome morning. However the meeting was so orderly that they didn't venture, perhaps all the more as two of the Radicals spoke also; the meeting also was somewhat short. Last Saturday however they did 'run in' Mowbray and fined him 20s. and costs yesterday, which seems to me absurd; I mean to say that they let us alone and got him. We are not going to give it up however yet, but shall try to get the Radicals to go into it heartily, as *really* an ordinary meeting makes no obstruction at all. In any case I shall go on the Scotch journey of which I told you, and shall be away for a week. As to my coming to see you my darling, if I possibly can this week I will; though it will have to be but a short visit, and I cannot tell till the last moment if I can come; it would be on Friday if I can come.

As to other events we had our conference on Saturday; all day long it lasted; May and I getting home about 11.30 p.m. Bax, Mahon and poor little Mr Henderson slept here. It was rather a weary job that conference,and as I was not a delegate I had not got to speak; though that was after all rather a blessing, as the main subject in dispute was the alteration of the constitution—not of the British Empire but of the League. However all went well; the alterers were defeated and bore their defeat with good temper; but I am very glad that there is a respite of a year before we have another. Yesterday (Monday) we had our outing and I rather enjoyed it, though we did not distinguish ourselves by much organization in it wandering about rather aimlessly: also the day was not brilliant as in the afternoon there was a sort of cloudy drizzle on the hills: yet we escaped a good ducking. The place Boxhill is really beautiful, with a famous box wood at the top: you and I must go there when you are back in London. We finished off in Dorking not however at the Markis of Granby, but the Wheatsheaf where we had tea, beer, singing and recitation. I regret to state that in the town generally we were taken for a detachment of the Salvation Army. In fact Dorking is a very quiet place, I don't suppose they have yet heard the word Socialist.

May & I both agreed that Dorking was just like what one expected. I forgot to say by the way, that though I didn't speak at Stratford on Saturday I did do so at Hyde Park near the Marble Arch. I was quite nervous about it, I don't know why: because when I was speaking at Stratford I was not nervous at all though I expected the Police to attack us, at Hyde Park we had a very quiet and rather good audience and sold 4 quires of *Commonweal:* and I spoke twice, the second time not at all nervously. As to the Bill,[1] my dear, we expected it to be defeated though not by so large a majority. The question now is what the country will say about it. Again I expect Gladstone will be beaten, though this time he ought not to be as he is in the right. I thought his last manifesto (of yesterday) was good and straightforward: There will be all sorts of trouble if the Home Rule matter is not soon settled. I am rather enjoying myself to-day after the last two days excitement in being quietly at home on a nice fair fresh day though I am obliged to work very hard.

I forgot to tell you that on last Friday I went to the Fabian Conference and read a paper there called *Whigs, Democrats and Socialists,* which was very well received: the place was very full, South Place Chapel it was.

Now I think that is really all the news: I laughed about the Bishop [who] was humanized by the coaly ride. Good-bye my dear here are kisses for you. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To Jane Alice Morris 14 August 1886

I have just time to write you a little letter before post-time after wrestling with the 'copy' for *Commonweal.* May and I were in the court all day yesterday, and a sorry exhibition it was, except for our comrade Mainwaring's speech which was very good: in fact I wab proud of his bearing altogether. The Judge was abhominable, really a kind of Judge Jeffries the younger. You would have thought that our friends had at least committed a murder under aggravated circumstances so bitter an advocate he was against them. They were sentenced to pay *£20* each or else two months: and besides that to be bound over with one surety each to keep the peace for *12* months: that means that if they can't find a surety, or if they get hauled up for

[1] **Gladstone's first Irish Home Rule Bill.**

obstruction again, they will have an extra 12 months prison—and all this for what no reasonable man can call even the smallest crime. It is too disgraceful: being working-men they cannot themselves pay so heavy a fine, and though we could find the money I don't think either of them would agree to that. It is a pity that Dickens wasn't alive & there to touch up the little blackguard of a judge, for that is what he is. However, as I told some of our lads yesterday, they mustn't grumble, as all this is the why & the wherefore of their being Socialists. I am glad that you have had such a good time down there my darling. I was so happy to think of you enjoying yourself among the autumn fields & hedges. . . .

To Jane Alice Morris August 1886

I had a brisk day yesterday, though tell your mother, no policeman's hand touched my sacred collar. I went from the Grange to Walham Green where we had a good little meeting attentive and peaceable, back then to Grange & dinner and then away Eastward Ho to Victoria Park rather sulky at having to turn out so soon after dinner. Though Victoria Park is rather a pretty place with water (dirty though) and lots of trees. Had a good meeting there also spoke for nearly an hour altogether in a place made noisy by other meetings near, also a band not far off. Whereby I was somewhat hoarse for our evening lecture which was Shaw's not mine, and very good. . . .

The garden looks nice and smells so now the N wind no longer blows across—not Araby the blest, but Brickfields the t'othered. I have been hard at work all day long at an article. Did another & lots of Homer all Saturday. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith

To Andreas Scheu 20 August 1886

Won't you come and see a fellow on Sunday? I want to ask you a question about your Austrian business in '71. Also to get something out of you for *Commonweal.* And the mulberries are getting quite ripe: and I haven't seen you for a deuce of a time. I shall be by myself however unless Shaw comes in from the speaking station. Won't you come to early dinner which will not be very early as I am speaking at Walham Green and don't get back till after 1.30. Do come.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 26 August **1886**

What I want for the article is a word or two as to the Vienna affair in '71 in which you were a part: it is for our (Bax and me) next article for *Commonweal.* As to your contribution whether I am an anarchist or not (which I'm not by the way) I fear I am a bad Editor, or rather I know I am. Besides the idea of *my ordering you* about is rather too funny. Would you like to give us some of your experiences with those weaver lads you once told me about? Besides I will talk it over with Bax and ask his advice, and then I will give my order to you.

I think I shall be out of town next Sunday, and perhaps the next one too; for I want a few days' holiday badly: are you never to be got at on a weekday? Never was at Wolverhampton, and don't want to go there. Was at Malvern a long time ago: but have still a memory of how beautiful and inviting it was looking towards Herefordshire. But I suppose Villadom has much polluted the near landscape. Let me hear from you at any rate, and then I will write again, am hurried now this afternoon.

To William Bell Scott[1] September 1886

I am of course much more from pillar to post since I have taken to the pernicious practice of what may be called professional agitation, professional though unpaid, except by general loss of reputation, which however is of no importance, and by no means balances on the wrong side the pleasure on the right side of being engaged in an important movement. Things seem to us more and more tending to a great change, though no doubt it will take time, and also there is a great expenditure of patience necessary to meet all the petty worries that encumber the progress of even great movements. I am also at work, as perhaps you have heard, at translating the Odyssey: this is very amusing: and a great rest from the other work: I am in the middle of the 9th book now. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[2] September 1886

I amused myself partly with Homer (no lines) and partly with reading a new book which is very interesting, Russian Epic Songs to wit. The smoke hung low on Edinburgh, so that the mountains looked like strong outlines against the sky, and the ugly detail of the

[1] From Mackail, ii. 166. [2] From Mackail, ii. 167-8.

houses was a good deal hidden: so that there was something very fine about the whole view from Castle Hill, to which I wandered before getting into the church where our window is. Our window is fine, and looks a queer contrast with its glittering jewel-like colour to the daubs about it. There is no station hotel at Edinburgh, so I had to make a shot at one, and it was a bad one too; dull and not over clean. It was quite respectable however, although its dulness was relieved by a sudden fight between the head waiter and a quarrelsome gentleman more or less in liquor. The waiter got the best of it and quite deserved to do so, as far as I could see. It was a curious piece of drama to note the attempts of the quarrelsome gentleman to get away with some kind of dignity, while his old antagonist, become the polite waiter again, brushed past him taking other people's orders. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 13 October [1886]

I am very busy with running about to one place or another; so this is only a line to let you know that I am alive & well. I came back from Norwich yesterday on a wet afternoon, though autumn fashion, it was beautiful in the morning. We had a very good meeting at Norwich in spite of there being a great flight of black birds (the Congregational Union) on hand that evening; amongst whom I tumbled indeed going down in the train. But our meeting was almost entirely working men.

I am a good deal about this week as I lecture two nights, besides Monday next at Reading.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
To J. L. Joynes [1] 16 October [1886]

I will print your poem in C. *[Commonweal]* and thank you for it. It is very direct and straightforward and nicely written: I am a bad critic; but I fare to feel that the lover was rather a duffer to give in so soon and could have had but a very slender acquaintance with the ways of womankind. However don't take my criticism seriously, no one does. I shall be glad to see you when you can come up here, but shall be away Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this coming week. Couldn't you come up to-morrow if you get this in time?

[1] **From May Morris. *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* ii. 171-2.**

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 29 October 1886

I am afraid I am too much tossed about by doing many things to have much head for writing a long letter to you my darling; but I will write a few words. I find I cannot come this week; indeed I don't think you or your mother expected me to come. I go to Lancaster on Tuesday & am at Preston on Wednesday: back again on Thursday and if I possibly can I will come down on Friday evening or Saturday morning, but must be in town again in time for the meeting on Monday. A beautiful bright morning & quite warm to-day. I felt almost inclined to walk to Merton, but am afraid I can't spare the time. I have finished the 10th Book of Odyssey now & shall certainly do 12 books before the year is out. It really would be rather convenient to me to have a little gout in order to do some literary work. I am going to start getting my *Pilgrims of Hope* in order, so as to make a book of it: I shall add and alter a good deal though. . . .

To the Editor, The Pall Mall Gazette 1 November 1886

ENGLISH LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITIES

I expect I shall be in a minority among those who answer your letter as to the proposed Professorship of English Literature, for I think the Universities had better let it alone. Those disasters the Slade Professorships of Art ought to warn them off establishing chairs whose occupiers would have necessarily to deal vaguely with great subjects; and that all the more as the Slade Professors chosen have been the best that offered, one a man of genius, and the rest men of talent. Need I mention that queer absurdity the Oxford Chair of Poetry as a further warning? As to the Merton Professorship, which you mention in our note. I think the University did all it could in the matter, because philology can be taught, but 'English Literature' cannot. Neither can I admit that there is any analogy between the proposed study of English Literature and the way that the Universities have dealt with the classics: their study implies that of the language and history of civilized antiquity: they are not taught as literature, nor criticized as literature, at any rate. If the function of the proposed chair were to be, or could be, the historical evolution of English literature, including, of course, the English language, it might be well enough; but I do not think that this is intended, judging by the outcry raised about the filling of the Merton Professor-

ship. I fear that most professors would begin English Literature with Shakespeare, not with Beowulf. What *is* intended it seems to me is a chair of *Criticism:* and against the establishment of such a chair I protest emphatically. For the result would be merely vague talk about literature, which would teach nothing. Each succeeding professor would strive to outdo his predecessor in 'originality' on subjects whereon nothing original remains to be said. Hyper-refinement and paradox would be the order of the day, and the younger students would be confused by the literary polemics which would be sure to flourish round such a Chair; and all this would have the seal of authority set upon it, and probably would not seldom be illustrated by some personal squabble like the one which your note mentions. Pray, Sir, change your mind and do your best to deliver us from two (or more) Professors of Criticism.

I might suggest as a compromise, however, that the Professor of Poetry might have his position made a thought less ridiculous by his subject being extended so as to embrace the whole of English Literature—but I'm not sure. Or, if a new professorship is wanted, might not a humble one of mediaeval archaeology be established, with the definite object of teaching the dons the value of the buildings of which they ought to be the guardians? In the thirty years during which I have known Oxford more damage has been done to art (and therefore to literature) by Oxford 'culture' than centuries of professors could repair—for, indeed, it is irreparable. These coarse brutalities of 'light and leading' make education stink in the nostrils of thoughtful persons, and *(pace* Dr Lombroso) are more likely than is Socialism to drive some of us mad. But I must not end with a joke: so, as a last word, I say that to attempt to teach literature with one hand while it destroys history with the other is a bewildering proceeding on the part of'culture,'

To Bruce Glasier 1 December 1886

Many thanks for your long, interesting, and hopeful letter. I was well pleased with all you had to tell me, except that you had been ill and were out of work. I suppose you will think I am teaching, if not my grandmother, yet at least my grandson, to suck eggs, when I say that it is most important that you should get more fuglemen. It seems to me that it would be good winter work for you to 'mutually improve' each other in Socialism and in public speaking. At Ham-

mersmith we are having a class on Sundays to bring out young speakers, and try to cure them of 'stage-fever,' and their wrigglements to avoid speaking are amusing. I am much pleased to hear your views as to the parliamentary side of things; all the more as, to say the truth, up here we are having some trouble with some of our friends on that point. I think needlessly, because, after all, they have no more wish than the others to push the League into electioneering.

Yes, I did say that to Kropotkin; but I did not mean that at some time or other it might not be necessary for Socialists to go into Parliament in order to break it up; but again, that could only be when we are very much more advanced than we are now; in short, on the verge of a revolution; so that we might either capture the army, or shake their confidence in the legality of their position.

At present it is not worth while even thinking of that, and our sole business is to make Socialists. I really feel sickened at the idea of all the intrigue and degradation of concession which would be necessary to us as a parliamentary party, nor do I see any necessity for a revolutionary party doing any 'dirty work' at all, or soiling ourselves with anything that would unfit us for being due citizens of the new order of things. As for the S.D.F., if their leaders really believe in the usefulness of the measures they are putting forward, let them go on; but if they do not believe, they are playing a dangerous game. And in any case their present successes are won at the expense of withdrawing real Socialism from view in favour of mere palliation and 'reform,'

For the rest, I think it is a mistake to play at revolt; it is but poor propaganda to behave like a dog sniffing at a red-hot poker, and being obliged to draw his nose back in a hurry for fear of being burnt. As to Hyndman's patronage of me, I am proud enough to be humble, and am glad not to be put down as an enemy by any section of Socialists; but as to what he says about the League in London, that be damned! As a party of principle, we are not likely to number ab many members as an opportunist body; but we have several solid and increasing branches here. A good South London branch has lately been formed; we Hammersmith chaps have formed a Fulham one now flourishing; Hackney is not bad; Hoxton is good; Mile End is being reorganized; North London is much improved; Bloomsbury is very much so; Mitcham has been set on its legs by Kltz; Croydon is sound, though somewhat sleepy. Of course we ought to do much more, but we are suffering from the lack of energetic initiative

men who are not overburdened with work and responsibilities. It is true that we have far too much bickering over our Central Council work; but I feel sure that the branches will take care that we shall not spoil all by that, if we haven't the sense to do so ourselves, which, however, I think we shall do. I mention this as you will possibly have heard exaggerated reports of it, from S.D.F. people or otherwise. I don't suppose that any body of men can be quite free from such troubles. I know that S.D.F. is not, in spite of all their being bossed by three or four men.

As to Edinburgh, it would appear that they know more of my movements than I do myself; but I suppose I must assume that they have the gift of prophecy, and go north in March next; all the more as I want to visit Lancaster again, where something is to be done, I hope. So of course I will come to Glasgow that while.

By the way, what about this lock-out and strike in Dundee? Can any of our friends do anything there? As to my pars on Salisbury and Churchill, you must remember, 1st, that I make them stalking-horses for bringing Constitutionalism into contempt; 2nd, that in London there are people inclined towards Socialism who haven't got as far as Radicalism yet, and think Tory Democracy might help them, save the mark!—but I will mend, I will mend.

With fraternal greetings and best wishes all round.

To the Editor, The Pall Mall Gazette 15 December 1886

In common, I suppose, with other lecturers, I have sometimes suffered from misrepresentations of my lectures in the brief abstracts of them that appear in the newspapers, but have not hitherto troubled myself to make any explanation, because such reports have not hitherto made me say exactly the reverse of what I did say. The gentleman, however, who reported my lecture of last Sunday to you has achieved this feat, therefore I am compelled to ask you to be so good as to allow me to make a short statement, lest my friends should think (after making all allowances for such reports) that I have gone mad.[1] Your reporter makes me say of the Germanic tribes who invaded these islands 'that the civilization they spread was commercial, and their chief characteristic therefore was vulgarity.' Sir,

[1] **'England As It Was, As It Is, And As It May Be', delivered at Kelmscott House and reported in *The Pall Mall Gazette* 13 December, 1886. In the course of this lecture Morris said: 'With the first Roman invasion came also the great tax-gathering machine called civilization', whereas the society that produced *Beowulf* breathes the very spirit of courageous freedom . . . . Indeed the style [of Beowulf] is so clear and vigorous that it is plain the people really believed that the life they were living was a continuous poem.'**

as I write these words I cannot help picturing myself as present among the audience at a lecture where such a statement was made, and I really dare not tell you what I imagine my conduct would be on such an occasion. In the passage which the reporter seems to be alluding to I was cautioning the audience against the common error of making a parallel between the so-called pioneers of progress on the outskirts of modern civilization and the fierce, rough men of barbarous or heroic times; I pointed out (I think distinctly) that the former were commercial and individualistic, and that their chief characteristic was vulgarity, so that they could be easily varnished into gentlemen; whereas the latter had an elevated literature founded on the ideas of the dignity of life which naturally spring from the consciousness of belonging to a corporation of freemen, and the responsibilities which the position involves. I ask you, Sir, to excuse me for troubling you, but the wide circulation of the *Pall Mall Ga{ette,* the prominent place you were kind enough to give the report, and I think I may add the interest attaching to an historical lecture delivered by a Socialist in a lecture-room belonging to a Socialist body, make it necessary for me to defend myself by this explanation.

Hammersmith

To Jane Alice Morris [Feb.-March 1887]

... I will try to gather my scattered senses by telling you a joke which Margery told me on Sunday—to wit—Jowett[1] was asked to meet the two Miss Jex Blakes to tea or something such-like, and went; they are very learned ladies, and when they got hold of him they talked up & they talked down, on the most abstruse subjects, so that the poor man, who is himself a great talker, could not get in a word edgeways: so when he was asked afterwards how he had enjoyed his evening he said: 'Well I have known for long that *lex* was the Latin for *law,* and I now conclude that *Jex* should be the Latin for *jaw.'* A tale I will tell you more tragic: comes me here on Tuesday one of our Oxford St chaps, and says will I go call on a lady near Hans Place about some decoration, so yesterday I go—grumbling—but thinking like John Gilpin about the loss of pence: and coming to Hans Place find it a very architectooralooral region: knock at the door and am shown into the drawing-room, when enter to me a lady, who after a very short preamble requests me to look at some decoiat-

[1] Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), the Master of Balliol.

ing that *she was doing* in the poker-style you know: burning the pattern in: and with a view to my helping her to a sale of these articles—her husband by the by being a swell in the War Office. My dear the impudence of women is great, ask your Mama if she don't think so. Moreover I was too much amused, and also flabbergasted to walk out of her house without a word, so I had to finish my morning call with great gravity; a morning call for which I can't see my way for charging. How May did laugh at me when I came home! . . .

I am going to entertain Watts[1] & G. B. Shaw at dinner on Sunday. Watts wanted to meet him.

To Bruce Glasier 18 March 1887

. . . Cunninghame Graham is a very queer creature, and I can't easily make him out; he seems ambitious; and has some decent information. I am almost afraid that a man who writes such a preposterous illegible scrawl as he does must have a screw loose in him. We had a fine meeting last night to celebrate the Commune—crowded. Kropotkin spoke in English & very well. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Jane Alice Morris 30 March [1887]

I will just write you a line or two to let you know that I am alive & well. Next letter I shall have more to tell you perhaps, as on Saturday (April 2) I shall be going on my regular Scotch tour, and shall be away for a week, and shall leave Scotland not later than April 9th. It will hardly be worth while writing to me to hit me there, as I shall be about in several places I scarcely know where: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Paisley, Hamilton, Coatbridge—what know I? I shall try to make it as much of an outing as I can and be jolly and free from anxiety: but it will be good hard work.

Boat-race day went off well enough; though I always find some difficulty as to what to do with the guests after the race is over on these daylight occasions. A good many of them would go upon the roof, & sit astride of it: bah! it makes me giddy to think of it.—And O how black their hands were afterwards. Do you see any political news, my dear? The Government have brought in a very ferocious coercion bill against the Irish; and I fear that there will be Vigs on the green' if it is carried. There are to be radical demonstrations

[1] **Theodore Watts-Dunton.**

against it; but I don't know if we shall be allowed to join; as the orthodox Liberals are taking it up.[1] Uncle Ned is a great friend of Balfour, the Irish Secretary, who has charge of this stupidity, and seems to be a very headstrong stiff sort of Tory. Of course Uncle Ned don't agree with him politically. I am sorry poor old Tennyson thought himself bound to write an ode on our fat Vic's Jubilee: have you seen it? It is like Martin Tupper for all the world.

I must tell you, my dear, that I am getting famous or at least notorious in Hammersmith town. The other day opposite the Nazareth a covered green grocer's cart hailed me as Socialist & then as Morris!—I don't think this was meant to be complimentary. Also a week ago as I was going down River Court Road, so a small boy chubby about 7 years old sitting swinging on one of the iron gates, very uncomfortably I should think as they have a sort of cabbage ornaments, sings out to me: Have a ride—Morris!

At these two places I was known: but last Sunday it befel me to go to Victoria Park (beyond Bethnal Green) to a meeting. Now I have mounted a cape or cloak grey in colour so that people doubt whether I be a brigand or a parson: this seemed too picturesque for some 'Arrys' who were passing by and [they] sung out after me, Shakespeare—Yah!

There there! I have been playing twice or thrice with May at backgammon; she plays badly, not to say very badly; yet last night she gammoned me; to both our satisfactions, I think. Homer is not regularly out yet, owing to Strangeway's dilatoriness. But I shall call at my publishers to-morrow and see if I can't get hold of a copy for you my darling. I want him to send it you, as he will pack it better than we should at home.

Well my dearest goodbye for the present, & give my best love to your mother. Goodbye.

Central Station Hotel
Glasgow
To May Morris 4 April [1887]

How do you do? I am in a bad temper this morning as I have just performed a clever trick of losing 2 golden guineas out of my pockets. I don't know how, a thing which will be remembered against me for ever I fear: all the more as the feat appears to have been

[1] The great Hyde Park demonstration against the Irish Coercion Bill at which Wiifitd Blunt spoke. 'But there was a second platform for Morris's section' he noted in *My Diaies*, ' and I saw May Morris on their cart like a French revolutionist going to execution,'

performed in the smoke room last night after standing drinks to the M.P. & Comrades so that the whole hotel will think I was drunk—which I wasn't. This is the only misfortune. I had a very comfortable journey down in a coupe: 2,'6 to the guard ensured my sole holding of it; and my supper was splendid. The morning was beautiful & dawn broke before we got to Shap, so I had a good view of the mountains. A very good meeting last night; the M.P. turned up after all: I also did a little open air in the morning. The Branch seems solid and good. I go to Dundee this afternoon. I shall be back in Glasgow (but not at the hotel, but at Muirhead's) on Wednesday, but I don't know the address; so if you write on Tuesday or Wednesday address 84 John St Glasgow.

Gentles'
69 West Cumberland St
Glasgow

To May Morris *6* April 1887

Thanks for note: here's a go! I have been so bullied to go to Newcastle and speak at the miners' meeting so as not to let the S.D.F. reap where we have sowed that I have given way and shall speak there on Monday if Mahon arranges for it: I don't like the job but it ail comes in the day's work: I will write again when I know more. Meeting at Edinburgh rather poor: Dundee a good audience as to number but not the right thing. I go to Hamilton to-morrow. I feel debauched and holidayfied but must go through with it. Best love dear.

Glasgow
Sunday

To May Morris [10 April 1887]

A line to say that I shall probably get back by Tuesday's day mail train that is about 9 in the evening.

I am well, but feel rather as if I had absconded, and left my family chargeable to the Parish. The other meetings were not very brilliant as to numbers for various reasons; but I think they will be able to do something in Paisley. I spoke in the open air last night among the furnaces at Coatbridge, a ghastly place: we did pretty well there.

I leave Glasgow for Newcastle this evening at 5 p.m. and shall get there at eleven and be met by Mahon.

I am sorry to miss Monday's demonstration, but since I can't be in two places at once I must put up with it.

To Jane Alice Morris Hammersmith
[At Rome] 14 April [1887]

I came back later from Scotland and the north than I had intended; otherwise you would have heard from me before; I found your letter for me on Tuesday evening last, which was a great pleasure to me dear.

Well as to the adventures of a respectable Socialist preacher, they are not very exciting (which is a good job) but they are perhaps of some interest.

I got to Glasgow on Sunday morning April 3 and was very glad of my wash and breakfast. I had to sleep at the Hotel that night Comrade Muirhead not being ready to give me guesting. Well I began operations by helping the ordinary open-air meeting in Jail Square (ominous name) which is just in front of a doleful openish garden called the Green: a meeting much like ours in London a good one of its kind: then we had a meeting of the Branch at their rooms and found them in a solid satisfactory condition: I rather blushed by the way to see my name in such large letters on the walls, as their posters were enormous, the League badge enlarged at the top of them: then in the evening came the lecture: my M.P. really turning up as chairman, which in Scotland requires some courage:[1] the meeting was very good upwards of a thousand people though they had to pay. The lecture was new, I was in good condition and the audience was very hearty and took up the points well, and we carried the Socialist resolution easily. Next day to Dundee under the wing of a parson turned out of the church for not believing in damnation, and who has set up for himself. A good audience as to numbers—but more or less the parson's congregation: also I was only part of the entertainment; music (which if it had been good I should not have objected to) being part of it also: however I was on my metal & got a good deal into my 40 minutes speech. So across the water of Tay to parson's house: an architect went with us who much belied his name of 'Stark' but I forgive [him] for the admiration he expressed of Brampton church,[2] which he had stumbled across. I forgot to say that young Steggall made a speech, & not a bad one. Next morning it snowed heavily for 3 hours, but I was not snowed up as I expected to be: the place on the water side looking on Dundee and

[1] **He was R. B. Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936), author, traveller, politician, M.P. North Lanarkshire, 1886-92.**
[2] **Brampton, Cumberland, built by Philip Webb and decorated by Morris & Co.**

its 'Law' or hill was very beautiful. So to Edinburgh with a nice innocent comrade of that branch 'Gilray' who dropped in upon me the day before: You know one has about 20 minutes sea from Fife across the firth to Granton, whence of old time I set sail for Iceland. I stayed with Glasse at Edinburgh and had a meeting in the evening (Tuesday 5 th) not very well attended, but interesting because it seems the audience was a new one, and a good [deal] hostile so that Glasse was afraid of putting our resolution, which however we carried after a rather stormy debate, owing to the stupidity of a cut and dried opponent one Job Bone, who always opposes everything and is known in Edinburgh as the 'Bone of Contention'. Well next day I went to Glasgow again; only I stopped at Linlithgow on the way, where there is the 15 th century palace, a ruin, but nearly complete on the border of a little lake, and a fine church the nave quite untouched, the choir made very ugly by the presbyterian fittings, and stupid by a feeble attempt at restoration. Then in the evening was a party of the Branch rather slow; our Scotch friends not being very good at that sort of thing they are so shy. The next day (Thursday) I went to Hamilton the heart of the coalmining district; the poor miners have just gone in again there, and are very depressed and wretched and our meeting was but a small one (it would have been better in the open air) but whatever was there was heartily on our side: except a drunken man in the gallery who persisted in taking me for Mr Mason his M.P. and quarrelling with me on some political subject to which I had never alluded. On the Friday I went to Paisley where we had a fairish meeting in a big hall: the audience attentive rather than enthusiastic; however we took 6 or 7 names for a new branch: the provost (mayor in England) took the chair for me: a little old body who had been an advanced man some 50 years ago in the old Chartist times when Paisley was (as it is now) a very radical town. A doleful place to look at, but with the nave of the old abbey church yet left, a fine 13 th century building, which must have been very fine indeed when its long aisleless choir was still standing, of which but a few walls are left. This was to have finished my work; but on the Wednesday I had heard from the London comrades begging me to go to Mahon's help at Newcastle, as he has been carrying on a very successful campaign amongst the miners thereabout and was to have a big meeting on Easter Monday: so I yea said that and stayed on the Saturday and Sunday at Glasgow; on Saturday we went to Coatbridge and held an open air meeting there;

'tis an iron working place where at night the flaring furnaces put out the moon and stars: the men are seldom out of work there; but work 7 days a week in this Devil's Den: Sunday *working* not seeming to hurt the Scotch conscience though Sunday playing does. There we were in rivalry with the Salvation Army and a cheap-jack, but had a good meeting only disturbed by a drunken Irish man, who insisted with many oaths on our telling him the difference between a Home-Ruler and a non-Home-Ruler, and swore by Christ that *he* would teach us Socialism *he* would: but the crowd soon put him down. All this we did by star and furnace light, which was strange and even dreadful,

Sunday afternoon I said goodbye to Glasgow to a large audience on the Green who were very sympathetic; but sadly poor & pinched they look as they well may. I went off to Newcastle in the evening & found Mahon and Donald there at 11 p.m.: also stumbled on Hyndman as the two bodies are working together there. But my paper is nearly done, & it is nearly post time: so I will write again presently & tell you my Northumberland adventures & send this off together with the Newcastle paper which will tell you some of them. May has gone with Sparling to exhibit that young man to your granny. I shall go & see her next week. Tell your mother, my dear, that I will write her a line presently with some more of the 'needful', and give her my very best love my darling. I am well but glad to get home and have some real quiet.

Hammersmith
To Jane Alice Morris 23 April [1887]

Here is another scrawl for you; and first to begin where I left off. I got to Newcastle on Easter Sunday evening about 11 and found Mahon and Donald there: also I presently met Hyndman, who I suspect was not over-pleased to see me, as the S.D.F. have been playing a rather mean game there; however I was taken to a temperance hotel for my lodging, not I suppose because I was thought likely to get drunk, but because such places are quieter & cleaner than the third-rate other hotels. Early the next morning we started off for the collieries, and alighted from the train in a wretched-looking country enough; not smoky, for alack the collieries are not working, but so waste and desolate looking like—well a 'back yard' on a large scale. The roads of course were black and presently we had to strike off onto a railway which was also a footpath and went

through one of the collieries; this brought us out presently into the 'village[5] where the pitmen lived called Seghill where Mahon had a great following, and then we went into one of our friend's houses. The family were all in, a man, his wife & daughter: they were very nice people, the man intelligent & pleasant, talking with that queer Northumbrian smack that makes the talk sound like that of foreigners: poor man, he had lost one eye in an accident & damaged the other; the house was as clean and neat as a country cottage, and indeed they all seemed like that; most of them as we passed their open doors showed a swell but ugly bedstead in the place of honour: Well Donald & I sat and talked there while Mahon went to make arrangements for these people to march to the field where the meeting was to be: and after about an hour we went to the railway station & Mahon & I set off for Blithe where we were to pick up another detachment: when we all got to the station there we found quite a crowd waiting for us who followed us to the market-place, & as Mahon again had some arrangements to make they brought a trolly to the place & I got up and amused them by a speech of some half hour or more: then we set off, rather a draggle-tailed lot because we couldn't afford a paid band, and so hadn't got one there, and not more than half the men in the market place followed us, and we straggled a good deal.

Blithe is a sea-port, and as we came in I could see the masts of ships there: and as we plodded on through the dreary (O so dreary) villages, & that terrible waste of endless back-yard, we could see on our left hand a strip of the bright blue sea, for it was a beautiful sunny day. At last at one village we saw a crowd drawn up and a band & a 'banner', and then we fell into some sort of order and rolled up rapidly, so we went on till we mounted the crest of a low hill after a 6 mile march and had some 2000 at our heels by then. We came on to the meeting field where the two other detachments had already come, and besides groups of men and women were streaming up the field from all about: the crowd was thick about the waggon we were to speak from, & a most orderly & good-tempered crowd at that: but when we were all in and they saw the reporters there also, they sang out 'put those chaps (the reporters) out unless they promise to put all down!' There were many women there, some of them very much excited: one (elderly) when any obnoxious person was named never failed to chorus it with 'put him out!': all near the waggon the men all sat down on the ground to give the others a

chance to hear: We had to stand on a rather perilous plank above the rail of the waggon, & I was for simply coming to the front without mounting on the plank but some of them sung out from the side, 'If yon man does na stand on the top we canna hear him!' So up I had to climb: however some one turned a poled notice board up for me and I leaned on that and so was pretty comfortable. It was very inspiriting to speak to such a big crowd of eager & serious persons, and I did pretty well and didn't stumble at all.

Well that meeting over we three had to rush for the train to Newcastle, as we were to speak at another place in the evening: we just caught the train, and got into Newcastle about 6 p.m. properly hungry, I for one; and so off we went to the big station & into the refreshment room, where as we were stowing the victuals into us who should come up but Joseph Cowen very friendly & nice, I must say, and we had a talk, all we could in twenty minutes space. Then off we went to Ryton Willows, which is even now a pretty place on the side of the Tyne; it is a recreation ground and being Easter Monday there were lots of folk there with swings and cricket and dancing & the like: I thought it a queer place for a serious Socialist meeting, but we had a crowd about us in no time and I spoke, rather too long I fancy, till the stars came out and it grew dusk and the people stood and listened still, & when we were done they gave three cheers for the Socialists, & all was mighty friendly & pleasant: & so back we went to supper and bed, of which I for one was glad enough. However I felt very well & brisk next morning, and so got up to town in time to get to our Council meeting, and arrange for a meeting in Hyde Park which is to come off to-morrow to sympathize with the miners. So much for my adventures, my dear, which are not very adventurous, but I know that you like to hear what I am about.

Crom has been in London and is still, & I have seen him twice: he is looking very well now though he has had a bad bout and been in bed sick. Yesterday I went down to your granny's & there were the two Emmas both of them looking O so old! Granny was well but I think a trifle deafer, and perhaps showing her age more than when I last saw her. The late spring was very beautiful there, the rooks most abundant and musical; but I felt old, strange to say older than I do among young persons. I hope to have a treat of two days or three at Kelmscott next week, going down on Wednesday morning, but there is many a slip & all. Now I daresay I have left out some

news, but you must excuse it my darling as I must go to bed as it has just struck midnight. Best love my dear to you & mother.

To [?] [1] Summer **1887**

I am trying to get the League to make peace with each other and hold together for another year. It is a tough job; something like the worst kind of pig-driving I should think, and sometimes I lose my temper over it. It is so bewilderingly irritating to see perfectly honest men, very enthusiastic, and not at all self-seeking, and less stupid than most people, squabble so: and withal for the most part they are personally good friends together. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones [2] Summer **1887**

On Tuesday our water-party did actually come off, Aglaia, Opie and Mr Leaf being the other ones besides Janey, Jenny and self. It turned out quite a success; we went by train to Richmond and then took a boat and went to Hampton Court by slow degrees, rowing, sailing, and towing. We got to the palace just half an hour before closing-time of the building, but didn't mind about that. Our other male-man got out coming back at Surbiton, so that we were rather late; didn't get to Teddington Lock till after 8; so that it was full night when we came out of it. So I had to set poor Aglaia to steer in the dark, or the dusk rather, as Jenny is short-sighted and Janey was too tired, and the two girls had been rowing a good bit already, so that I had to row till we were close to Richmond again. Aglaia was (naturally) nervous and kept on mistaking 'nature's boskage', or its shadow rather, for barges: but she did very well after all and we mightily enjoyed ourselves; Jenny especially, who was delighted with the night rowing and the glitter of the lights on Richmond Hill in the water, and the rather terrifying mysteries of a river by night.

An improvement is to be noted at Hampton Court by the way. They have cleaned the tapestries; and taken the piece that used to be under the gallery and hung it in the Drawing Room so that it is quite visible, and have added another piece to it which I have never seen before and which is very fine. The Triumph of Time, also at the end of the Drawing Room, now it is cleaned shows a most splendid work: also they have opened a small room next to the Drawing **Room,** and that also is hung with tapestries, inferior to these, but still very beautiful. . . .

[1] **Mackail ii. 184-5.** [2] **From Mackail, ii. 185-6.**

To Mrs Bume-Jones[1] August 1887

It is a beautiful bright autumn morning here, as fresh as daisies: and I am not over-inclined for my morning preachment at Walham Green, but go I must, as also to Victoria Park in the afternoon. I had a sort of dastardly hope that it might rain. Mind you, I don't pretend to say that I don't like it in some way or other, when I am on my legs. I fear I am an inveterate word-spinner and not good for much else.

To Mrs Bume-J ones [?] [x] September 1887

I had three very good days at Kelmscott: once or twice I had that delightful quickening of perception by which everything gets emphasized and brightened, and the commonest landscape looks lovely: anxieties and worrits, though remembered, yet no weight on one's spirits—Heaven in short. It comes not very commonly even in one's younger and brighter days, and doesn't quite leave one even in the times of combat. . . .

Kelmscott House

To May Morris 21 September [1887]

I dined with Touzeau Paris last night and Mrs Besant, Scheu and Shaw were there: the two latter had so fierce a debate on parliamentarism that I could barely get a word in edgewise. As we were all very good tempered it was most amusing. Jenny was there & enjoyed it. Shaw has consented to act in the 'Interlude'.[2] I was obliged to nail Miss Canthorne for the woman's part, not being sure of you for rehearsals & so on. I have got it all roughed out now, and the reading is to come off after the council meeting next Monday. So I shall have to work real hard at it this day or two. I feel very shy about it I must say.

[1] From Mackail, ii. 187.

[2] *The Tables Turned or Nupkins Awakened,* performed at the Farringdon Road offices of the Socialist League on 15 October for the benefit of *The Commonweal.* Morris himself took the part of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was supposed to have been called as a witness for the defence in a police prosecution of a member of the League on a charge of obstruction and incitement to not by speaking from a stool on a Sunday forenoon at Beadon Road, Hammersmith. The piece was a roaring farce and a great success. Mr Shaw writes (20.11.1948):'! was present at the performance, but did not play in it. Morris wanted me to play the defendant; but I persuaded him that it would be wiser to let a young member of his Socialist League (Halliday Sparling) do it. Morris himself played the Archbishop. The applause was terrific when he entered,'

Kelmscott House

To May Morris Monday [September-October 1887]

Thanks for your note: I will see about the wine and the tea. But it is Thursday that I am coming, not Wednesday. Also 1 don't much relish having to speak at Lechlade, as I am coming for a rest: but if I must you had better hire the Swan as before: however I shall see Harry[x] this evening, I suppose. Perhaps Walker will come as well as Radford. If you *can* get the punt over please do, as I thought it was done long ago: & get Charles to get some worms in case there are any fish left in the river: if we can't get the punt we must do with the boat.

I want you & Radford to help me with the interlude.

By the way, as I shall have to do a few hours work on a carpet, will you say what things are wanted if any: 'tis only a small-scale drawing.

To the Editor, The Daily News

THE POLICE AND THE PEOPLE

17 October 1887

Sir,—'Hear both sides' is a motto once thought worthy of notice; may I claim your attention to it with reference to the police onslaught of yesterday? At the meeting held at South Place last night to protest against the judicial murder, under peculiarly revolting circumstances, of seven men in America for being present at a meeting where blood was shed owing to the aggressive conduct of the police, a working man who had been present in Bride-street gave us his account of the attack by the police which is treated so lightly by your leader-writer.[2] If his statement was true, that attack was quite unprovoked, and was as cowardly and brutal as need be. Therefore it seems to me that it should be inquired into; and it is unworthy to brush aside the comparison between such an event and that of Mitchelstown with a contemptuous sentence. That men were slain at Mitchelstown was an accident depending chiefly on the fact that the police had fire-arms. The point of resemblance between the two events is (if our informant was right) that the police in each case wantonly attacked a crowd that was doing something which the

[1] Henry Halliday Sparling.

[2] Open fights between the unemployed and the police were almost daily occurrences in the London streets at this time. The *Daily News* had written that these demonstrations 'are soon like to try the patience of the public' and that the police were to be commended in their efforts to maintain order.

authorities did not like it to do, but which it had a right to do. If the *Daily News* disapproves of this conduct when the attacked and unoffending citizens are taking part in a Gladstonian meeting, and approves of it when they are a few unhappy people thrust out of work, or degraded beyond power of seeking work by the economical conditions of our faultless society, the Tories may well twit it with making capital out of an event natural if Government is to be sustained; and all honest and thinking men will be sorry to see a Liberal paper unable to look at public matters except through partisan spectacles.

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall, Hammersmith. 15 October.

Kelmscott

To May Morris 26 October [1887]

I was very sorry to miss you down here: I looked out for you at Oxford station but did not see you. I suppose I must come back for the council meeting on Monday, as we seem to be approaching another crisis, and I cannot allow myself to be made a cat's paw of. I suppose Harry has told you how beautifully I kept my temper last Monday. I did a good bit of work last night and night before: but I don't find myself wearing myself out with work in the day-time what with one thing or another. . . .

Yesterday Jenny and I went to see the church: they are putting down the old flagged floor again I am glad to say: they have uncovered a good bit more of the painting: over the doors is some apparently of the same date as that in the North Chapel. The chimney is finished and is as ugly & vulgar as the heart could wish.

The hens are beginning to lay again—just as we are going away. This is all the news. I shall not leave here on Monday till the 2.40 train so I shall come to you when you are abed so shall not see you till Tuesday morning.

To [?][x] 31 December 1887

One thing will have to be made clear, i.e. who is to find the money.[2] I can't help thinking on reflection that some money will have to be dropped upon it: for I don't think (again on reflection)

[1] From Mackail, ii. 202.

[2] The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was founded in the latter months of 1887 and now planned to hold an exhibition. Once fairly launched, however, Morris associated himself strenuously with the movement, lecturing and exhibiting his own goods.

that you will find commercial exhibitors willing to pay rent for space, and the shilling at the door will not, I fear, come to much after the first week or two: the general public don't care one damn about the arts and crafts; and our customers can come to our shops to look at our kind of goods; and the other kind of exhibits would be some of Walter Crane's works and one or two of Burne-Jones: those would be the things worth looking at: the rest would tend to be of an amateurish nature, I fear. In short, at the risk of being considered a wet blanket, a Job, or Job's comforter, and all that sort of thing, I must say I rather dread the said exhibition: this is of course my private view of the matter, and also of course I wish it success if it comes off.

To *[?]*[1] 14 January 1888

As to Blunt[2] and his imprisonment, from what I hear, the Irish prisons are better than the English. I don't see that we take it quietly specially because it is in Ireland: there are dozens of poor fellows in prison in England over the Trafalgar Square business,[3] some of them for four or six months, for the same offence as Blunt's, and I fear little enough is said about them. However it is a bad business enough, nor do I deny that an English prison is torture, and is meant to be so. Doubtless it is bad that political prisoners like Blunt and the so-called rioters should be treated as criminals; but then the criminals are not treated as if they were human beings. The whole prison system in its folly, stupidity, and cruelty, is a disgrace to mankind; and the treatment of political prisoners is only one instance....

Kelmscott House

To Jane Alice Morris 19 February [1888]

. . . Well it seems I am the one to tell stories this time. I was woke at 6 yesterday, and got up, had a hasty breakfast with the he &

[1] From Mackail, ii. 203-4.

[2] Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), poet, diarist, traveller, politician, and champion of small nations. In the early months of this year he served a sentence of three months with hard labour in Galway and Kilmainham goals under the Crimes Act.

[3] 'Bloody Sunday', 13 November 1887, when the police attacked and broke up the demonstration called by the socialist and revolutionary organizations to protest against the Government's Irish policy. The police attacked the various processions as they converged upon Trafalgar Square. Morris's contingent, some 6000 strong, which had marched from Clerkenwell Green, was dispersed at the end of Shaftesbury Avenue, with many arrests. In the square itself a battalion of Foot Guards had been drawn up with fixed bayonets, supported by the Life Guards. With all this display of force, only one man was killed, though many were injured in the police charges. Hyndman, John Burns and Cunninghame Graham were among the arrested. They were imprisoned after a trial at the Old Bailey.

she Tochatti who duly came a little before 7, and off we set for King's Cross to meet the prisoners.[1] We hardly expected to be in time as we knew that the prison authorities would play their usual shabby trick of putting the prisoners out before the appointed time, and so it turned out: but as we were sitting in the tram-car going towards the prison I saw Graham [R. B. Cunninghame Graham] & his wife in a cab going past, so Tochatti jumped out and ran like a roe till he caught up the cab and stopped them, and I came up & shook hands: I thought Graham didn't look much the worse, though I don't doubt that he felt weak, and his voice as well as Burns' [John Burns] was certainly weaker when they spoke in the evening (of which more presently). So then we went to the prison, and found a crowd still hanging about, and Burns walking up & down a by-street waiting for his wife who hadn't come yet: so I went up to *him* and we had a talk, and he showed me the bit of bread that the poor men have for their breakfast and supper—just two mouthfuls—no more. He looked a good deal pulled down. Well, then he went away, and I walked down the street to look at the miserable place and it made my blood boil to think that men should elaborate such a monument of folly, and thought how I should like to live to pull it down & turn it into a floor-cloth factory or something of that sort. So went back home. I should tell you that in spite of these shabby dogs there was a good gathering at the gates to meet the prisoners, and that some of them had been so thoughtful as to bring meat-pies with them which they thrust into their hands, and their dignity did not prevent them from 'wolfing' them, as Harry called it, at once: & they had a good time in a coffee shop just opposite the prison.

Well then in the evening came the tea-drinking, which as a tea-drinking was a confused affair enough: & no wonder as the place was crammed; but as a meeting was as enthusiastic as possible, in fact the audience cheered the prisoners so that they could hardly speak. Mr Blaine, an Irish MP under a sentence of four months, was new to me and seemed a very good fellow, and almost a Socialist. The GOM's [Gladstone] name was only cheered by a small minority and hooted by a good many. May & Harry both did their part in serving as did I poor Howe, and the big ex-sergeant-major Mohm ['ate' crossed out] of our branch. As the meeting seemed likely to last till midnight (from 6 o'clock) May & Harry & I came away about 10

[1] The men imprisoned in Pentonville Gaol for demonstrating on 'Bloody Sunday", 13 November 1887.

and we went & had supper at the Solferino & so home to bed. The meeting to-morrow evening I think will be a great success. William O'Brien has promised to come & speak & what with him & Davitt in the chair & Blaine it will mean no less than an acknowledgement by the Irish party that they are the allies of the London discontent & Trafalgar Sq. The Southwark election also with its unexpectedly big majority for the Liberal candidate is a serious blow to the Government, so that all things considered matters are going well. I have to speak to-morrow at the meeting. I will write to-morrow, my own dear, and will tell you how it went and of any other stories I have got.

Snowy & cold still: I lecture to-night near the prison again—at Pentonville.

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] March 1888

On the whole I think things will be pretty quiet till next October or November, when it will begin simmering again. I have been reading Tolstoi's 'War and Peace', which I find I can get through with much approbation but little enjoyment, and yet (to take the horse round to the other side of the cart) with a good deal of satisfaction. There seems to be a consensus of opinion in these Russian novels as to the curious undecided turn of the intellectual persons there: Hamlet (Shakespeare's I mean, not the genuine Amlot) should have been a Russian, not a Dane. This throws some light on the determination and straightforwardness of the revolutionary heroes and heroines there; as if they said, 'Russians must be always shilly-shally, letting I dare not wait upon I would, must they? Look here then, we will throw all that aside and walk straight to death.'

I don't think I shall tackle 'Anna Karenina'; I want something more of the nature of a stimulant when I read. I am not in a good temper with myself: I cannot shake off the feeling that I might have done much more in these recent matters than I have; though I really don't know what I could have done: but I feel beaten and humbled. Yet one ought not to be down in the mouth about matters; for I certainly never thought that things would have gone on so fast as they have in the last three years; only, again, as opinion spreads, organization does not spread with it. . . .

[1] From Mackail, ii. 204-5.

16 Tantallon Place
Edinburgh
To May Morris 26 March 1888

I daresay you will pardon me for not writing on your birthday, but you see there are difficulties in getting away from people, and though my days are passed in idleness, there is a good deal of shuffling about. ... I am just back from Glasgow, where I had a fair meeting considering the weather, for it came on to snow about 1 o'clock in flakes as big as your fist, and oh but it was a sea of slush by the time of the lecture. ... As to my movements, I go to Dundee to-morrow & sleep there; to Aberdeen on Wednesday & sleep there; then break the journey at Edinburgh again & sleep there Thursday; and home on Friday: but if things seem propitious I shall stop at Durham on the road & come up by the night mail on Friday. ... I have nearly read out 'Anna Karenina: I think it better than 'War and Peace' as a work of art, but I find it heavy reading some times. ... I feel as if I had been away a deuce of a time, & shall be so glad to see you all again.

16 Tantallon Place, Edinburgh
To Jane Alice Morris *26* March 1888

I have been dancing about the country finely: it was a long job getting from Penkill to Edinburgh, and after Ayr one goes through a wretched country mostly black and always ugly; and ugly Scotland is worse than ugly England. The house at Penkill has been so much spoiled that one can take but little pleasure in the architecture thereof, but the place is lovely; [x] it lies on the hillside on a spit of ground with a beck running on each side just like Naworth; from the tower you can see the great wide firth (of Clyde), Ailsa Craig plain to see, and the mountains of Arran lying in the distance: there were beautiful daffodils out in the woods, and more blackbirds than one could count. It was very fine the morning I came away. Close to the station one goes to (Killochan), there is a great man's castle, and a bright river runs across the road by it bridgeless and fordable by horses (when it is not in spate), and with a most perilous row of stepping-stones for foot-folk: yea and with a gap in the stepping-stones, so that no son (or daughter) of Adam can cross it dry shod. Hard by in the great man's grounds (or policies as the Scotch have it) is a foot-bridge, and people humbly ask for leave to cross by it;

[1] The Ayrshire castle of the Boyd family, restored by Spencer Boyd and extended in 1884 by William Bell Scott, who also designed every detail of the interior decorations.

but the great man more often than not gainsays them. 'How is that for high?' as the Yankees say. One of my meetings was a dead failure, that at Leith; 5 persons only came beside the branch; so their money was (unlike Mrs Harris) 'give back', and we consoled ourselves by holding a brisk open-air meeting in the open street (Leith Walk), which was very successful. On Saturday I went to a wretched little mining town (West Calder), where we were in great doubt as to whether we should get an audience, Saturday (the only available day) being a bad one. However we sent round the bellman, or bell-boy rather, for he was about 13 years old, whose clinkalinkle sounding to my cockney ears like muffins, brought us in a good audience enough.

I was entertained with great splendour last night by one Professor Dyer (at Glasgow), who has been many years in Japan, and told me much that was amusing about the Japanese. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
2 April 1888

To the Rev. George Sainton [1]

Socialism is a theory of life, taking for its starting point the evolution of society; or, let us say, of man as a social being.

Since man has certain material *necessities* as an animal, Society is founded on man's attempts to satisfy those necessities; and Socialism, or social consciousness, points out to him the way of doing so which will interfere least with the development of his specially human capacities, and the satisfaction of what, for lack of better words, I will call his spiritual and mental necessities.

The foundation of Socialism, therefore, is economical. Man as a social animal tends to the acquirement of power over nature, and to the beneficent use of that power, which again implies a condition of society in which every one is able to satisfy his needs in return for the due exercise of his capacities for the benefit of the race. But this economical aim which, to put it in another way, is the fair apportionment of labour and the results of labour, must be accompanied by an ethical or religious sense of the responsibility of each man to each and all of his fellows.

Socialism aims, therefore, at realizing equality of condition as its economical goal, and the habitual love of humanity as its rule of ethics.

Properly speaking in a condition of equality politics would no

[1] **From *Four Letters on Socialism.* Privately printed 1894. Ashley Library 1218. These letters represent Morris's most carefully reasoned statement of his beliefs.**

longer exist; but, to use the word as distinguishing the social habits that have not to do directly with production, the political position of Socialism is to substitute the relation of persons to persons, for the relation of things to persons. A man, I mean, would no longer take his position as the dweller in such and such a place, or the filler of such and such an office, or (as now) the owner of such and such property, but as being such and such a man. In such a state of Society laws of repression would be minimized, and the whole body of law which now deals with things and their domination over persons would cease to exist. In a condition of personal equality, also, there could no longer be rivalry between those inhabiting different places. Nationality, except as a geographical or ethnological expression, would have no meaning.

Equality as to livelihood, mutual respect and responsibility, and complete freedom within those limits—which would, it must be remembered, be accepted voluntarily, and indeed habitually—are what Socialism looks forward to.

But there would be few, if any, Socialists, who would not admit that between this condition of things and our present Society there must be a transitional condition, during which we must waive the complete realization of our ideal.

This transitional condition is what we socialists of to-day believe will be gradually brought about in our times. It will be brought about partly we think by the further development of democracy, and partly by the conscious attempts of the Socialists themselves.

The democracy have yet to get rid of certain survivals and superstitions. They will also be forced to deal with the circumstances produced by the gradual decline of the commercial system which has created democracy; as, for instance, the lack of employment for a large part of the population; their lack of leisure; their wretched housing, and so forth. The democracy by such action will improve the position of the working classes, or at least they will put them into such a position as will increase their discontent by making them conscious of possible remedies for their inferior position. But as constitutional democrats they can go no further than this: they must take the present relations between wage earners and capitalists as a basis for improvement and on that basis improvement must be very limited. It is the Socialists only who can claim a measure which will realise a new basis of society; that measure is the *abolition of private ownership in the means of production.* The land, factories, machinery,

means of transit, and whatever wealth of any sort is used for the reproduction of wealth, and which therefore is necessary to labour and can only be *used* by it, must be *owned* by the nation only, to be *used* by the workers (who will then include all honest men) according to their capacity.[1]

This claim for the abolition of the monopoly in the means of production is made by all socialists of every shade; it forms the political platform of the party, and nothing short of this is a definite socialist claim. It is true that some of us (myself amongst others) look further than this, as the first part of my paper indicates; but we are all prepared to accept whatever consequences may follow the realization of this claim; and for my part I believe that whatever struggle or violence there may be in the realization of Socialism will all take place in the carrying out of this initial step; that after that the class struggle, now thousands of years old, having come to an end, no new class will arise to dominate the workers; and that whatever steps may be necessary to bring us to the fullness of the fellowship, which, as you justly say, is the aim of Socialism, there will be no serious contest over them; they will come of themselves until the habit of Socialism will be thoroughly formed, and no one will have to use the word any more, as it will embrace the whole of human life. What further fullness of the consciousness of life may follow on that none can say. Only this remains to be said that Socialism does not recognise any finality in the progress and aspirations of humanity; and that we clearly understand that the furthest we can now conceive of is only a stage of the great journey of evolution that joins the future and the past to the present.

This seems to me to a fair sketch of what Socialists wish to see brought about. I have not attempted to go into details as to the means and so forth because I suppose what you wanted was just the root principles, and the necessary actions resulting from them.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
4 April [1888]

To the Rev. George Sainton

Allow me to suggest to you that if you do not agree with the abolition of monopoly which we socialists all think is a *necessary*

[1] **I ask you to keep well in mind the distinction between the *ownership* of wealth which implies no corresponding duties, and the *possession of it for use* which implies full responsibility towards other people.**

step to take, it is because you do not see the bearing of it; because, I think you confuse the Community with the State or the Government as it exists at present.

You see you must either have a Community master of itself, or a government master of the Community as at present. It is true that some persons, like my friend Auberon Herbert, for instance, try to conceive a condition of things in which every man is independent of every other, but that is not only impossible to be, but impossible even to conceive of.

If the means of production were 'nationalized' the following changes would result.

(1) Every one would be obliged to render some service to the Community in return for livelihood; thus getting rid of the class which lives by *owning* property.

(2) Every one could claim useful employment, and the duly resulting livelihood.

(3) The waste of labour power now caused by (a) the watching over the individual interests of the plundering classes (competition we call it) and (b) by the rich classes *forcing* the workers to work uselessly, would come to an end.

In fact artificial compulsion would come to an end, for the Community cannot compel the Community.

Even the crudest form of State Socialism (which I do not agree to) would have this advantage over the individual ownership of the means of production, that whereas the State *might* abuse its ownership, the individual owners *must* do so.

You see as long as there is individual ownership of capital (to put it short) there must be a superior and an inferior class; and between these classes there must be antagonism, each can only thrive at the others' expense.

Class antagonism is really the key to the solution of the social question.

You must not forget also that the Socialism of to-day being like every vital movement a political one, that is to say one that embraces the daily life of the *whole* people, is forced to look to the transitional period as a practical business. Doubtless there will be much trouble and blundering over the carrying of society into this stage; and that is why I think we may expect democracy which has no longer any principles, nothing but a vague instinct pushing it on, to do something for us. We want the dying old system to make the experi-

mental blunders for us so that the new order may set them right, which it can do because its action is based on principles.

With thanks for the kind words of your letter. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To the Rev. George Bain ton 10 April 1888

I think that what lies at the root of the due answer to your objections is that *OUT present* representative system is the reflection of our *class* society. The fact of the antagonism of classes underlies all our government and causes political parties, who are continually making exhibitions of themselves to the disgust of all sensible men; making party questions out of matters of universal public convenience, and delaying reforms of the most obvious nature long after the whole country has cried out for them. This is I think a necessary result of government—or, if you please, of political government; and what causes that government is, as I have said, the contest of classes which our competitive system forces on us.

Under these conditions the business of a statesman is to balance the greed and fears of the proprietary classes against the necessities and demands of the working class. This is a sorry business, and leads to all kinds of trickery and evasion; so that it is more than doubtful whether a statesman can be a moderately honest man.

Now the contest of classes being abolished all this would fall to the ground. The relations of men to each other would become personal; wealth would be looked upon as an instrument of life, and not as a reason for living, and therefore dominant over mens lives. What ever laws existed would be much fewer, very simple, and easily understood by all; they would mostly concern the protection of the person. In dealing with property, its fetish quality having disappeared, its *use* only would have to be considered, e.g. shall we (the public) work this coal mine or shut it up? Is it necessary for us to lay down this park in wheat, or can we afford to keep it as a place of recreation? Will it be desirable to improve this shoemaking machine, or can we go on with it as it is? Will it be necessary to call for special volunteers to cultivate yonder fen, or will the action of the law of compensation be inducement enough for its cultivation? and so forth.

Of course it is clear that such considerations can only be held when all such things as this are public property.

The instances you give of public management (you might have added the Poor Laws in spite of the cruelty and stupidity of their administration forced on them by our economical position) show this at least, that whatever theories of individualist property holding there may be, they cannot be thoroughly carried out in practice.

But to return to our 'government' of the future, which would be rather an administration of *things* than a government of *persons*. Without dogmatizing on the matter I will venture to give you my own views on the subject, as I know that they are those held by many Socialists. Nations, as political entities, would cease to exist; civilization would mean the federalization of a variety of communities great and small, at one end of which would be the township and the local guild, in which administration would be carried on perhaps in direct assemblies 'in more majorum', and at the other some central body whose function would be almost entirely the guardianship of the *principles* of society, and would when necessary enforce their practice; e.g. it would not allow slavery in any form to be practised in any community. But even this shadow of centralization would disappear at last when men gained the habit of looking reasonably at these matters. It would in fact be chiefly needed as a safeguard against the heredity of bad habits, and the atavism which would give us bad specimens now and again. Between these two poles there would be various federations which would grow together or dissolve as convenience of place, climate, language, &c. dictated, and would dissolve peaceably when occasion prompted. Of course public intercourse between the members of the federation would have to be carried on by means of delegation, but the delegates would not pretend to represent any one or anything but the business with which they are delegated; e.g. we are a shoemaking community chiefly, you cotton spinners, are we making too many shoes? Shall we turn some of us to gardening for a month or two, or shall we go on?—and so forth.

Absolute facts and information would be the main business of public assemblies.

Of course every competent citizen would have to take part in public business; and also no one would receive any special dignity, still less any domination for filling any post; he would do his work there because he could do it best, i.e. easiest. To my mind the essential thing to this view (which can be filled in in detail as much as you please, but always with a tolerable certainty that the actual details

won't be like the imagined ones) is the township, or parish, or ward, or local guild, small enough to manage its own affairs directly. And I don't doubt that gradually all public business would be so much simplified that it would come to little more than a correspondence. Such are the facts with us; compare them with the facts with you. You know how to act, so that we should tend to the abolition of *all* government, and even of all regulations that were not merely habitual; and voluntary association would become a necessary habit, and the only bond of society.

I admit that this is a long way ahead; the contest of classes is still going on, and we cannot help taking part in it.

State Socialism will have to intervene between our present break down and communism; but I do not think it will last long when it is fully developed, especially as I think there are signs that it will come in the municipal rather than the imperial form; which I think a very good thing.

To conclude I must remind you that however gradually the change comes from monopoly to freedom, it will only be when the first stage which recognizes the principle at least is complete that our present inequalities can be, I won't say abolished, but even much palliated. The present system is based on the assumed necessity of a proprietary class and a proletariat. As long as this lasts whatever advantages you give to the latter must result in the aggrandizement of the former, except so far as the proletariat are struggling towards revolution by rebellion of various kinds; the lowest form of which is the ordinary stealing, lying, and cheating of the criminal class, and the highest, conscious political action directed against the dominant class; workmen's combinations for strikes and such like lying between two extremes, and being like the others a necessary form of the class struggle, but a temporary one; the link between the pure hopelessness of the slave, and the self sacrificing dignified hope of the rebel, who feels his rights of citizenship, and is determined to claim them for his class, whatever may happen to himself personally.

As to when the change will come about, that is not our business. It is clearly hope of its advent that *forces* us into agitation. For my part I think that though it may be long before the revolution will be complete, it is already amongst us; and that a very few years will see a great change in the attitude of political parties towards Socialism. I am certain that they will be forced into socialistic experiments, which may be partial failures, but which will always leave their mark;

and that this will go on till it will be only one conscious step over the border, and monopoly will be no more.

I have thus troubled you with another long letter, but as I think you are anxious for information I also think you can excuse it.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To the Rev. George Sainton *6* May 1888

I had been thinking about your last letter, and had answered it in my mind, and so convinced myself that I had written your answer; pray excuse my wool-gathering. You say that Society at present compels the idle man to work by the threat of starvation: what will a free Social Federation say to the drones? Now your statement of what Society does to the idle man is inaccurate if you come ro think of it. In the first place, there is a considerable class of men whose *privilege* it is to be idle: Society rewards these unhappy people with riches, titles &c. Again, there is another class whose *misfortune* it is to be idle, and whom Society punishes in various ways,—semi-starvation, workhouse, prison, &c. These two classes form altogether a much greater burden of drones than any reasonably ordered society is likely to have as a consequence of atavism, even supposing that all the people now engaged in production and distribution were really usefully employed. But this is very far from being the case, as the first glance you may chance to throw on an advertising station will show you. My belief is that the merely necessary labour, the labour that will supply us with food and shelter, will be a very light burden in the future, properly distributed as it will be; and that the greater part of the work we do will be done with pleasure, just as a poet writes a poem, or an artist paints a picture. Did I not say in a former letter that human happiness consisted in the pleasurable exercise of our energies? At any rate I say it now; and if you widen the word energies as you should do to include the moral, of which *all* men possess some share, though it is often obscured and hindered, you will then see that this is the true stimulus to exertion as soon as men by dint of association have once relieved themselves from the fear of starvation *as a body*, which has been the case now for many ages.

I think, as to your second paragraph, that if you refer to my

former letter you will see that I admit the necessity for a transitional stage of progress. During that stage, before the *habit* of working for the whole was formed, some compulsion would have to be exercised. That compulsion would be found in the very remains of competition which would render the stage imperfect; only it would be comparatively a fair competition: the means of labour no longer being engrossed by a privileged monopoly, every one would have free access to them, and be able to exercise his capacity to the utmost. I do not see what this has to do with Christianity and its denial.

I do not understand what you mean by your question as to Socialism ignoring the moral facts and relations of human life. Have I not dealt with this in a former letter? Does not every Socialist say it is immoral to steal? And don't they, the Socialists, often with some emphasis denounce the present masters of Society for so stealing? Again, I don't see what this has to do with Christianity as Christianity; I willingly admit that its ethics condemn dishonesty, but so do Socialist ethics quite as emphatically.

As to the metaphysical side of religion, or its mystical side, I must confess I felt no disposition to discuss them, because I find that such discussions inevitably become mere word-contests. When I use the word Christianity I do not mean some abstract idea, any more than a set of dogmatic assertions, but an historical phase through which the world of civilization has passed, or, if you will, is passing. I am quite willing to make all allowances for the clinging to tradition which such a movement must necessarily leave behind it, even when its chief function has come to an end; but I see nothing eternal in its *differentia,* any more than I do in Judaism, Zoroastrianism, or Ancestor Worship, although I admit that it may, and probably has, embraced higher principles of action, than they have. Religion to me means a habit of responsibility to something outside myself, but that something does not always clothe the claim to my responsibility in the same form. If I had lived in former times, I mean, I should have felt the responsibility, but the rules of conduct would not necessarily have been the same; or perhaps, not to engage in a logomachy, I should not have expressed them in the same way.

Meantime I claim, do you know, to be a practical person. I am not a philosopher, and could not if I would give much time to contemplation. I am an artist, or workman, with a strong inclination to exercise what capacities I may have, and a determination to do nothing shabby if I can help it; or, if I do anything shabby, to admit that

I have done so, and to be sorry for it. This appears to me to be the Socialist religion, and if it is not morality I do not know what it is.

Before closing my letter I must remind you that I am only writing letters, not a careful disquisition on Socialism; so that I daresay I often repeat myself and am not as consecutive as I should be. Put down, then, all illogicalities and slips to the advocate and not to the cause.

To Bruce Glasier 15 May 1888

I expected to hear from you this morning. The engagement will be hot: there was a preliminary skirmish last night in which both sides showed unexampled stupidity: I am heartily sick of the job, but we must go through with it. Donald & Co.[1] are determined to break up the League if they can, & they will do it unless all we-uns vote: so in any case let the Branch send their delegates and flatly if the cash is scarce I will pay & you can repay me at leisure. Once more I hope to see you personally.

To Bruce Glasier 1888

Private *not* to be read at a meeting

The accompanying letter is the sort of thing you ask for: you must look upon it as a kind of personal manifesto, & may & should read it at any meeting. I can only say that I intend to abide by it. I don't think the Donald party will be able to carry their resolution, at all events not effectively: but we ought to make every effort to defeat them. You see, to speak nastily, since Webb and Faulkner will probably go with me, the parls. cannot do without us moneyly as we have found most of the money; if you think it mean to say this I must say in turn that they have rather speculated on my known horror of a split, in their machinations. Plainly speaking, the shadow of corruption which we should certainly tumble into if we became Pari, is already on us, and there has been a great deal too much intriguing going on.

All this is very sickening: but I never heard of a revolutionary movement in which it didn't happen—it must be looked on as a part of the day's work. For myself I refuse to have 'my moral tone lowered' at Donald's bidding. Well keep up your spirits, we will do something yet between us.

[1] A. K. Donald, M.A., formerly of Edinburgh, who, by means of the Bloomsbury branch, **led the** parliamentary factionists. Note by Glasier.

To Bruce Glasier 27 July [1888]

You must not be too downcast because of my London views of the movement; but you can easily see that from the time when the Parliamentary section in the League made up their minds to press the question to extremities the League was practically split. Of course I shall do all I can to prevent a formal split, and shall work my hardest whatever happens, either in the League or out of it; nor is there any probability of the really active amongst the section of principle being discouraged or separating. But you will see that the *whole* of the work in London is now on our shoulders, and since we were but shorthanded before, you may imagine that it is hard work now. By the way, I am writing a paper on the policy of abstention, which I should like to read in an informal manner to *Socialists only* when I come your way.

As to *Commonweal* here are the hard facts: with the present circulation of say about 2800 we are losing *£4* per week, supposing the number sold are all paid for. There are monies owing to us of about £40, but about half that must be written off as *bad,* owing to a bad habit that those branches and individuals have got into of not sending up the money for the sales they made and accumulating a debt which now they *cannot* pay. Well, I already pay *£2* a week to *Commonweal* (this *£4* loss being in addition to that) and absolutely cannot pay the extra *£4:* nor ought I to do so, as i|d (three halfpence) a week from each member of the League would tide us over, and if that cannot be raised it is a sign that the League members don't care about *Commonweal.*

Perhaps you will put these facts before our friends, who I am sure are anxious to do their best in the matter. You see when so very little more would save us, it does seem a pity to drop the only satisfactory English-written Socialist print.

I shall be glad to hear from you as often as convenient.

To Mrs Burne-Jones[x] 29 July 1888

I am a little dispirited over our movement in all directions. Perhaps we Leaguers have been somewhat too stiff in our refusal of compromise. I have always felt that it was rather a matter of temperament than of principle; that some transition period was of course inevitable, I mean a transition involving State Socialism and pretty stiff at that; and also, that whatever might'be said about the reception

[1] From Mackail, ii. 206.

of ideal Socialism or Communism, towards this State Socialism things are certainly tending, and swiftly too. But then in all the wearisome shilly-shally of parliamentary politics I should be absolutely useless: and the immediate end to be gained, the pushing things just a trifle nearer to State Socialism, which when realized seems to me but a dull goal—all this quite sickens me. Also I know that there are a good many other idealists (if I may use that word of myself) who are in the same position, and I don't see why they should not hold together and keep out of the vestry-business, necessary as that may be. Preaching the ideal is surely always necessary. Yet on the other hand I sometimes vex myself by thinking that perhaps I am not doing the most I can merely for the sake of a piece of 'preciousness'.

I have done another chapter to the tale,[1] rather good I think, and shall get on with it as I can; and when finished shall set about revising before I get it into type. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 7 August 1888

. . . I am so glad, my ear, that you like the place [Malvern], as it will do you all the more good I am sure. Sunday we had a nice day here tho' rather windy: for I may speak of the weather now mayn't I, since it is somewhat better. I spoke a long speak to a small audience at Latimer Rd. in the morning, & to a very fair audience by Weltje Rd. in the evening, and we had a good meeting in the Room.[2] Even on Sunday the road seemed much quieter than usual, and yesterday morning when I set out to join our excursion to Petersham, the roads were quite empty, the people had already got further away I suppose. I found our people that had come from London waiting about the station, and after a few more had joined us we set off with a band and banner through Richmond town to the Park which is more than a mile away. I have no doubt the inhabitants sneered as they are mostly Tories, either the villa-abiders or their hangers-on. The day was not over-good dropping rain that left off & came on again, most of the day, finishing by a steady drizzle about 5.30. However the comrades

[1] *The House of the Wolfing'.*

[2] The coach house at Kelmscott House, which Morris had converted into a lecture room. These meetings are described by W. B. Yeats in *The Trembling of the Veil,* with the Sunday evening suppers that followed them. 'I met at these suppers', he says, 'verv constantlv Walter Crane, Emery Walker, in association with Cobden-Sanderson, the printer of many fine books, and less constantly Bernard Shaw and Cockerell, now *oi* the Museum of Cambridge, and perhaps but once or twice Hyndman the Socialist and the Anarchist Prir«ce **Kropotkin.**'

seemed to amuse themselves. Your venerable father entered himself as a competitor in a foot-race, & with Mainwaring was allowed a start: but I did not make much of a show, as there was a false start, and I ran half way and had to come back again to the real start, and was winded before that began. However it served all purposes I have no doubt. I came back home about 4.30 and was rather tired. It is a very pretty place and we ought to go and see it when you come back, or in the spring. There are some beautiful cedar-trees there and it all looks very rich and luxurious. I am going, as I think you know, to Norwich on Saturday & shall not come back till late on Monday or early Tuesday: I am going to take your mother to Hadham on Monday; so that she will not be burd-alone while I am gone.

I saw Uncle Ned & Phil [Burne-Jones] this morning for a brief space: they both seemed very well. Do you know, my dear, I am really out of books to read unless I take to one of my 16th or 17th century folios: I have about done Mommsen (he has thinned me down a good deal) and I am reduced to reading a cookery book for the present. I suppose you will say take to your folios then! and indeed I shall do so; for the cookery book is only moderate reading except when one is really about to get to *wCftk* in the kitchen. . . .

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] August 1888

I am prepared to see all organized Socialism run into the sand for a while. But we shall have done something even then, as we shall have forced intelligent people to consider the matter; and then there will come some favourable conjunction of circumstances in due time which will call for our active work again. If I am alive then I shall chip in again, and one advantage I shall have, that I shall know much better what to do and what to forbear than this first time. . . .

Hadham

To May Morris *16* August [1888]

I am undergoing the stuffing process here and am staying here till evening. To-morrow I am going to Birmingham to see the new window. I came up from Norwich on Tuesday having left the greater part of my voice behind me, although I believe the comrades considered that they had used me with much forbearance. I only spoke 3 times on the Sunday twice in the Market place, and one indoor lecture, and twice on Monday in the Market place besides taking the

[1] From Mackail, ii. 207.

chair for Mrs Besant in the evening. All went well: the Sunday afternoon meeting was the biggest they have yet had, and Mrs Besant's audience was as big as it could be and very enthusiastic. Item I sat twice (in grumps) to a photographer, using many cuss-words. One of the comrades has been fined 40,'- or a month for speaking at Yarmouth the Sunday before, which seems very spiteful as they have not interfered with him before. Altogether they seem in good condition, but are as poor as rats.

On the Monday we went on the water in 5 boats (hire of all i,'5d). It was a very pretty water, as clear as crystal, a very little stream, banks very nearly awash with the water; no weeds except long grass, of which there was plenty: so different from Thames in all respects. Indeed I always feel in a foreign country when I am at Norwich. I am sorry to miss Shaw and his insults on the country in general and Kelmscott in particular. Give my best love to Harry & tell him that T. Shore makes a very effective sub: we have plenty of copy, and shall turn out good numbers this week & next, so that he need not trouble himself about Commonweal. The Norwich Sec, Sutton, is a very good one: wish we had as good a one at the central. I think I and Mother will be coming down next week, probably early in it. I shall be no extra burden as I shall be a cook amongst others. Harry had better get T. Shore on as sub. for another week; having copy for 3 weeks or so we can easily do. No, my dear, I don't think you *can* send in a bill to the Hudsons, considering the entertainment. I am glad you enjoyed yourself there. All send love. Granny is looking well, but is I think deafer than when I was last here.

Kelmscott House
To Margaret Burne-Jones[1] 21 August 1888

Dearest Margery

I have bidden our Mr Smith to send you an 'article' called a Hammersmith Rug (made at Merton Abbey) which Janey and I ask you to take as a small and unimportant addition to your 'hards.' If it should at any time get dirty (as is likely, since London will not be pulled down for a few months, I judge) if you send it to Merton we can wash it as good as new.

Also with this little gift take my hearty good wishes for your happiness, which you will easily believe are not at all con entional, since you will remember how prettily and dearly you have always be-

[1] **Edward Burne-Jones's daughter who married Morris's biographer, J. W. Mackail.**

haved to me since you were a dear little child, in the days when I was really a young man, but thought myself rather old. Also as the wish is not conventional, as really meaning what it says, so it is not conventional as saying something which I do not think will happen: as indeed I think you have every chance of being happy, both because of your fortunate surroundings, and your good choice, and especially because I think you have it in you to be happy, and to be all along the dear little child of those times I was reminding you of,

I went away in a hurry last Sunday, which I was sorry for, as I should have liked to have said good-bye. But I shall hope to see you very soon after September.

Meantime good-bye, and good luck in all senses of the word.

Your affectionate friend
William Morris

To Jane Alice Morris

Kelmscott
24 August 1888

Here we have been for two days now, and I have been enjoying myself much, especially as Wednesday was a wholly beautiful day. The fishing is pretty much as it was when Ellis & you were here: the river higher and the weeds uncut, though not very visible at the first glance because the water is high. Altogether a very pleasant river to travel on, the banks being still very beautiful with flowers; the long-purples & willow herb, and that strong-coloured yellow flower [drawing] very close & buttony, are the great show but there is a very pretty dark blue flower: I think mug-wort, mixed with all that besides the purple blossom of the horse mint & mouse ear & here and there a bit of meadow-sweet belated. ... I have got my work to do down here; 1st my story to which as yet I have done next to nothing, I get so sleepy in the evenings, and 2nd a piece of designing work for Oxford St. to which I *have* done some few hours work, as that is morning work. Further I have done some cooking, my dear, with not very startling success. 1st an Irish stew; all right *except* that the meat was rather tough; but I shall know better another time: 2nd a hash of somewhat tough fowl—made it tougher you bet—3rd fried the perch for breakfast yesterday: they were done and were not greasy but were not properly crisp: you see I am out of practice my dear: also I come to the conclusion that cooking takes a very long time to do and I can the better understand why the British working man's family is so bad at it—and I look with respectful

wonder on the French ditto who is so good at it. As to the garden, it seems to me its chief fruit is—blackbirds. However they have left us some gooseberries, and I shall set to work this morning & get some before their next sit-down meal. As for the flowers the July glory has departed, as needs must; but the garden looks pleasant though not very flowery. Those sweet sultans are run very much to leaf, but the beds in which they and the scabious are look very pretty, the latter having very delicate foliage. There are two tall hollyhocks (O so tall) by the strawberries, one white, one a very pretty red: there are still a good many poppies in blossom; a bed of chainy-oysters and a good many scattered about; also a good few Dianthus Hedwiggii which look very pretty: few apples, few plums, plenty of vegetables else. Weather doubtful: woke up this morning to a most splendid but very stormy sunrise. The nights have been fine, and the moon rises her old way from behind the great barn... .

Kelmscott
To [?] [x] August [1888]

We have had all the birds here again. The herons have been stalking about the field in the gravest manner; and I have seen the kingfishers very busy. One ducked down into the water before me and came out again with a little fish. I saw an owl last night come sailing along, and suddenly turn head over heels and down in the grass; after a mouse I suppose: such a queer action I never saw.

Sunday Morning
To Emery Walker [2] [26 August 1888]

In case you should come over here while we are away, I tell you that we are going at eleven o'clock towards Inglesham, and shall be back at 5 p.m. or thereabouts: so if you come over in the afternoon *please* wait and take a drink of tea or wine or beer, and a bite of what may be handy. But if you come in the morning you would probably soon catch up with us by walking *up* the tow path (i.e. towards Lechlade), as we are going in a heavy boat against wind & stream. Note that the tow path breaks off just below St John's Lock and you will have to walk a few hundred yards by road to the lock.

I should be sorry to miss you if you come over so do as you are

[1] From Mackail, i. 234-5.
[2] This letter was fastened outside the door of the house at Kelmscott. I was then staying at Kencott. (Note by Emery Walker.)

told. We can give you a bed. I go up to town tomorrow morning duty calling: but hope to be down next week (after Sept. 3).
P.S. As everybody may be out when you come look under the mat for the key and you will find the house key. Enter & be happy.

To Bruce Glasier 29 August [1888]

I was very glad to have news from you, and thank you for it. I wish I could give you as good news from London as you give us from Glasgow, but I consider we are in a poor way mostly. Our own branch is very good still and keeps up wonderfully; I don't know that we increase in mere muster roll, but we do in numbers who take an interest in the work, and we really are brisk. Elsewhere I can't say much for us, the few who take an interest are pig-headed and quarrelsome. The Sec. is (to speak plainly) a failure as such, though a very good fellow. The East End agitation is a failure; the sale of *Commonweal* falls off, or rather has fallen off all round; which of course was inevitable after the business of the Conference.

This sounds very gloomy; but, after all, I doubt if we are worse off than we were before; a great deal of the excitement of our East End Leaguers was the result of 'indoor' agitation, i.e. quarrelling amongst themselves, and the Parliamentarians having gone off, the excitement has gone with them, and the excited friends withal. Now all this does not discourage me simply because I have discounted it; I have watched the men we are working with and know their weak points, and knew that this must happen. One or two of them are vainglorious humbugs; a good many are men who, poor fellows, owing to their position cannot argue, and have only impulsive feelings based on no sort of logic, emotional or otherwise, and fall back when there is nothing exciting going on; since they have never had any real grasp of the subject. Many also are so desperately poor that they cannot work much for us; some one or two like our McLaren 'have married a wife and therefore cannot come'. Some again are hot-headed; some, like poor Lane, in bad health. With all this the worst of them are no worse than other people; mostly they are better, and some very much better; so that supposing we broke up the band, any new band we got together would be composed of just the same elements. Therefore the only thing is to be patient and try to weld together those that are work-worthy.

Of course, the secession has given us a rough shake; several of the seceders did fair work, and they bought and sold some *Commonweal*

if not much. If any compromise had been possible between us and them I should have favoured it; but it was not possible: the other side were determined to *use* us if they could, quite reckless if in the attempt they knocked the League to pieces. I ought to tell you, by the way, that the Norwich branch, which at one time showed signs of dissolution, has got on its legs again, and is really both numerous and enthusiastic. So you may depend upon it that we shall not drop *all* to pieces. We are quite determined here at Hammersmith to keep things going if no one else will. We must never forget amongst other things that there are many times of reflex in these movements, and all politics are very dull at present owing largely to the deadlock in the Irish question, and the feeling among persons really progressive that we are being played upon by politicians for their benefit; the end of the Irish question will, I feel sure, mark a step in revolution. Meantime we have to stick to it and be patient, as I have no doubt you feel.

As to your own affairs: cannot you *manufacture* speakers, deliberately inaugurate a speakers' class? *Commonweal:* I admit that it has been dull lately, and for the reasons you stated. You see what we want here is, once more, three or four able writers that we can depend upon; we are obliged to shove in all sorts of twaddle from time to time to fill up—such is unpaid journalism, which, however, is not so bad as paid ditto. I shall be very glad to have Mavor's help. Kindly give me his present address. As for your article, which I hurried you so for: mere printers'consideration joined with the fact that it had not to do with passing events kept it back. We are going to get together a meeting of all our London speakers to see if we can shove the thing on a bit here. I am more and more sure that what we want at present is not mere numbers but a good band of steady workers who will stick to it and who understand the subject—only we want a good many of them.

Once more I am much encouraged by your letter, and am not in the least inclined to give in.

Good luck all round.

Kelmscott

To Jane Alice Morris *6* September 1888

Yesterday the weather, which had been drizzly in the morning, clearing up somewhat in the afternoon, we set off about 2.30 to go to Rushey, thinking we might get to Bampton, which your mother

has never seen, and we got down there comfortably enough: we intended coming straight back by boat, as we seemed too late to get up to Bampton and back, (it is two miles from the lock there,) but strolling up towards the town over the fields we thought we would go there and get a trap for the ladies, and that Walker and I would go back and pull the boat home: so we did this; but Mrs Walker could only go so slow that it was quite late before we got to Bampton. However we managed to see the church, which is a very fine one, but has been shockingly restored. There is Norman work in it, and transition; and a fine decorated nave with a most beautiful western doorway. The tower and spire is very pretty; much the same date as Broadwell but handsomer. Near the church is a very pretty little house used as a grammar school, and another house called the Deanery. The town is the queerest left-behind sort of a place: when Walker and I first came into the street there were two other persons visible, a small boy and a small girl. Well, it was nearly dark before we were well under way. I had to steer all the way, as Walker didn't like the job. It was a very dark night with drizzle now and then, and often one could barely see the bank. However we scarcely touched the bank at all, and got in about 10 o'clock. Frank had been sent out with a lantern to meet us, and we perceived the same as we came to Welly-Hole Reach, looking like a 'bright particular star'. It seems he had been nearly down to the Old Weir to look for us. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 14 September 1888

. . . I came up by the savage train on Tuesday last and went straight to Oxford St: with the result that I went straight to Tilbury Docks to see about things for a ship for a customer of ours. It was a curious ride by rail down the Essex coast from Fenchurch St. When you clear London somewhat the country would be both pretty & interesting if it were not for the blotches of commerce. Queer farm houses or wooded knolls & some curious little towns on the landward side, and river-ward great stretches of marshland are what you would see but for paper works, cement works &c with their attendant yellow brick hovels. Near Barking one comes near a beautiful old house (Elizabethan) of red brick and plaster, Eastbury House, quite a fine place. As to the docks they were desolation itself. The ships of the 'Orient Line' go to Australia through the Suez Canal, they are larger than anything you can imagine—and uglier. Inside a

mere floating hotel for 1st & 2nd class passengers, and pretty much a workhouse for the 3rd. Snobbery rampant over everything. We had already done carpetting for these ships & the customer wanted a few things for one in a hurry. By the way on Monday evening I went a drive with your mother through Langford Broadwell and Kencott to Alvescote (we picked up Harry at the station) the latter village I did not know well: it is so pretty, especially the place where the church is placed. We did not go into the church: the chancel of which has been rebuilt, but the nave is quaint & pretty but very small.

Now my darling I have got to make a call on our decoration at Holland Park, & then I go to Merton. . . .

To F. S. Ellis

Kelmscott
8 October 1888

I am really surprised at your not liking 'Tom Sawyer', especially as it is so *very* like Shakespeare, not to say Shelley.

I went out in the afternoon of Saturday, and a most grim and stormy afternoon it was: I caught nothing except that just as I was going away a lb. chub took my gudgeon and insisted on being caught. Saturday night was as cold as need be; but yesterday was better, and to-day is a mild beautiful morning: unhappily there is no river for me to-day, as we are all going to Fairford.

I wish you had been here instead of the new comer, whose shortcomings I am not used to like I am to yours and mine; so that we have no standing cause of quarrel; which I think is a necessity to a really good understanding. . . .

To Jane Alice Morris

Kelmscott House
17 October 1888

. . . I suppose May told you how we went to hear Mr Jones [1] read his play? I really got rather interested in it before it was over: he lives in Tadema's old house, & there are scraps of the Tademaesque decoration left about the place: I don't admire them: they appear to me too much made up of goose giblets and umbrellas.

I have been very busy since I saw you but all in a small way, so that there is little to tell of. I lecture on Tapestry for the Arts & Crafts on the first of November. I believe they are getting on pretty

[1] **Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929).**

well. On Monday I went on an Oxford St. journey down to the wilds of Surrey: our client lives on the top of Hind-head; so what Cobbett would have said to him I am sure I don't know. The view from there is certainly beautiful: curious to note the sand hills which it is the centre of lying like islands between the great chalk ranges of the Guildford Hills & the South Downs. But the place itself is quite a desert: brake, whortle berries, Scotch fir, nothing else will grow: it is well as a desert but when you complicate the matter by sticking horrible Cockney villas about it and attempting gardens, apparently for the sake of exhibiting specimens of the mange and rail in your acres of whortle berries with iron railings of singular hideousness why then indeed you *are* a fool. At any rate it was a beautiful day when I was there: and I prevented our client from performing one or two expensive pieces of folly; and the Fiddler's wages also—to wit —meat, drink and money. I have made up my mind, darling, to come & see you next week unless specially prevented: only I shall not be able to stay for more than 3 or 4 days, I am afraid. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
17 November [1888]

To T. J. Wise[1]

The book which I have in the press is called The House of the Wolfings. It is a story of the life of the Gothic tribes on their way through Middle Europe, and their first meeting with the Romans in war. It is meant to illustrate the melting of the individual into the society of the tribes: I mean apart from the artistic side of things that is its moral—if it has one. It is written partly in prose and partly in verse: but the verse is always spoken by the actors in the tale, though they do not always talk verse; much of it is in the Sagas, though it cannot be said to be performed on their model. It is a short book not much above 200 pp: I hope it will be out before Xmas.

Kelmscott House
17 November 1888

To Jane Alice Morris

. . . I am going to Nottingham to-night to lecture to-morrow & have got to finish my lecture before I go, so I have not much time to write a long screed. Yes we have been very busy the past week: I spoke on four consecutive days: last Saturday in St Paul's Cafe,

[1] **Ashley Library 1218. T. J. Wise (1849-1937), well-known bibliographer.**

Sunday Hyde Park, Monday Store St Hall: Tuesday Clerkenwell Green. At the latter place there was a bit of a shindy but not till the end when I had gone away: as a result I had to bail out a comrade on Wednesday, and spent a couple of hours in that sink of iniquity a Police Court. Thursday I was at the Arts & Crafts at Walker's lecture on printing; he was very nervous and ought to have written down his words: but of course he knew his subject thoroughly well: There were magic lantern slides of pages of books, and some telling contrasts between the good & the bad. There was a ridiculous Yankee there who was very much 'risen' by Walker's attacks on the ugly American printing; who after the lecture came blustering up to Walker to tell him he was wrong; so I went for him and gave him some candid speech on the subject of the said American periodicals. He was not a nice-looking man: no chin little forehead: in short a mere nose with whiskers (sandy). Mrs Parson's lecture was a great success here, the room crammed. May was in the chair: I was not present, as I had to go to a meeting of the Arts & Crafts. She is a curious looking woman: no signs of European blood in her, Indian with a touch of negro; but she speaks pure Yankee. I was much tickled by her indignation at the barbarous & backward means of communication in London. . . .

To Jane Alice Morris

Manchester
4 December 1888

Here I am for a day or two yet in the shabbiest of all back-yards-of-a-workshop. I am staying with Mr Hunter Watts an S.D.F. man and a very good fellow; but his lodgings are deadly dull. Just outside the window are the City Assize Courts, a dreary pretentious heap of buildings (by Waterhouse) built in a Gothic which is an insult to the memory of our forefathers. I am rather busy this week. I lectured for Mr Rowley's Sunday Society on Sunday afternoon, and spoke to a branch of the S.D.F. afterwards in the evening. Last night I lectured at Bolton to a fairly good audience; to-night I go to Blackburn, to-morrow to the Art Congress at Liverpool, and on Thursday to Rochdale, going home on Friday. I think Manchester gets nastier & shabbier every time I come there, my dear; but Socialism is taking some hold of the district now, partly owing to Hunter Watts' efforts. Bolton I *saw* in the dark: which perhaps was as well; though they tell me it is a cleaner & pleasanter place than Manchester, as it may well be. I have now seen my book through the press all but the title-

page,[1] so I shall soon be able to send a copy of the ordinary impression on to you, my dear: I think the large paper [edition] will be some time before it comes out. It will be a pretty piece of typography for modern times.

In spite of the nastiness of Manchester, I have got you 3 photos: for your vol. 2. One is a little old inn, the last old house in Manchester: the other two are interiors of Chatham College and are pretty. I do hope my dear Jenny that you will be comfortable in your new abode, and will get on with Miss Coates. Now no more this dull place gets into my pen I think. . . .

To Bruce Glasier 15 December 1888

. . . I am sorry to say that up here we have by no means got rid of our quarrels in getting rid of the Bloomsbury branch: there seems to be a sort of curse of quarrelling upon us. The Anarchist element in us seem determined to drive things to extremity and break us up if we do not declare for Anarchy—which I for one will not do. On the other hand the ' Moderates', Mrs Besant & Co., by their foolish wooden attacks on us are taking away from the reasonable party inside (if, alas, we must use the word party) all chance of holding things together. The only thing to be done is to go on steadily trying to strengthen local bodies. Hammersmith remains satisfactory and is increasing in solid strength, especially in speakers. But it is getting into bad odour with some of our fiercer friends, I think principally because it tacitly & instinctively tries to keep up the first idea of the League, the making of genuine convinced Socialists without reference to passing exigences of tactics, whether they take the form of attacking (or running away from) the police in the streets, or running a candidate for the school-board. I find that living in this element is getting work rather too heavy for me. It is lamentable that Socialists will make things hard for their comrades. All this I ask you to keep *strictly* private and confidential i.e. not to talk to others about it, as I don't want to discourage young members: but you are old enough in the movement to have discounted a good deal of it, and therefore will not be discouraged. All this after all is but one corner of the movement, which really taken as a whole and looked at from some way off is going on swimmingly. . . .

The House of the Woljings.

To F. S. Ellis[1] December 1888

I am very glad that you like the new book.[2] I quite agree with you about the type; they have managed to knock the guts out of it somehow. Also I am beginning to learn something about the art of typesetting; and now I see what a lot of difference there is between the work of the conceited numskulls of to-day and that of the 15th and 16th century printers merely in the arrangement of the words, I mean the spacing out: it makes all the difference to the beauty of a page of print. If ever I print another book I shall enter into the conflict on this side also. However this is all grief that comes of fresh knowledge and I am pretty well pleased with the book as to its personal appearance.

Kelmscott House

To Jane Alice Morris 23 December 1888

By the way I did intend to give you some information about the *stocks* in my last and it somehow slipped out of my memory. When we lived at Woodford there were stocks there on a little bit of wayside green in the middle of the village: beside them stood the *cage*, a small shanty some 12 ft sq: and it was built of brown brick roofed with blue slate. I suppose it had been quite recently in use since its *style* was not earlier than the days of fat George. I remember that I used to look at the two threats of law [and] order with considerable terror, and decidedly preferred to walk on the opposite side of the road; but I never heard of anybody being locked up in the cage or laid by the heels in the stocks.

Well my dear, I wish you well through your festivities; our Christmas will be quiet enough, and I shall principally use what holidays I get in doing patterns for stuffs &c which work Mr Smith rather presses on me.

I am lecturing to-night for the branch. I was at Walham Green in the morning, but the meeting was small: really I think chiefly because the road was so very muddy that standing there was by no means pleasant unless you stood on the curb-stone.

I went my journey to Stanmore[3] near Harrow yesterday (a

[1] **Mackail, ii. 215.**

[2] *The House of the Wolfings* was printed at the Chiswick Press in a special type modelled on an old Basel fount. The same fount was used for *The Roots of the Mountains* with slight modifications, next year.

[3] It was for Stanmore Hall that the great series of Grail Legend tapestries was executed by Morris & Co., which represents the culmination of the firm's work. The tapestries, with their figures by Burne-Jones and foliage and flowers by Morris, were completed in 1894.

beautiful day) the country there is pretty after a fashion, very well-wooded and up & down; but much beset with 'gentlemens houses'. Nothing but grass fields everywhere. Our client sent his carriage to meet me and I couldn't help laughing to see the men I met touching their hats, clearly not to me, but to *it*. . . .

Your mother & I have taken to backgammon: & she backgammoned me the other day: all the same though she doesn't play as well as you do. . . .

Kelmscott House

To Jane Alice Morris 1 January 1889

I came back yesterday from Hadham; auntie was pretty well, & the Grannie in very good spirits but very deaf. She went a walk with me to the church in the morning: they are 'restoring' the nave: a wanton piece of stupidity, as there was really nothing to do to it. However there was no excuse for touching the roof, which is quite sound: so they left that alone: in short the only harm is the new plaster, & the new modern glass, but that is considerable. They have found one or two bits of painting which they have left: one a good patch of that imitation of patterned stuff such as we know at Fairford & Burford, but not so elaborate; a rough bold good pattern. I went to see the Berrys with them: and thought the house very nice: it is really a 16th century building much faced up: but the rooms with that pleasantness of an old house: some of them with that regular old panelling in them where the mouldings are not 'mitred', but the horizontal ones die off before they meet the vertical. I was there two nights & played backgammon both with auntie & Granny: the latter beat me one night (to her great delight) but they, and especially Auntie, played with the utmost recklessness.

This is a bad business of the burning of Clouds,[1] isn't it? When I saw it (the year before last I think) it looked so solid that one could not think of its being destroyed. I was at the Grange this morning and aunt Georgie read me a letter to Margaret from one of the daughters which gave a really good account of the scene. It was touch and go for some of them: I saw Webb yesterday & he made light of it as he would be likely to do. It seems it will be rebuilt, which is a good thing; but there is a certain feeling of weariness in the proceeding, isn't there dear?

Webb says that some of the walls may be all right, especially as

[1] **Built by Philip Webb for the Hon. Percy Wyndham at East Knoyle.**

they are mostly built of sandstone, not limestone: the lower rooms, or some of them, were not burnt. The walls were 3 ft thick. One of Uncle Ned's cartoons that he did for the church in Rome was there & was burnt: but that is the only important unreplaceable thing I have heard of. Our long carpet was I imagine saved.

The weather changed on Tuesday & yesterday was a bright beautiful day: but to-day is cold, rainy, sleety, but not frosty. I think I should care mighty little about it (in January) if I were at Kelmscott, but bad weather, especially fog, does make London wretched: indeed I feel very like not going out in it this evening; but I think I must, as it is a Ways & Means evening at the League. . . .

To Bruce Glasier 21 January 1889

. . . The truth must be faced, that the 'Communists of the League' are in a very weak position in the Socialist party at present. We have been much damaged both by parliamentaries & Anarchists, & I don't think we are strong enough to run a paper; although, numbers apart, there is something to be said for us.

You see John Burns has got some of his desire—rather him than me in the position—ugh! [1]

Kelmscott House

To Jane Alice Morris 21 January 1889

. . . Yes, doesn't it look beautiful to see that mist-sea on a bright morning! But I remember in Iceland seeing another beautiful and curious thing: that was after all the mist was quite cleared from the mountains and everything was as clear as glass, the sky overhead cloudless blue, four or five white clouds like bundles of wool rolling about the hollows of the mountains: looking soft but quite solid. That is the great charm of mountainous countries that the whole day is a drama, and the changes are so magical and sudden.

Yes, Jane Cobden has got on to the County Council; though I suppose there will be a fight about whether she and the other lady will be allowed to sit on it___John Burns, as you see, has come in at the head of the poll; but the other Socialists did not do well: he is very popular with the working men partly I think on account of his personality. On the whole the London election has been a great blow to the reactionists; though I don't suppose that the County Council can do much directly as they are now constituted: yet they

John Burns was elected Liberal-Labour member on the L.C.C. Glasier's note.

may become Socialist in feeling, and so make a rallying-point for a kind of revolt against the Parliament. In Paris, you know, the *tendency* of the Municipality is decidedly Socialist, and do such things as voting substantial sums of money to men on strike, and so forth. Did I tell you that there is to be a Socialist Congress in Paris this summer? I suppose I shall have to go: in which [case] I ought to try to improve my French, don't you think my dear? Though mind you, if I were ever so much better at it I should not attempt to speak in French. I have made an engagement to go to Glasgow about the 18th of Feb. I don't much relish the idea of Glasgow in Candlemastide; but I am to speak to a School of Art and they will pay my expenses, which will give me an opportunity of seeing our branches & speaking for them gratis. . . .

Kropotkin was very pleasant last Wednesday, though he was far from well. Sitting with us in the dining-room after the lecture he told us many interesting though sad things about our comrades in Siberia & the prisons, and how good and self-sacrificing the Nihilists are out there. Also he told us an anecdote which I will tell you, my dear.

There was a little colony of Russians in the Far West of America right among the Redskins: one day the Redskins fell on them and burnt their fields and lifted their cattle. Now if they had been Yankees they would have shouldered their rifles and gone after the Indians and shot as many of them as they could, and so have established a regular deadly feud between them. But the Russians bided their time and watching an opportunity, got hold of all the women of the tribe and brought them home to their own block houses where they kept them fast but treated them well. Then the Indians came to them, and said: 'Have you got our women?' 'Yes.' 'How are they?' 'O pretty well thank you.' 'Well, give them back to us!' 'Wait a bit.' 'If you don't we will fall on you and kill you.' 'No you won't because then we will kill *them* first.' 'Well, give them back to us.' 'Presently, but you must do something first.' 'What?' 'Why you must till our land again that you burned.' 'We don't know how.' 'Never mind, we will teach you.' So the Indians turned to, and as they worked between the plough-stilts & otherwise the Russians stood by & encouraged them; crying out: 'There! Good fellow, how well he works! How clever he is!'and so on. Then, the work done, they got their women again & they had a feast together, and were very good friends ever after. Isn't that a pretty little story?___

To the Editor•, The Daily News 30 January 1889

MONUMENTS IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

I do not quite understand whether Mr Shaw Lefevre's [1] scheme implies any meddling with either the Abbey Church, or the interesting remains of the ancient buildings near it; if it does, it cannot be too severely condemned; but your own article (of January 26th) on this subject gives a dangerous hint, which I hope will not be taken, for 'beautifying, at a comparatively small expense, the cloisters which form part of the ancient chapel,' I must say that part of the 'expense' would be the destruction of the cloisters themselves, and such an expense is not easily measured in money. As to the general question of monuments in Westminster Abbey, you say with truth that it is one of the most beautiful of ancient fanes. I do not think that it is an exaggeration to say that at the beginning of the sixteenth century it was the most beautiful of Gothic buildings. Everything which has been either taken away from it or added to it since then has done more or less to destroy this beauty, until to-day the exterior no longer exists as a work of art, and even in the matchless interior we are forced, if we are to receive any impression of beauty from it, to abstract our thoughts from a mass of monuments which, even apart from their incongruity with the delicate loveliness of the ancient architecture, are for the most part the most hideous specimens of false art than can be found in the whole world; mere Cockney nightmares and aberrations of the human intellect. I do not think, Sir, that I am saying too much in asserting that this is generally acknowledged. For what has been done in the past I fear that there is no remedy possible; or at least only a very partial one; since most of the abortions have been built into the very structure of the Church. It is true that if we had any common sense we might at once set to work and remove whatever of these idiocies is removable without interfering with the structure; but with a sinking heart I must admit that we lack the due amount of common sense for that simple purging, that demonstration against a national disgrace. There remains, however, the future: surely, Sir, we might close Westminster Abbey once for all to any more memorials, whatever their form might be: it appears to me a poor reward for a man's past services to privilege him to share in the degradation of a true monument of bygone ages, a record of men who, to judge by the works which they left behind

[1] First Commissioner of Works, afterwards Lord Eversley.

them, were not unworthy, though they have chanced to be nameless to us. If some evil fate does compel us to continue the series of conventional undertakers[5] lies, of which the above-mentioned brutalities, in all their loathsomeness, are but too fitting an expression, surely now that we have learned that if they are necessary they are still ugly, we need not defile a beautiful building with them. Therefore, Sir, I most cordially agree with your suggestion that St Pauls should be utilised for the stowage of such fatuities: and that all the more as it was clearly meant to fulfil that function. Also, properly speaking, it is a modern building, the product of the architect's office, a work conceived and carried out under much the same conditions as such a building would be now, and expressing much the same aspirations and ideals as ours. Whereas between us and the mournful but beautiful ruins of Westminster Abbey, once built by the hands of the people for the hearts of the people, lies a gulf wide, deep, unbridgeable, at least at present.

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1]

Kelmscott
Easter Monday [1889]

As I have been away some time I will hereby bestow some of my tediousness on you. I only got here on Thursday and feel as if I had been staying here a long time; not that I have been bored with it, as I have enough to do what with my story *The Roots of the Mountains*, what with other work which I ought to do and don't. The country is about six weeks backward; more backward by a good deal than it was last year, though that was late: neither the big trees (except the chestnuts) nor the apple trees show any sign of life yet. The garden is very pretty, though there are scarcely any flowers in blossom except the primroses; but there are such beautiful promises of buds and things just out of the ground that it makes amends for all. The buds of the wild tulip, which is one of the beautifullest flowers there is, just at point to open. Jenny and I went up to Buscot wood this morning: it is such a change from our river plain that it is like going into another country; yet I don't much care about a wood unless it is a very big one; and Buscot is scarcely more than a coppice; but the blue distance between the trunks was very beautiful. As to the weather, bearing in mind that things are so much behindhand, it is not bad. To-day has been March all over; rain-showers, hail, wind,

[1] From Mackail, ii. 220-1.

dead calm, thunder, finishing with a calm frosty evening sky. The birds are amusing, especially the starlings, whereof there are many: but some damned fool has been bullying our rooks so much that they have only got six nests, so that we haven't got the proper volume of sound from them.

One grief, the sort of thing that is always happening in the spring: there were some beautiful willows at Eaton Hastings which to my certain knowledge had not been polled during the whole 17 years that we have been here; and now the idiot Parson has polled them into wretched stumps. I should like to cut off the beggar's legs and have wooden ones made for him out of the willow timber, the value of which is about 7s. 6d.

I am so very sorry to hear of poor Kate's misfortune, and am not a little uneasy about it. I didn't see her last Wednesday, though I called. She was poorly then, having had some bad nights with poor dear Charley. It is such a grievous business altogether that, rightly or wrongly, I try not to think of it too much lest I should give way altogether, and make an end of what small use there mav be in my life.

To the Editor, The Daily News 17 April 1889

May I be allowed a further word or two on the subject of monuments in Westminster Abbey and its precincts, since I see by your issue of the nth April that it appears probable that the plan of carrying the plague of monuments into the cloisters and Chapter House will be approved of by the authorities? I think that, whatever scheme for the continuance of what is called, in the detestable slang of the day, our National Valhalla, may be second-worst, this surely must be called the worst. Here very briefly is the position. Incongruous monuments have been allowed to block up and disfigure the Abbey church; this is now allowed by every one who claims to know or care anything about art to have been a deplorable mistake; nevertheless, we are now preparing to carry on this mistake, which we deplore, by bringing these incongruous monuments into the Cloisters and the Chapter House, which have hitherto escaped the evil. Thus are we hag-ridden by a mere convention, which we have allowed to become our master; and we are inexcusable in the matter, for we are sinning against knowledge. Our forefathers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at least acted in good faith: they looked on Westminster Abbey as an ugly accident of barbarism, which they could

not spoil but might improve by any work of theirs. We know it is an exquisite work of art, which we can disfigure but cannot improve by our work. The alternative to this lazy, cowardly, and senseless piece of destructiveness I have suggested before in your columns. It is to transfer the 'National Valhalla' to St Paul's, which no doubt was intended to perform this function, amongst others, and which cries out for some incident, good, bad, or indifferent, to break its vast blank space. Westminster Abbey can then be declared finally closed against monuments, and we can debate at our leisure any scheme for removing to the new home of 'distinguished' dead men whatever can be removed from the Abbey without injury to its genuine character. I must say that I am writing to you in something like despair; for this is so obviously the common-sense solution of the difficulty that I fear it is not likely to prove attractive to Englishmen of the present generation, to whom this same common sense, with the almost exclusive possession of which they have been so long credited, appears such a precious treasure that it is rather to be hoarded than used, lest, like other market wares, it should be consumed in the using.
Kelmscott House, Upper Mall, Hammersmith.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
I Iammersmith
[April 1889?]

To W. R. Lethaby[1]

My dear Mr Lethaby

Thanks for the papers duly received. I don't (by the way) agree with you that I have said the worst of the monuments; I think on the contrary that I have let them down very easily. I cannot see why one should show any tenderness to such monstrous and ghastly pieces of perversity and bluntness of feeling as they exhibit themselves in spoiling one of the 3 or 4 most beautiful buildings in the world. By themselves they are lumps of ineptitude and insults, I will not say to beauty, but to the common sense of a simply stupid person. If they were only this, as they would be say in St Paul's, I wouldn't trouble my head about them any more than I do about such scrawls at humanity as Racine or Pope—but in Westminster Abbey! My dear fellow, if I have said so little about the unspeakable wretches

[1] **William Richard Lethaby (1857-1931), architect, afterwards Surveyor of Westminster Abbey, Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art. From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist*, i. 3-4.**

who daubed them on there, it is simply because 'I couldn't do justice to them', as the celebrated Yorkshire man said.[1]

I really must take you to the transepts at Westminster one of these days, & explain. You needn't be afraid, I don't think the beak will give you more than 14 days; though I shall probably get 2 months.

Yours very truly
William Morris

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
April [1889]

To C. R. Ashbee

Dear Mr Ashbee

There has been some mistake: I was depending on Mr Fry for all the absolutely necessary slides, and thought I would bring any others I could get. And as a matter of fact I haven't got one. However I believe I can get some. By the way you must understand that I know nothing about such things so I hope you will get some one to help me. I will come (and thanks) to dinner: but I must certainly be on the spot before the lecture begins so as to arrange properly.

The most necessary slides to me are: 1. the front of the Parthenon or some Greek Temple (a restoration, the ruins will be no use): 2. a Roman building, a longish facade: 3. an early Byzantine building, the Dome of the Rock (Ferguson) the best (I think I can get St Sophia): 4. a south French Romanesque building, St Trophime at Aries the best: 5. a Saxon, Bradford-on-Avon: 6. an English Norman building, Iffley would do: 7. Early English (I settled with Mr Fry about this): 8. Decorated: 9. Perpendicular: 10. Elizabethan, Montacute the best.

If you would kindly get me these in case I cannot, all well: if not I must do as well as I can either with or without slides.

Thank you perhaps one of my daughters will come but I am not sure.

Yours truly
William Morris

P.S. I shall be at Merton Abbey on Tuesday and shall come on from there.

[1] **'Na, I canna do justice to it', said the Yorkshireman, celebrated for his foul language, on reaching the top of a steep hill with a load of turnips and finding that some of his friends hud removed the tail of his cart.**

To Mrs Burne-Jones[1] 13 May 1889

. • • Thursday afternoon was grey and stormy: the lightning twinkled over the White Horse as we passed by, and just at Swindon down came the rain floods. However I had rather a pleasant journey to Westbury, as the rain didn't last long, and every field corner was lovely. Some way off I saw the downs rise mountainous above the town, and remembered them by token of a modern White Horse which somewhat spoils the lovely headland they push into the plain. The town is little and, as I expected, dull, dull, dull: no old houses, a great big church much spoiled by restoration, and my dull, but not ugly inn close to it. I got in about seven, so had a longish time before bed, which I partly got rid of by going a little way up the down after my dinner: so you see gout was not rampant. The resources of the Lopes Arms were not great; but they (with all civility) provided me for breakfast with what to me has been of late a rarity; to wit, a genuine addled egg. However their hearts were in the right places if the eggs were not. Next morning I drove to Edington along the feet of the Downs, which are very fine: also the villages push up right into their buttresses with cottages and trees, so that it is lovely; the building being tolerable: so came I to Edington, which was like one of my dream-churches, so big and splendid: the whole population of Edington and its two neighbours could easily go to church in one of its transepts. Besides it a beautiful little fifteenth-century house with pretty garden, and beyond, the Abbey gardens and fish-ponds and a village green on the other side: except that the parson is a lubber-fiend and that the people are as poor as may be, nothing need be better. So back to Westbury and in early afternoon to Bradford. Quite a pretty town and as gay as gay; away from the downs in a steep little valley built all up the southern-looking slope; all up and down with steps and queer nooks: of stone every house, most of them old, a good many mediaeval. The bridge fifteenth-century, with a queer little toll-house on it. The church a very big and fine one, but scraped to death by G. Scott, the (happily) dead dog. Close by, the Saxon chapel, a very beautiful little building, but shamefully vulgarized by restoration, cast iron railings, and sixpence a head. Out in the meadow, awkwardly near the Railway Station, Barton Farm with old house and farm buildings, the big fourteenth-century

From Mackail, ii. 221-2.

barn one of them. It is very fine, but I think Great Coxwell is bigger, and I like it better.[1]

To Bruce Glasier 13 May 1889

I suppose you have seen or read, or at least tried to read, *Looking Backward.* I *had* to on Saturday, having promised to lecture on it. Thank you, I wouldn't care to live in such a cockney paradise as he imagines.

Kelmscott

To Mrs Burne-Jones[2] Midsummer Day 1889

Haymaking is going on like a house afire; I should think such a hay-time has seldom been; heavy crop and wonderful weather to get it in. For the rest the country is one big nosegay, the scents wonderful, really that is the word; the life of us holiday-makers luxurious to the extent of making one feel wicked, at least in the old sense of bewitched.

We went to Great Coxwell yesterday, and also to Little Coxwell, where there is a funny little church with a 14th-century wooden roof over the nave, the church much smaller than Kelmscott. We were delighted with the barn again. The farmer turned up and seemed a nice sort of chap; he said his family had been there for hundreds of years. William Morris was, it seems, lord of the manor there: we saw his brass again, it is really a very pretty one.[3] The harvest being now out of the barn, we saw the corbels that support the wall pieces: they are certainly not later than 1250, so the barn is much earlier than I thought. The building of the walls and buttresses is remarkably good and solid.

The roses are not at their best, yet I shall bring you a good bunch. The pink martagon lilies have been very fine. Raspberries any amount, but none to eat for a fortnight at least: no strawberries yet. . . .

Kelmscott

To Mrs Burne-Jones[4] July-August [1889?]

The birds were very delightful about us; I have been of late so steeped in London that it was a quite fresh pleasure to see the rooks

[1] The thirteenth-century tithe barn near Kelmscott which Morris always asserted was one of the finest buildings in the world—'unapproachable in its dignity, as beautiful as a cathedral, yet with no ostentation of the builder's art'.

[2] From Mackail, ii. 222-3.

[3] This refers to the two fifteenth-century brasses in Great Coxwell Church: William Morys, 'sumtym fermer of CokyswelP, and Johane his wife. The former is of a man in a short gown, with a pouch at his girdle.

[4] From Mackail, i. 234.

about, who have been very busy in this showery weather. There was no lack of herons in these upper waters, and in the twilight the stint or summer snipe was crying about us and flitting from under the bank and across the stream: such a clean-made, neat-feathered, light grey little chap he is, with a wild musical little note like all the moor-haunting birds. . . .

To Jane Alice Morris

Kelmscott House
30 August 1889

. . . I came up from Lechlade to Oxford with Mr Hobbs; and we talked amicably together. He told me that his new machine did not answer for cutting corn that was much laid. He was boastful over the ram lambs which he had sold in May (I think in May) and showed me a paper with an account of them as the Kelmscott flock, which sounds grand, doesn't it. I lost him at Oxford but tumbled upon Ogden of the Oxford branch of the S.L. [Socialist League] & rode with him to London and we talked about the strikes wherewith he was much excited.[1] Much excited also I found our people at the League; as they well might be; for however it ends, it will have been by far the most important one of our times; that is *the* most important one, since strikes belong only to our times. From what I can see this morning I think it most likely that the men will win, and that will be a great encouragement for the future. Mrs Tochatti has been working very hard at getting money for the strikers, and the Hammersmith Branch generally has done well in that respect. On the whole the spirit is very good.

I really enjoyed my journey to and fro Yarmouth. I got there on the most beautiful evening with the low sun setting over the great flats. The country is most curious about there: the great alluvial flats with their rivers and wide ditches are bounded by low banks of sand and gravel grown over by heather and ling and bracken as if you were in a mountainous country: and then there is the fen almost on a level with you. The town itself is very pleasant: the little 'rows' in which all the workmen and most of the others live, open out into a huge market place: above the town the river widens into a kind of lake (called Bredon) which is, of course, tidal: the harbour is made by the river defended from the sea by a long low bank of sand. It was full of ships and smacks; we walked 2 miles along it yesterday, and watched the smacks being tugged out to sea, for the herring fishery

[1] **The great London dock strike of August-September of this year.**

is now beginning. I am sorry to say that the fishermen are terribly exploited by the capitalists and all very badly off. I wish *they* would strike. . . .

To [?][x] 31 August 1889

I went straight to the League and found our people there in a great state of excitement about the strike, the importance of which I had not at all understood in the country; only you see we are two days late for news at Kelmscott. However I thought that perhaps our folk *z* little exaggerated the importance of it, as to some of them it seemed that now at last the revolution was beginning. Whereas indeed it began before the Mammoth ended, and is now only going on. Yet I don't want to belittle the strike, which *is* of such importance, chiefly as showing such a good spirit on the part of the men. They will, I fear, be beaten; and perhaps their yesterday's manifesto will not do them good as mere strikers. On the other hand it was a step which they were sure to take, if the masters held out; as in spite of the assertions of the daily press the tendency of the strike has been Socialistic; and I am very glad that they have taken it, since as aforesaid the real point of the strike is the sense of combination which it is giving to the men, and their winning or losing matters little, especially as what they ask for is so small. That the capitalistic press should turn against them for the said manifesto, is a matter of course, so after this hint at a general strike (it can be no more than a hint) it is clear that there is a feeling abroad wider than a mere attack on these muddling dock directors. I am told, and believe it, that the attack is on sweating in general. Our people have been very active; the Hammersmith branch alone having collected (mostly on Sunday and Monday last) nearly £20; a large sum for Socialists to handle.

To the Editorj The Pall Mall Gazette 10 September 1889

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL

A note published from a correspondent about Peterborough Cathedral is somewhat alarming. Will you allow me a few words on this subject? As to what has been done to Peterborough I will not say much; some of us thought that when the necessary rebuilding of the arches of the crossing took place, it might have been possible to save the tower from rebuilding; but it was at any rate highly credit-

[1] From Mackail, ii. 224-5.

able to the good sense of the Chapter that they refused to allow the church to be disfigured with an experimental modern Norman tower, especially as much pressure was put upon them in favour of that absurdity. Let us hope that they will understand their responsibilities in the future as well as they did on that occasion. For it seems that not only are we threatened with a bedizening of the cathedral with modern ecclesiastical upholstery of various kinds, but that also the structure of the building is to be dealt with. This latter work may be necessary; and in that case, if rightly done, though we must regret the necessity, we may at least preserve something of the old building; but it may be wrongly done, and in that case the old building is destroyed.

Now, is it worth saving? If not, let us say so at once, and when it becomes dangerous pull it down without more words. But there are not many people, I imagine, who would like to confess that they are prepared to do this. What they really are prepared to do, I fear, is to allow a sham to take the place of the genuine work, and this at a vast expense of labour and also of flattery and humbug all round. Now, I assert both that Peterborough Cathedral is worth saving, and that it can be saved. But it will not be saved unless the public watches it carefully; for it is much easier, and to a commonplace and unenthusiastic mind much pleasanter, to pull an old building down and put up a sham in its place than to expend the constant trouble, ingenuity and patience requisite to keep it in a genuine and sound condition.

Let me remind your readers that Peterborough Cathedral is a Norman church (with a few later additions), entered through a magnificent portico or west front of Early Pointed work, which front is unique in this country, a miracle of grace and beauty. This front, your correspondent says, is to be 'repaired,' But it does not need repair in the ordinary sense of the word: to the eye of the passer-by it is in excellent repair. There is, however, a rumour that it is structurally unsound; which may be true, since something or other (probably the draining of the fen) has damaged the foundations of the church. If it is true, a remedy ought to be sought and found at once; if it is not, the front ought not to be touched. Now, in the first place before we give our money to the restoration committee, who is to assure us of the truth as to the stability of this great work of art? The architect of the cathedral, aided by his very able clerk of the works? That is not enough. The matter is too important to be left to the

judgement of one man. There should be a jury called (to which the architect of the cathedral should be ineligible) comprising the men best skilled in construction: engineers as well as architects, foreigners as well as British: who should give a report on the matter to the public. That report being made, if the decision were unfavourable, the question would then be, How can it be saved? But it would have to be borne in mind that the thing to avoid is *rebuilding;* if it were rebuilt it would not be really and wholly saved. For myself, I am quite sure that it could be saved (supposing it unsound) without rebuilding.

This, it seems to me, is at least the kind of way in which the question should be treated. I am aware that it would cost a great deal in trouble, anxiety and labour; but I for one think that the building would be worth all that; and as for those who do not think it would be worth the trouble to preserve the church, I call upon them to state this plainly and then to stand aside and let the work be done by those who really care about the ancient art of the country. I also call upon the public generally not to give another penny to the restoration fund until they are quite sure that it will be used for the preservation of the actual building, and not for pulling it down and putting a modern substitute in its place.

To Bruce Glasier 16 October 1889

All right I will be in Glasgow on the Sunday; and I think Crane had better give the lecture as he is fresher than I am to a Glasgow audience; and I am writing to tell him so. If I lectured I would call it 'The Close of the 19th Century', of which I think something could be made.

Good luck! I have got a whole sheaf of letters to write and must shut up.

16 Tantallon Place
Edinburgh

To Jane Alice Morris 2 November 1889

Here I am, and all of me that is not talked away will be back at home sometime on Monday evening. . . . The Congress is now over,[1] and Crane, Walker, Sanderson & myself go to Glasgow this

[1] The Art Congress, which met under the presidency of the Marquis of Lome, at which an attempt was made by a section of its promoters to capture it for Socialism. Morris lectured on dyeing.

afternoon. The Congress has not been much of a success, I fancy: I was in the chair at some monumentally dull papers; and you may imagine how I fidgetted, my dear. However I behaved pretty well, and did my best to keep the dull times off them; apparently with some success, since the Dispatch, a Tory evening paper here, declares that the ill-success of the congress is owing to Crane and me and our Socialist vagaries: and in fact we managed to get a good deal of Socialism into our discourses. The Socialist meetings were quite successful. Walker after much suffering seems to have got through his lecture with credit. . . .

To F. S. Ellis [1] 21 November 1889

I think before my next book comes out I shall design a chintz for bookbinding, and if I do I shall get it calendered so as to keep the dirt off—what do you think? As to the printing the difficulty of getting it really well done shows us the old story again. It seems it is no easy matter to get good hand-press men, so little work is done by the hand-press: that accounts for some defects in the book,[2] caused by want of care in distributing the ink. I really am thinking of turning printer myself in a small way; the first step to that would be getting a new fount cut. Walker and I both think Jenson's the best model, taking all things into consideration. What do you think again? Did you ever have his Pliny? I have a vivid recollection of the vellum copy at the Bodleian.

Kelmscott House

To Mrs Emma Morris 24 December 1889

Dearest Mother

Thank you very much for your kind letter, and for sending me the paper knife. We are all well; and as for me I rather like the weather for winter-weather. Yesterday morning was indeed beautiful, and Jenny went with a friend to the Chiswick Horticultural Gardens, which are still in existence though sadly built up. I remember as clearly as if it were yesterday going with father there when I was quite a little boy, and have never been inside the place since. How the neighbourhood must have altered since then! Indeed it has altered very much, and that for the worse, since we first came to Turnham Green.

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 227-8. The last great interest of Morris's life begins at this point—the inception of the Kelmscott Press.**

[2] ***The Roots of the Mountains.***

I have been so very busy lately with the work at Oxford Street and Merton, that I have had no time to turn round, or I should have come down and seen you. I will do so shortly after Christmas. Janey and I remembered that you liked the champagne which I sent you last year, and I'm sure it will do you good to drink a glass now and then; so we are sending you a little more, which ought to reach you before the New Year. I hope you will like it, dearest Mother.

I shall be writing to Henrietta as well as you, but give her my best love, which I send her, and to you, my dearest mother, my best of love and good wishes.

The paper knife has not come yet, or I would tell you what I think of it.

Good-bye, dearest Mother. Your most affectionate son
William Morris

To Bruce Glasier 19 March [1890]

I have been a long time answering your letter: need I make any excuses? Thank you for your kind estimate of my last work: I am truly glad that it pleases you. It is not popular, but I think some people read it and like it. As to the movement, between you and me the League don't get on—except like a cow's tail, downwards. Up here there is now a great deal of quarrelling (in which I take no part), the basis of which is that some of them want the paper made 'more revolutionary', i.e. they want to write the articles themselves (which they can't do), and to do a little blood and thunder without any meaning, which might get *me* into trouble but couldn't hurt them. In all this there is no great harm (and no malice) if we were flourishing; but we are not. I am now paying for the League (including paper) at the rate of £500 a year, and I cannot stand it; at Whitsuntide I must withdraw half of that, whatever may happen: which will probably be the end of *Commonweal*, followed by the practical end of the League. A little while ago this would have seemed very terrible, but it does not trouble me much now. Socialism is spreading, I suppose on the only lines on which it could spread, and the League is moribund simply because we are outside those lines, as I for one must always be. But I shall be able to do just as much work in the movement when the League is gone as I do now. The main cause of the failure (which was obvious at least two years ago) is that you cannot keep a body together without giving it something to do in the present, and now, since people will willingly listen to Socialist doctrine,

our rank and file have nothing to do. But of course you know more about all this than I can tell you. Meantime, it is a matter of course that I shall do what I can to put off the evil day for *C'weal,* and I am sure you will help. Try to make arrangements to come up at Whitsuntide; I will find you quarters. This letter is hurried and rough; so please keep it to yourself.

To Bruce Glasier *6* April [1890]

My dear Glasier

. . . *Commonweal* appears to have discovered the widow's cruse; for it goes on buying and selling and living on the loss quite triumphantly. The (genuine) sale is a little going up, and I think we shall be able to keep it going through the year. Kitz is by no means a bad sec. in that respect.

Otherwise I can't say that I call the League prospects good. Outside the Hammersmith branch the *active* (?) members in London mostly consider themselves Anarchists, but don't know anything about Socialism and go about ranting revolution in the streets, which is about as likely to happen in our time as the conversion of Englishmen from stupidity to quickwittedness. A great deal of our trouble comes from Messrs Donald and Mahon, who have been rather clever at pulling us to pieces, but could do nothing towards building up even their own humbugging self-seeking party.

Now I must do notes for *C'weaL* I don't like the job, as I have a new book on hand which amuses me vastly.

To Mrs Burne-Jones [1] Kelmscott House 10 June 1890

I have had three outings—no, four—two of them business though. Item to Chislehurst after a job: villas (some desperately ugly, others according to the new light) in the beautiful woods with lots of oak growing in them which to me is a treat, as I see so little oak about Kelmscott. Yes, villas and nothing but villas save a chemist's shop and a dry public house near the station: no sign of any common people, or anything but gentlemen and servants—a beastly place to live in, don't you think?

Next place was better—in a way—a house of a very rich [man]—and such a wretched uncomfortable place! a sham Gothic house of fifty years ago now being added to by a young architect of the com-

[1] From Mackail, ii. 245- 7.

mercial type—men who are very bad. Fancy, in one of the rooms there was not a pane of glass that opened! Well, let that flea stick on the wall. Stanmore is the name of the place: it is really quite pretty about, though only about ten miles from London (near Harrow), great big properties all about, the wall of one park next to the wall of another, which has at any rate preserved the trees. Smith and I walked thence to Edgware over most beautiful meadows with scarce a house to be seen till you come to Edgware, which is a little melancholy town or large village; old, not ugly, but too visibly the home of most abundant poverty.

The next outing was an Anti-Scrape one to Lincoln. That was exceedingly delightful to me. The town has a terrible blot on it, a great factory for machines down by the river, which seems to take a pleasure in smoking; indeed I suppose its masters are practically the masters of the whole town. However that is the worst of it: there is a longish oldish street on the flat, and at the end of it a beautiful gate across, now the Guildhall, and it rises steeper and steeper till before you come to the close you almost have to crawl, and most of the way the leaden roof of the minster is the horizon; the houses mostly oldish red brick and pantiles. There is another most beautiful gate into the close, over which show the different planes of the minster most wonderfully. The whole place is chock full of history: there is work of the first Norman bishop, Remigius, who strangely enough moved his see there from Dorchester on the Thames, so well known to me. The rest (and almost all) is in gradated periods of Early Pointed; outside one may perhaps find fault with parts, especially the East Front (only I had a pleasing feeling that I was not responsible for them). But when we got inside all criticism fell, and one felt—well, quite happy—and as if one never wanted to go away again. I had seen it all more than twenty years ago, but somehow was much more impressed this time: the church is not high inside, though it is long and broad, but its great quality is a kind of careful delicacy of beauty, that no other English minster that I have seen comes up to: in short a miracle of art, that nowhere misses its intention. There is a little stained glass (early thirteenth century) as good as the best, and some of the sculpture at least belongs to the best work of the time. Outside the church and close to it is a huge Norman Castle, the *enceinte* quite complete, a piece of the keep left: a horrible modern prison and court house inside the old walls. Five minutes from the close gate towards the open country

you come to the gate of the Roman town, quite unornamented, but sound and well-built. Down the slope of the hill are still left two twelfth-century houses. One of them, in honour surely of little Sir Hugh, is called the Jew's House; I cheapened an old chest there of a lady somewhat of Mrs Wilfer's type, who received us with the dignity of a fallen Queen.

To [?][1] 18 June 1890

I am steadily at work reading my own poems, because we are really going to bring out a one-volume 'Earthly Paradise' this autumn. Some people would say that the work was hard. 'The Glittering Plain' I have finished some time, and begun another.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Bernard Quaritch 2 July 1890

I had back your draught agreement and have slightly altered the passage about the time of the second payment, in order that everything may be clear to other people than you and me in case of accident: I have also added a word or two for the same reason to the clause about the Volsunga.

I will sign the fair copied agreement as soon as it comes to hand. I will set to work at once on the prospectus.[2]

Kelmscott House

To D. J. Nicoll' 19 July [1890]

I have been looking at this week's *Commonweal,* and I must say that I think you are going too far: at any rate further than I can follow you. You really must put the curb upon Samuel's blatant folly,

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 247.**

[2] **The Saga Library edited by William Morris with the assistance of Eirikr Magnusson. The prospectus states: 'The literature of the Sagas is on the one hand the very flower of the mediaeval, or epical feeling; and on the other it is seldom tainted by any touch of rhetoric . . . at the same time though they sometimes necessarily give us pictures of rude and violent life, they are singularly free from anything that can be called *coarseness'* Fifteen volumes were projected.**

[3] **The proprietor of *The Commonweal.* The articles were becoming more and more violent, the Anarchist element in the League urging open insurrection and the use of dynamite. Morris's position was summed up in his statement: 'I say for us *to make Socialists* is *the* business at present, and at present I do not think we can have any other useful business.' Two years later Nicoll was arrested and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.**

or you *will force* me to withdraw all support. I never bargained for this sort of thing when I gave up the editorship.

I look upon you as a sensible and friendly fellow, and I am sure that you will take this in a friendly spirit as it is meant to you. For I feel that it is only fair to give you warning of any dissatisfaction that I may have. Please understand that this is meant to be quite private, and do your best not to drive me off. For I do assure you that it would be the greatest grief to me if I had to dissociate myself from men who have been my friends so long and whom I believe to be at bottom thoroughly good fellows.

I shall be at Kelmscott, Lechlade, till next Friday, and will send you the new batch of *News from Nowhere* [1] so that it shall reach you on Friday morning at the latest.

To the Editor, The Times 15 August 1890

STRATFORD-ON-AVON CHURCH

Sir,—My attention has been called to a letter from the vicar of Stratford-on-Avon appearing in your issue of July 28, and appealing for funds generally towards the completion of the restoration. In this letter occurs the following sentence:—'Under the stalls sufficient of the ancient reredos has been found to make Mr Garner think he can give us a drawing of what it was when the church was built. We shall hope, then, that somebody will provide the funds to erect a copy of it in the old place.'

I am glad that the vicar talks about a 'copy' of the reredos, and not a 'restoration' of it: but may I ask why a copy of it should be 'erected in the old place'? Will not every fresh piece of modern work make 'the old place' (the church, I mean) look less old and more like a nineteenth-century mediaeval furniture-dealer's warehouse? There has been a great deal too much modernization of this fine church of Stratford-on-Avon already, and it is more than time that it should come to an end. Once for all I protest against the trick which clergymen and restoration committees have of using an illustrious name as a bait wherewith to catch subscriptions. Shakespeare's memory is best honoured by reading his works intelligently; and it is no honour to him to spend money in loading the handsome mediaeval church which contains his monument with trash which can

[1] *News from Nowhere* was first published in instalments in *The Commonweal* from **11 January to 4 October of this** year.

claim none of the respect due to either an ancient or a modern work of art.

I am, Sir, yours obediently
William Morris
Hon. Sec. of the Society for the
Protection of Ancient Buildings

9 Buckingham-street, Adelphi.

To F. S. Ellis[x]

Kelmscott
29 August 1890

Please pardon me for not answering your letter sooner; you know my little ways. Also I did want to weigh between the Golden Legend and the Troy book for reprinting: now I have borrowed a Recueil of the Histories of Troy (the Wynkyn de Worde of course) from Quaritch, and have no doubt that the G.L. is by far the most important book of the two: so I accept your kind offer with many thanks indeed, and will begin printing as soon as the type is free from the Glittering Plain, which I take it will be the first book printed in the regenerate type of Jenson-Morris.

I enclose a specimen (over-inked) of as far as we have gone at present. I hope you admire its literature—due of course to the compositor. Kind regards to the young she-scribe that is to be.[2]

To F. S. Ellis[3]

Kelmscott House
7 September 1890

I gave Quaritch your letter in person, and we had a talk about the matter: by this time you will have had a letter from him.[4] It seemed to me a matter of course to agree, as far as I am concerned, with his proposition to take the whole expense on himself and do what he can with the 250 copies, since it will then cost us nothing but our work: only it seems to me that your share of the work will be so much the heaviest that I feel rather uncomfortable about it, and think it some-

[1] From Mackail, ii. 248-9.

[2] Miss Phyllis Ellis, who had transcribed *The Golden Legend* for the press from Caxton's first edition of 1483, borrowed for the purpose from the Cambridge University Library.

[3] From Mackail, *ii.* 249-50.

[4] *The Golden Legend* was published by Quaritch. The agreement provided that the publisher should pay for paper, printing and binding and that Morris should have sole and absolute control over choice of paper and type, size of the reprint, and selection of the printer. The idea of becoming a publisher as well as printer himself had not then occurred to him.

how ought to be made up to you. What I have now chiefly to do is to push on the type-founding side of matters: I will do all I possibly can on this side, so that we may begin as soon as possible. I should think that we might get some type about Christmas time; but of course I cannot be sure. Wishing you good luck (I had little with the gudgeons).

Kelmscott, Lechlade
To Emery Walker[1] 14 September 1890

The weather is most brilliant here and I rather grudge doing any work at all, nor have I done much.

Yesterday we went a drive; Langford, Broad well, Kencott, Alvescote, Black Bourton, Bampton, Aston and at last Cote; where that house is of which you may have heard me speak. The house is most beautiful, but it is in sad repair: not tumbling down I think, but a great part of the rooms dismantled, ceilingless. It is much bigger than Kelmscott, more dignified; a swell's house, built about 1560 I should think. The wife of Sir Thomas Hord of the house is buried in Bampton Church about 1590. .. .

Kelmscott
To F. S. Ellis[2] 14 September 1890

I have sent on Q.'s [Quaritch] copy and now send back yours. Of course I should like the reprint to be of the same *form* as the original if the Roman type can do it, which I doubt, as black letter takes up less room: in any case some kind of folio it will have to be. As to paper I have heard of two people who may help us, one whom Walker knows and whose mill I propose to visit with Walker almost at once; and one employed by Allen, Ruskin's publisher. We can do nothing with Whatman but take what he has on the shelves. In one thing I think I differ from you a little, i.e. about the joined letters or queer signs: since our book is to be a *reprint*, not a fac-simile, I do not think that we need reproduce these: indeed I should extend the abbreviations in order to make the book more readable. However I am open to correction on this point. Don't rest too much on my date of Christmas for the type: we seem to be getting on very slowly with it at present, and I have only eleven letters cut yet. I can only hope for the best.

[1] From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist*, i. 663-4.
[2] **From Mackail, ii. 250-1.**

Kelmscott
To [?] [1] October [1890?]

The western sky is getting leaden grey and the wind is rain-cold. I heard a heron 'squark' just now, and saw two kingfishers twice: one sat three yards from me for two or three minutes and talked to himself before he saw me: he was a beauty.

To Bruce Glasier 7 October 1890

. . • I have been down at Kelmscott (where Ellen vanished, you know) off & on for some weeks now, but London has begun to call me, and next week I shall be there: and shall try to be a little more virtuous about propaganda work. In truth I have not been very well (am all right again now) and did really need a rest. Not that it was not full of work though.

I shall now presently begin to touch up *News from Nowhere* for its book form, & will publish it for is. It has amused me very much writing it: but you may depend upon it, it won't sell. This of course is my own fault—or my own misfortune.

As to League affairs; I have really been a good bit out of them. I don't think there is much life in it anywhere except at our Branch which so far is really satisfactory. The whole movement has taken the turn which might have been expected, towards unideal & humdrum 'gradual improvement', i.e. towards general deadlock and break up. That's all right but of course it goes slow; and meantime I sometimes rather feel sick of things in general. The humbug which floats to the top in all 'branches of intelligence' is such a damned greasy pot of scum.

But I must not get to mere railing. Good luck. . . .

To Bruce Glasier 5 December [1890]

This is private. I mean the very words are.

I have seen your letter to Walker anent the League and the H. Society [Hammersmith Socialist Society],[2] and am thinking that perhaps you are thinking I owe you an apology or at least an explanation, so here it is; I hope not a long one. In the first place I did not write to you before because I wanted to avoid all appearance of plotting and colloguing. So much for my apparent neglect of you. As

[1] From Mackail, i. 235.
[2] Morris and the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League withdrew from the main body in November this year and formed themselves into an independent body, the Hammersmith Socialist Society.

to the event itself: there is really little to say beyond the circular (sent only to the branches and the Council). The whole thing lies in this, that, as of course you noticed in the last conference, there were two parties in the League, the old Communist one with which it began, and the Anarchist. Now supposing these two parties remaining in the League, each must necessarily try to use the other for purposes it did not approve of. Hence constant quarrel; one party always attacking the other instead of the common enemy. I have gone through this, as you will know, before, and I am determined never to stand it again. As soon as there are two parties in any body I am in—then out I go. Yet you should know that the H. [Hammersmith] Branch would have gone out six months ago if it had not been for respect of my sentiments; they have been very discontented for a long while. As to detail: please understand the H.B., though as numerous as all the rest of the League I think, had no power on the Council; if we had stayed in and fought the matter we should have been outvoted every time by at least 8 to 3, so what was the use of our being there? Something ,'might have done in keeping *Commonweal* rational, but only by threatening withdrawal of supplies: such a 'censorship of the piper' would be too odious for me to endure. And again what would have been the use since I was in any case going to withdraw my subsidy at the end of the year, as I now have done, paying all *up* to the end? Nay, supposing I had gone on with that subsidy, it would not have saved the paper, which was making a fresh deficit every week. I must have doubled it, as I *did* the early part of the year—up to the Conference in fact.

Well, now, what were we to do? Go once a week to a private hell to squabble causelessly with men that after all we like? Or withdraw from the Council? That would have been only a covert and less honest way of leaving the League, and would have hampered both them and us. Call a general conference? To what end? What more could we discover at it than that we didn't agree? Besides, these conferences are really bogus affairs.

In short, my dear boy, whenever you want to get rid of me you need never put on your boots. I never wait to be *kicked* downstairs. Don't misunderstand the affair: we have borne with it all a long time; and *at last* have gone somewhat suddenly. For my part I foresaw all this when we allowed the Bloomsbury branch to be expelled. They deserved it, for it was that pig of a Donald who began it all; but they being out, it was certain that the Anarchists would get the upper

hand. I rather wonder at your being surprised. My article, following on Nicoll's folly, should have told you what was up. I meant it as a ' Farewell'. It was, and was meant to be, directly opposed to anything the Anarchist side would want to say or do. If I had remained in the League after that I must have attacked their position persistently. And why should I? I shouldn't have converted them.

You understand, I don't want to influence your action up there: none of us do. Your position is different from ours; because you are so far away that you cannot take any part in the management; whereas, in my judgement, we *must* as long as we profess to belong.

We have no wish to proselytise among the League branches. Anyone can join us who pleases, League or no League; but we don't ask them. And I have no doubt that we shall be just as good friends with you whatever you do.

Personally, I must tell you that I feel twice the man since I have spoken out. I dread a quarrel above all things, and I have had this one on my mind for a year or more. But I am glad it is over at last; for in good truth I would almost as soon join a White Rose Society as an Anarchist one; such nonsense as I deem the latter.

You will have our manifesto soon; and I know you will agree with it, as it will disclaim both Parliamentarism and Anarchism.

To change the subject: I am going to send you my new translation-book tomorrow. *News from Nowhere* is already printed in America, and I am going to print it here for a shilling: the Yank, I fancy, is a dollar.[1]

Well, good-bye, and don't be downcast, because we have been driven to admit plain facts. It has been the curse of our movement that we would lie to ourselves about our progress and victories and the like. Aha! What do you think of the awakened conscience of Mrs Grundy *re* Mr Parnell? Ain't it delicious?—as Miss Mowcher says.

To Bruce Glasier 16 December [1890]

My dear Glasier

Thanks for your letter; I might say so much, that at present I will say little: In the first place I agree with you almost wholly, including Parnell. In the second, I am not going to retire. In the third, we mustn't trouble ourselves about the babble in the press. In

[1] 'With Morris, too, whom I again saw much of, I found the same political despondency. He had just published his *News from Nowhere.* The picture he draws in it of social communism is pretty, but he, too, is not very hopeful of its ever coming true,' Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries,* 2 June, 1891.

the fourth, we Hammersmithers will, I have no doubt, be eager to join in any arrangement which would bring us together. Lastly, as to the paper, I don't like papers: and we have after a very long experiment found out that a sectional paper cannot be run. Two things we might do or might be done. First, we might set up a penny monthly, merely as a means of communication. Second, a *general* Socialist paper might be started to include all sections. As to the first, I would do nothing in it as long as a monthly *Commonweal* exists; I would rather support that if I could. As to the second, it looks promising; but you, of course, know the difficulties. Who is to be editor? How will it work under the jealousies of the different sections? Are the Anarchists to be in it? etc.,etc. Pamphlets are good: won't you write us one? For the rest, speaking and lecturing as much as sickened human nature can bear are the only things as far as I can see. . . .

To Henry Mayers Hyndman[1] 22 December [1890]

My dear Hyndman—I hope you will excuse me for not answering your letter, for which I heartily apologize. The fact is that it was difficult for me to answer at the time, because nothing was definitely settled as to *Commonweal*, and afterwards I let the matter slip out of my memory amidst my multifarious businesses. I now thank you for your friendly letter, but really I have come to the conclusion that no form of journalism is suited to me, and I shall not write at present in any journal. I want to pull myself together after what has been, to me at least, a defeat; and I have got a lot of literary work on hand including two works more or less propagandist; to wit my 'News from Nowhere' and the book that I have been working at with Bax which I am at last going to tackle.

With best wishes from

Yours very truly
William Morris

To F. S. Ellis [2] 31 December 1890

I am very glad that you are getting on so well and like the work. As for me I expect to have my type in a month, and shall take a room and see about comps at once. The paper also will not be later, though this matters less as to our date of beginning. Only one thing may disappoint you—to wit, that we cannot make a double-column page of it, the page will not be wide enough. For my part, I don't

[1] **From H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, p. 361.**
[2] **From Mackail, ii. 252-3.**

regret it: double column seems to me chiefly fit for black letter, which prints up so close. Jenson did not print even his Pliny in double column. But it is a case of *a fortiori* in modern printing: because we have no contractions, few tied letters, and we cannot break a word with the same frankness as they could: I mean we can't put whi on one side and ch on the other. This makes the spacing difficult, and a wide page desirable.

Would you kindly give me the Initial letters of the first few sheets of our copy; I mean state whether they are A's B's and what not; I want this for our 'blooming-letters', so that I may get ready those which are most wanted.

Membership card of the Socialist League, Hammersmith Branch, designed by Walter Crane.

PART FIVE
1891—96

Education for Socialism and Return to Romance ; *News from Nowhere ;* Kelmscott Press

To J. H. Middleton [1] Kelmscott House 20 January 1891

One of those books of Olschki's [2] is a fine book otherwise (John Zeiner, Ulm, 1474) and rare doubtless, and has moreover a *very* fine woodcut border to first page and some curious initials: I am not buying it because there is, oddly enough, the same border in another of his books (by the same printer, 1475) which is much cheaper. This border is however so fine and so very well printed that I thought you might like it for the Fitzwilliam, since though I think it Jew-dear, I should have kept it if I had not got the other. The price is £15, but I daresay O. would take less. Shall I send it you to look at? I have just bought a very fine and interesting book: Speculum Humanae Salvationis (in Dutch), Culembourg, Veldener, 1483. That says little; but the point of it is that it has in it *all* the cuts from the block-book Speculum (116) and 12 more seemingly of the same date. These are not recut, but are printed from the original blocks sawn in two down the columns of the canopies: some of these cuts are to my mind far away the best woodcuts ever done, and generally the designs are admirable: at once decorative, and serious with the devotional fervour of the best side of the Middle Ages. The date of the cutting you know is probably about 1430.

Do you know if they have a copy at the University Library? If they have not I should like to show Mr Jenkinson the book when I come your way. My copy belonged to the Enschede people, who you may know were a very old firm of type-founders.

By the way I expect my press will be at work in about a month.[3]

To the Editor', The Times 5 February 1891

PROPOSED ADDITION TO WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Sir,—Those who care about the remains of the ancient art of our country may well be somewhat anxious about the scheme which is before the public for the building of a memorial chapel at West-

[1] From Mackail, ii. 253-4. [2] A dealer.
[3] The Kelmscott Press, Hammersmith, began work in February this year.

minster to hold the monuments of distinguished men in the future, since it is now admitted on all hands that there is no more room for them in the Abbey church. As representing the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, it is not my business to criticize the various proposals, except from one point of view, that is: as to how they may effect the existing ancient buildings. I beg you to allow me a word or two on this point, while there is yet time to say anything concerning the scheme. What I have to say will be very brief. It seems to me that all the proposals err in this respect: that, whereas in this matter the welfare of the noblest building ever raised by Englishmen ought to be the first thing considered in all these schemes, it is considered last, if at all. They all seem to assume the necessity for the new building being connected with the Abbey church: a necessity which for the life of me I cannot see; while, on the other hand, if this connection be desirable, surely its desirability should not weigh for a moment against any chance of damage to the ancient historical buildings of Westminster. There is a site which is obviously the best one for this memorial chapel, the place in Abingdon Street now occupied by quite uninteresting modern houses, which would give the best chance to the new building, as it would be well seen there, and might group well with the Houses of Parliament opposite: while—and this is really the important point—it would obviate the risk of damage to the ancient buildings, which are almost certain to be tampered with and altered if any connecting link between the old and the new is attempted.

We in the metropolis have treated our most beautiful building but ill for centuries. We have allowed its lovely interior to be cluttered up with a huge mass of the ugliest and vilest undertakers' masonry that can anywhere be seen. We have patched and cobbled its exterior with restorations, and restorations of restorations, till it has been half destroyed as a work of art; we keep the interior, again, in a state of sordid dirt, which is disgraceful both to the Government and the Chapter. But there is still some of it left, and what is left is of the utmost importance, and we profess to think it so. Would it not be well if we were to show some of our boasted 'practical common sense' by not throwing the remains of this treasure away, at the dictate of mere inconsiderate whim? Common sense surely would tell us that whatever modern building we may erect near the Abbey can always be connected with it, if after long consideration it seems desirable to us or our descendants. But the same common sense for-

bids us to say that the building shall be a part of the Abbey, whether it damages it or not. Yet this is the plain meaning of these proposals.

To F. S. *Ellis*[1] 11 February 1891

This is the state of things. The punches all cut, and matrices all struck: I had a little lot of type cast to see if any alterations were required, and set up a page of the 4to as there was not enough for the folio; I had the grecut because it seemed to me too black. I then ordered five cwt. of the type, which I am told is enough, and am expecting to have it towards the end of this week or beginning of next. As soon as I get it I will set up a trial page of the Golden Legend.

Then paper—the trial lot turned out not quite right, not sized quite hard enough, though I think better than any modern paper I have come across. He is going to size it harder. But it is only a little lot (9 reams), therefore I intend printing a little edition of the Glittering Plain on it. Moreover we had better not be too cocksure about the paper, we *might* find it desirable to make a bigger sheet. In any case however we might set up a section or so of the G.L. and let the type be till we had got the paper right. I was not going to send you a specimen of the type till we could set up a page of the G.L. But I can sympathize with my partner's anxiety; and accordingly send him a page of the G.P.[2], of course full of defects, but on the paper and with the types. I don't know what you will think of it; but I think it precious good. Crane when he saw it beside Jenson thought it more Gothic-looking: this is a fact, and a cheerful one to me.

To F. S. Ellis[3] February 1891

My hand seems lead and my wrist string.[4] And now as to the joint enterprise: I have got my type and am hard at work on the Glittering Plain, which I hope to get out in about six weeks time; about the same time I expect the first instalment of my due stock of paper; and I don't see why we then should not be ready to go ahead with G.L.,

[1] From Mackail, ii. 255.

[2] *The Story of the Glittering Plain,* printed in 'Golden' type, was the first book to be printed at the Kelmscott Press. It was issued in May by Reeves & Turner, then Morris's ordinary publishers.

[3] From Mackail, ii. 256.

[4] 'Towards the end of February Morris was laid up for several weeks with a severe attack of gout, attended by other symptoms of an alarming kind. On consultation the kidneys were found to be gravely affected; and he was told that henceforth he must consider himself an invalid to the extent of husbanding his strength and living under a very careful regimen'. Mackail, ii. **255.**

only I certainly must see you before we settle matters. Meantime, as soon as I can stand up, or before, I will get a mere trial page or two of the G.L. set up, and then you can get some idea of the number of pages.

Yes, 'tis a fine thing to have some interesting work to do, and more than ever when one is in trouble—I found that out the other day.

Folkestone
To Emery Walker 2 May 1891

. . . On Thursday I saw Hythe Church; terribly restored by Street and Pearson, but still well worth seeing: a spacious Early Dec: nave, early E. transepts, a Norman arch in S. aisle of nave; a Norman door, and a wonderfully beautiful E.E. vaulted quire & aisles, with a crypt under the high altar, filled with piles of bones and skulls, the remains of an old battlefield as 'tis (not unreasonably) thought. Outside this choir is not much injured and is delightful. The Ch. stands high upon the steep hillside over the queer little market-town in a lovely place amidst gardens and old stone-walls. Not far off amidst the down-land valleys is Saltwood castle; the *house* whereof has been restored out of all knowledge, & is a swell's house; but the circle of the wall is left untouched, and is very interesting. . . .

To **[?][1]** **20 May 1891**

The new printed sheets of the G.L. look very well indeed. Pleased as I am with my printing, when I saw my two men at work on the press yesterday with their sticky printers' ink, I couldn't help lamenting the simplicity of the scribe and his desk, and his black ink and blue and red ink, and I almost felt ashamed of my press after all. I am writing a short narrative poem to top up my new book with.[2] My wig! but it is garrulous: I can't help it, the short lines and my old recollections lead me on. . . .

Folkestone
To Mrs Btime-Jones' 29 July 1891

I am ashamed to say that I am not as well as I should like, and am even such a fool as to be rather anxious—about myself this time. But

[1] **From Mackail, ii. 256-7.**
[2] ***Poems by the Way*** **was the second book issued from the Kelmscott Press. It is a selection from Morris's earlier poems. The 'short narrative poem' referred to here is 'Goldilocks and Goldilocks'.**
[3] **From Mackail, ii. 261.**

I suppose the anxiety is part of the ailment. I hope you are better, as I have still some anxiety left for the service of my friends.

On Sunday we had a strange show: a sea-fog came on in the afternoon after a bright morning, which gradually invaded the whole land under the downs; but we clomb to the top of them and found them and all the uplands beyond lying under a serene calm sunny sky, the tops of the cliffs towards Dover coming bright and sharp above the fog, and throwing a blue shadow on it; below a mere sea of cloud, not a trace of the sea (proper), wave on wave of it. It looked like Long Jokull (in Iceland), only *that* was glittering white and this was goose-breast colour. I thought it awful to look on, and it made me feel uneasy, as if there were wild goings on preparing for us underneath the veil. . . .

Folkestone
To Mrs Coronio 29 July 1891

I am really ashamed of myself for not answering your kind letters before: please excuse me on the grounds that I have a lot of things always pressing on me to do.

Again amidst one thing or another I forgot to keep a copy of the Glittering Plain, and there is not a copy to be had for less than about £4. However promises must be kept, and I believe I can let you have one of my own; I must look when I get back home tomorrow. I suppose you will want a copy of the new book (my poems). Item I will give you one for yourself, as I shall have a fair number of copies for myself this time.

I have been here a good deal keeping company with Jenny who has been here mostly since her illness. She now seems better than she has been for a long time—in fact quite well. On Friday week I am going to take her over to France if all goes well. This is the doctor's orders; otherwise I should stay at home & get on with my work, which interests me very much. We are going over to NW France, Rheims & thereabouts & shall be away a fortnight. Meantime I shall be in town for a week from tomorrow. I suppose you will not be in town: if you were I should be so glad to come & have a talk with you. A fortnight ago we were somewhat your way; Rye & Winchelsea to wit. Do you know them? They were delightful places, especially Winchelsea, and we had a beautiful sunny day for our outing to them. On Sunday we had such a strange afternoon & evening; there came on a sea fog which lay heavy on the sea and

the lower parts; but we clomb the hills, which are handsome here, and got above the fog into a beautiful calm sunny evening, and looking down saw the sea blotted out as it were by a mass of rolling clouds: it almost reminded me of one of the great glacier fields in Iceland except that it was grey instead of glittering white. The tops of the cliffs on towards Dover stood up sharp & clear above it. It was beautiful but rather uncanny. Looked as if the world were new-made almost.

Well, at any rate I hope I shall see you soon. I am a bad letter-writer, or you would have heard from me before.

Tete de Boeuf
Abbeville

To Mrs William Morris 8 August [1891]

Dearest Janey

Writing in an inn bedroom is done under difficulties; but here are a few lines to you since Jenny is writing to May. All well: we have had a very agreeable day, though it began drizzly: We have found it is so pleasant here that we are not going on to Amiens till to-morrow. We went a nice drive in the morning to St Riquier (about 8 miles) many were the magpies on the road. I expected a quite flat country, but to my surprise found a very pretty breezy chalk down-land, only of course all under tillage or wood. St Riquier is a town decayed into a village and untidy and rather dismal; but the church exceedingly fine, and unrestored: the late statuary in the W. front much above the average of its date: the sacristy much painted with nice 16 century naif pictures with doggerel (in French) under them. We couldn't get into the Library to see the Gospels as the curator was away on his holiday. However it does not matter as moveable works of art are so much less important to see than immoveables on such journeys. We had a jolly walk by the canal and river-side instead, (which was much better for us) finishing by buying 'a present from Abbeville' for you in the form of a wide-mouthed jug with comic lady & gentleman on it, rude modern, but traditional pottery. Jenny would have it for you—don't fear it only cost 3 50. Altogether this is a jolly, cheerful old town, and the church a miracle of beauty. Jenny is enjoying everything to the full, and is very good & dear.

Dinner-time is now coming on, and that is a pleasant epoch in a

decent French Inn like this. So here an end with best love. I have been all right, and think I shall keep so. Your loving
W.M.

Hotel d'Angleterre
Beauvais
To Philip Webb[1] *11* August [1891]

My dear Fellow

Here I am after 33 years, and not yet as melancholy as I suppose I ought to be. The Cathedral here not having run away, nor indeed having changed at all that I can see may partly account for that. I think I like it better than ever with the little extra knowledge I have got hold of since then. The town also is very pleasant and full of old houses, and comes as a blessing after Amiens town, which is dull, bourgeois, and, in a word gritty, and is much improved for the worse since I saw it last by the addition of some beastly buildings of the 3rd Napoleonic style inconceivable almost outside Zola's books. As for its Church, it must be said that it is not ruined by its restorations. I came upon it at the S.W. angle, face to face with the big St Christopher, & thought that S. aisle & its sculpture so curiously nailed onto the wall most delightful. Inside there is no alteration except that the 2 bronze bishops have been shifted to the 3rd bay westward, and have had dishonest-tailor's iron railings put round them. I really had no time to look carefully over the details, though Jenny and I had a spell at the West front. So I bought those photos of the medallions which J.R. had done in the lump; they are beyond everything good and interesting, & can be photographed. However we spent an hour over the stalls to our great pleasure. Jenny almost refused to leave the Church when we were going away: she was delighted and is well and very happy.

Abbeville we liked hugely; except for that jolly place which names the street of the 6 mills, which is quite swept away, the *town* is little damaged. The big Church has had its flanks restored, but inside it is scarcely touched, and the W. Front has not been meddled with: also it still looks like part of the town, and altogether lovely. I liked the inside better than I did last time.

One day we drove out some 8 miles to St Riquier, through a pretty up and down chalk country, & found a queer very decayed

[1] From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist*, i. 666-8.

town with two enormous late 17th century buildings, a 14th cent: belfry much modernized and a lovely church wholly unrestored front and nave flamboyant, transepts & quire early 14th with additions & insertions that seemed to my ignorance like English flowing Dec: & *not* flamb. There was a beautiful sacristy all painted with wall pictures in fair condition; besides some fine pieces of goldsmiths' work. The statuary in the W.F. terrible good, I think the best Flamboyant I have seen.

NB a great farm-yard ran along the N side of this church, and we went in there to look at it (the church). 4 French dogs, big, sitting in the litter of a shed, barked at us no allowance, but we thought they were tied up and went on, but when we came back, out bounced a big one very flamboyant, but did not get so far as the legs of the rear guard (me to wit) chiefly I think because 3 or 4 bloused French men cursed him till *all* was blue.

Item the street opposite our hotel at Amiens had a name less gritty than itself, to wit 'the Street of the naked dead bodies without heads.'

I think we shall stay here till over Thursday & then go on to Soissons & thence to Reims where we shall be on Sunday & Monday next. To-morrow if the weather is tolerable we shall drive out to Gournay and St Germer: if you see Coquerel [sic] tell him so. . . .

Yours affectionately
William Morris

To Emery Walker[1]

Beauvais
13 August 1891

Many thanks for your letter and enclosures. I chuckled over the upside down A. I have written to Prince: he has now done e i h 1 n o p r t. The t does not look well: I think I shall have to re-design it. The e also looks a little wrong, but might be altered. The rest looks very well indeed. I shall be pretty certainly at home on August 30. 1 leave for Soissons to-morrow, and I suppose shall get to Reims on Saturday. But I don't think we shall find any place better than this: the town is delightful quite apart from the Cathedral and St Stephen's. Also our inn is comfortable, which is something. We went a long drive yesterday (morning drizzly, afternoon downright wet, but a jolly drive of near twenty miles and back) and saw the two churches at Gournay en Bray, and St Germer de Fly: both early and

[1] **Printed in Mackail, ii. 262-3.**

interesting: the second exceedingly beautiful: a huge church, Norman, with vaulting and insertions of transitional, and a long lady-chapel with its vestibule, time of St Louis (late thirteenth-century). The chapel (not the vestibule) has been restored, pretty badly; but had three stained windows (of its own date) about as good as any I ever saw. The rest of the church quite unrestored: also there are grills of twelfth century round the choir. The west end, traditionally said to have been burned by the Burgundians (c. 1470), is very defective, but a plain (but good) abbey gateway remains. Altogether a wonderful church. Gournay, a much smaller church; the nave very early Norman (before the middle of century I should say), but with transition vaulting: transepts and choir mainly transition with each a big early decorated window in it: east end square and window coming low down. The carving on caps of nave very curious, no two alike; mostly rude (some very), but many beautiful. I am sorry to say that this admirable nave has been badly restored, even to the recutting of some of the caps: perhaps the French Society might stop this game, as those that are left are extraordinarily valuable. As to the west front it *was* thirteenth century; but is now nineteenth, and bad at that; they have even done new sculptures for the tympanums. As for the town of Gournay it is uninteresting, but they make cream cheeses of the very best: *crede mihi experto.*

Certainly the Cathedral here is one of the wonders of the world: seen by twilight its size gives one an impression almost of terror: one can scarcely believe in it. But when you see the detail, it is so beautiful that the beauty impresses you more than the size.

We are just going to read the late stained glass at St Stephen's, which is very amusing, lots of it.

The arms of the chapter are gules a cross argent with four keys of the same cantoned if I blazon it right: the arms of the town, gules a pale argent. The town has lost its walls, but they are in a way traceable, for the town ditch fed by the two little rivers goes all round: there is a very big central *place* also, so that the plan of the town is very good.

Reims
Marne

To Emery Walker 16 August [1891]

Will you excuse pencil since Jenny has got the ink. We have just come out of the cathedral, which, though a wonderful place, is, if I

am right, not so great a work as Amiens Beauvais or Soissons. The latter was our last place on our way here. I thought the church there most extraordinarily beautiful. Except for the end of the N transept (which is early decorated) it is all of the earliest gothic, not very big (but wide) of great simplicity and of the utmost refinement. The S transept is much lower than the N and is apsidal, the interior of it of two vaulted stages comparable in beauty to Hugh's work at Lincoln (though not like it) Gothic at its best. There have been some bad restorations there but it is not destroyed. The worst is the black-lining of the ashlar of the choir down to the triforium. Here the outside has already been restored (including the work they are doing to the S transept, which looks very bad) but excepting the W front with its amazing wealth of imagery. Though they do not here seem to touch the figure sculpture. Perhaps it might be of use to memorialize the French society on this & some other points. Here the whole of the clerestory (except two windows of the choir blocked by the restoration at present) has its stained glass, of the most splendid quality, though a good deal patched. If Grant Allen should see it he would find it justified his views of jewelry completely; for no collection of gems could come within a hundred miles of it. All the way from Beauvais to Compiegne, Soissons and here, the churches seem very fine and mostly early. The country round Soissons is very beautiful. It is built on the side of the Aisne, a river about as big there as the Thames at Reading: We saw the vines there for the first time this journey. The arms of Soissons city are azure a fleur de lys argent. The chapter carries I think under a chief of France a tower. The tinctures I did not see as I take my information from a lamp-post by the Cathedral of Louis Napoleon's time (I suppose) since the fleurs de lys were *bees.* There are some fine tapestries hung up in the aisles here in very good preservation c. 1520 I think. They make splendid ornaments. I intend studying them & the stained glass & the sculpture to-morrow properly. . . .

Yours affectionately
William Morris

I find I shall be going to Beauvais again & expect to be there next Saturday; so if you feel inclined to risk a line you can write to me at the Hotel D'Angleterre Beauvais. W.M.

St Remy a very fine church: some glass there even finer than that in cathedral 12 century.

Hotel de la Hare (Boar's Head)
Rue du Bourg
Laon

To Philip Webb [1] 19 August [1891]

My dear Fellow

Thank you very much for your letter, both Jenny & I. We are here on the Burg of Laon, a very pleasant and interesting place but bad for draught cattle, as you go up it zig-zag. Yesterday we went all round the walls, if round can be said of a shape like this [drawing]. They are mostly complete and everywhere to be traced. They must be very old though of course perpetually patched; mixed up too with the live rock, (the hill is a sand-hill) square bastions & round; 13 century buttresses & so on: a modern citadel at one end, and a beastly brick building (a Lycee) are the only things that break the circuit seriously. There are many beautiful things in the houses: the old bishop's palace with a long row of St Louis windows giving on to the ramparts, a curious and beautiful cloister inside, and a transition chapel over a crypt (earlier mostly) a beautiful little Templars' chapel of 3 dates, the last transition; and lots of gateways & windows which you *can* see besides all you cannot; a very strange early church with a Decorated West front tacked on to a 17th century Benedictine monastery; 3 gates of the town. And all below the ramparts the great plain on one side (or two) and on the other the winding coasts of the sand-hills, of which this is an outlyer—This seems wonderful doesn't it?—and is. Unhappily it is poisoned by the very bad restoration of the Cathedral, which more unhappily is still yet in progress. However I will say nothing more about that until I am before the S.P.A.B. The Church is, or has been, a very fine one. Low nave arcades, enormous triforium beautifully vaulted, in fact another aisle (which is rather the manner of this part of France) and short clerestory. The detail where not restored is delightful; a clump of acanthus caps among others being as good as ever I saw. The east end square, which however does not make it much liker to an English Church. The S. transept unrestored outside (as yet) has a huge Decorated window in it, and Decorated doorways, very lovely and elegant. I did not see the inside of the cloisters, because I quarrelled with the sacristan who wanted to sell me photos as soon as I came into the church, telling him I didn't want photos of restored churches: so he said he was going away until

[1] **From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist,* i. 668-70.**

next Saturday. The outside of the cloisters are in the street and have little dwellings of folk in them, so they are unrestored: nothing could be more beautiful: we saw them this morning with the market people sitting up against them, like old times.

After I wrote to you we saw Gournay & St Germer; both well worth seeing, I must tell you about them when we meet. We went from Beauvais to Soissons; stopping two or three hours at Compiegne, and going through Pitou's[1] forest by a sort of omnibus-train in the cool of the evening. Soissons is a jolly town; beautiful country all about; not many *ancient* houses, but (in the town itself) all *old* ones of stone. As to the Church, it is a wonderful work, not very badly restored, especially outside; though the W Front has been first mutilated and then church-wardened. The apsidal transept I had heard of there (S.) turns out to be rather a transeptal chapel, the roof being only on a level with the parapet of the nave: it is exceedingly beautiful inside (outside you cannot get near it for the houses) with a great vaulted triforium over the aisle; but the end of the N transept is early Deed., delicate and beautiful: it has a big door on its east side. Altogether I seldom saw a building which I found more difficult to leave. As for *Reims*, imprimis the town is a dull & mostly modern one; as for the Cathedral, there seems to me something amiss with it, I couldn't tell what, except that it seemed *pinched* I mean inside. Of course the amount of beautiful sculpture lavished upon it is amazing. Almost the whole of the original glass (unrestored) is left in the clerestory, and is a miracle of colour; and the W front as you see it down the street with its mass of imagery is as wonderful as anything that one could see—Why grumble then? Perhaps it was the disturbance of restoration still going on (about the S. transept), which makes everything seem unsafe. The W front is not restored ; I wonder if it might be possible to save it. Of the buttress angels most I think are the old figures, but their wings have been humbugged. The beautiful & epical imagery of the N transept has not been injured, though the church has been restored all down that side. St Remy is a most interesting church little injured by restoration except the curious W front, which is restored both churchwardenly and architecturally. Inside it *is* a wonder. First two transition bays, then eleven Norman ones, then very early transition transepts, choir and chapels, but all of a piece: huge triforium beautifully vaulted running through everything. Of course the vaulting of nave

[1] Dumas the elder's *Ange Pitou.*

(very wide, low for a French church) is pointed not Romanesque. Besides some ridiculous modern glass which makes the church too dark, the choir has some splendid 12 cent: glass; the East window the finest I ever saw, I think—such a mass of blue!

Well now paper is running short, and about all these things there must be question and answer when we meet old fellow. I expect to be at the SPAB to-morrow week. To-morrow we go to Noyon, and on Saturday shall be at Beauvais again; shall go to Amiens Sunday or Monday, sleep there & cross on Monday or Tuesday, sleep at Folkestone and home Tuesday or Wednesday. . . .

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 22 October [1891]

. . . The printers are now on Mr Blum's book.[1] I have one sheet and it looks very gay and pretty with its red letters, but I think I prefer my own style of printing.

The leaves are coming off very fast here; the tulip-tree has changed colour; it is quite bright yellow, and almost looks like as if the sunlight were come into the garden this dull day.

Kelmscott
To Jane Alice Morris 23 February 1892

Dearest own Child

This is alter dinner so I think I may tell you how I am getting on. I have lost two things; first my brushes (for drawing), second my cold. I find I can do without either of these, as I have found some brushes which I can work with as to the first loss: and as to the second, what is the use of sniffing when there is no one to sniff at?

Now for local news: the waters are out a little, owing to the melting snow. It is a cold rather windy day, but not unpleasant; brilliantly sunny at first; now cloudy with gleams of sun at times. It froze last night; but took to a sharp shower in the morning. As to the house, it seems in good order. The green-room has had its rotten woodwork removed, and smells mouldy no longer; the whole house is clean and neat.

As to the garden, they are late here; there are two or three crocuses out, but most of them are not above ground even; the winter aconite is not fully in blossom; and the yellow jasmine is over. The great thing is snow-drops which are everywhere, but mostly

[1] **Wilfrid Scawen Blum's *Love Lyrics and Songs of Proteus* was one of the earliest volumes of the Kelmscott Press. 'I was much with him (Morris) in connection with it', notes Blunt in *My Diaries,***

double; however they give one a delightful idea of spring about: there are a few violets out, and here and there a coloured primrose; and some of the hepatica roots have flowered, but show no leaves. But how pretty it looks to see the promise of things pushing up through the clean un-sooty soil: everything seems doing well & Giles seems to understand his work, so I think we shall have a beautiful garden this year. My dinner was served in style, so that I felt quite proud of such attentions and Mrs Giles seems a nice kind simple person.

Now as to myself. First, my dear, I will tell you a tale. I had forgotten to bring a watch-key: I asked Mrs Giles to lend me one and she produced the one I had left here; I thanked her and put it in my waistcoat pocket: on retiring I sought the said key in said pocket, and found it not. I sought then (but calmly I assert) with the help of a candle all about the house & found it not. Then I said never mind the time doesn't matter these 2 days but as a last resource pinched my waistcoat all over, and as I live by bread! *there* it was in the corner of my waistcoat. Doubtless it had heard my chuckle and my that's all right and had seized the opportunity to bore a hole in my pocket & disappear, in the false hope that it would reach, not my waistcoat lining, but the wide world. N.B. my waistcoat is brand new.

Last night I wrote out tale (a good bit); this morning I have been doing bloomers with considerable success. I will presently post this letter, & then go for a little walk for my health's sake on the usual promenade. . . .

To Bruce Glasier 9 March 1892

I have been trying to find time to write a long letter to you; but, seeing that I have *not* found the time for that, I had better write a short one at once.

Thanks very much for your last letter. As to the subjects of it I had perhaps better get over the disagreeable part of them, and say that it does *not* seem as if I shall be able to come to you this spring, though I should very much like to do so. If I possibly can come I will turn the matter over. Isn't the autumn a possible time?

For the rest, I quite agree with your views as to the present position, and so I am sure do all here. I sometimes have a vision of a real Socialist Party at once united and free. Is it possible? Here in London it might be done, I think, but the S.D.F. stands in the way.

Although the individual members are good fellows enough as far as I have met them, the society has got a sort of pedantic tone of arrogance and lack of generosity, which is disgusting and does disgust both Socialists and Non-Soc. Their last feat in trying to spoil the Chelsea election for the L.C.C., although they had no programme better than theirs, was a wretched piece of tactics; and now the Anti-Soc, both Whigs and Tories, go about saying that the Chelsea Socialists are only 170. Whereas that means nothing more than the branch of the S.D.F.

What do you think of the said L.C.C. election? I am pleased on the whole. It is certainly the result of the Socialist movement, and is a Labour victory, as the affair was worked by the Socialist and Labour people. Of course I don't think that much will come of it directly; but I do think it shows a great advance. Item, the L.C.C. so far has to my experience shown itself an amazing improvement on the old red-tape public bodies: the antiscrape has on three separate occasions had deputations to them and has been received in a human point of view; arguments listened to and weighed, and opinion changed in consequence. This for a public body is certainly wonderful. Of course, I don't think much of gas and water Socialism, or indeed of any mere mechanical accessories to Socialism; but I can see that the spirit of the thing is bettering, and in spite of all disappointments I am very hopeful.

I send by this post a copy of the last songbook: you will find some of the old well-worn fellows amongst them.

Well, I hope we shall meet somehow. Walker (by the way) is going to Scotland at the end of the week. He will tell you all the news.

Consider about the autumn and tell me. Meantime, Good Luck.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
25 March 1892

To Theodore Watts-Dunton[1]

You know what a heavy coach I am in writing letters, so I hope you will pardon my delay in thanking you for your review in the Athenaeum, so friendly and appreciative as it was, which I do now most heartily. 'The versified prose' of the latter part of the article & Wordsworth there anent raised a grin in me: also the hint about the Browning Society. You know, though Browning was a poet, he had not a *non-* but an a,'uz-poetical side to him: and this is why he has

[1] **Ashley Library, 1218.**

achieved a popularity amongst the 'educated middle-classes', who though they are badly educated are probably over-educated for their intellect. Yes the Briton has no interest in a book if it is merely a work of art, i.e. if it is meant to endure, the ephemeral is all he cares about: as he naturally thinks his own life so damned important. And yet though I am not a patriot (as you know) I doubt if said Briton is more anti-poetical than the men of other nations. Only he seems more anti-artistic, I think, because he has gone further through the mill of modernism; some survivals of the old artistic spirit still cling in a queer paradoxical way to Frenchmen & Germans: to Englishmen none, unless they have gone through the mill and come out at the other [end]. . . .

Excuse this yarn and with thanks again & best wishes. Come again as soon as you can.

Kelmscott House

To Jane Alice Morris 9 April 1892

The boat-race is over & so is my entertainment. Annie provided splendidly for us; the men I think were a little shy, but I think they enjoyed themselves: the day was most brilliant. Oxford won the race; but I suppose that you care for that as little as I do.

All is well at the Press: we have printed 3 sheets (a signature & a half) of the John Ball: and are now doing some Recuyells. As to the garden it really looks very well considering & has come out wonderfully since you left. The almond blossom is beginning to go off: the daffodils are well out, and some of those also are going off: the hyacinths are coming out one after the other, and the leafage has made great strides: there is still a good bit alive in the old chestnut tree. I have naturally not done much work to-day but happening to be awake at 6 a.m. I went & got my book and wrote several pages of the story before I got up. . . .

Kelmscott, Lechlade

To Sydney Carlyle Cockerell[1] 3 August 1892

My dear Cockerell

We shall be very glad to see you here on Friday; so please do not fail. You will find a convenient train the 1.35. Take ticket

[1] **Printed by Viola Meynell in *Friends of a Lifetime: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell*, p. *66*. Soon after this visit Mr Sydney Cockerell, now Sir Sydney, became Morris's librarian and secretary and later took charge of the Kelmscott Press at Hammersmith. After Morris's death he became, for a time, private secretary to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and then Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, from 1908-37.**

for Lechlade, change at Oxford: (you will have to wait an hour) go on by Witney and Fairford train.

At Lechlade my trap and man will meet you. Waggonette, brown horse, pepper and salt man *not* in livery.

Friday one thirty-five at Paddington for Lechlade Station. If I tell you more I shall confuse you. Yours very truly

William Morris

To A. J. Wyatt[1] 28 August [1892]

Thank you for your letter. I should be very pleased to work with you if we could hit upon some plan together. I hope to be in Cambridge some time this autumn when I could have the pleasure of seeing you: I shall be in town this day week (in the afternoon I shall be at home) but I should not like to ask you to come all the way from Cambridge to see me, though I should be very pleased to have some talk together. I do not think I should be able to set to work at once, so full as my hands are of work: but my hope is to tackle Beowulf, which no one can appreciate in the present versions I think. Of course I am well aware of the great difficulty of dealing with it because every word which it is necessary to substitute for the old one (every word that is which has not its exact equivalent in modern English) *must* be weakened and almost destroyed. Still as the language is a different language from modern English and not merely a different form of it, it can, I would hope be *translated* and not paraphrased merely. Anyhow I intend to try if I can get anyone to help me who knows Anglo-Saxon (as I do not) and could also set me right as to the text and its grievous gaps.

I should much like to know what you think of the adventure.

To Bruce Glasier 11 October 1892

I must say no to the art lecture: it is with the greatest difficulty that I can get to you at all, and I must cut it as short as I possibly can. I understand that I am to lecture at Edinburgh on the Saturday evening; so I shall start from London that morning & go back to London as early as I can on the Monday morning. I am less troubled at not being able to give the art lecture as I am rather sick of putting matters before people which they cannot attend to under the Present State of things—let 'em turn Socialists!

From May Morris, *ibid.* i. 493-4.

What a set of ninnies the papers are about the Laureateship, treating it with such absurd solemnity! Bet you it is offered to Swinburne, Bet you he takes it. . . .[1]

Bordighera

To Jane Alice Morris 18 November [1892]

I delivered your mother here in good condition last night: it was quite dark by then we got to Ventimiglia even; but I think clocks and their differences might have more to do with that than the sun: as they keep Paris time the other side of the frontier, and Roman time here (which is 47 minutes earlier) and you see we are a long way south and east of Paris, and a long way north and west of Rome. I cannot say very much about the looks of this place yet, as I have not been out yet. From my window it is all olives and olives and the sea beyond; from the balcony I can just see a bit of the coastline, handsome enough. It is warm at present, but rather close to my feeling. What little wind there is seems to come from the S.E. It is greyish but not heavy. Yesterday we were rather unlucky in our weather: there was a beautiful sunrise a little before Valence, but it soon got cloudy and showery, so much that at times we could see nothing much. But what we did see was very beautiful and interesting: a wonderful range of mountains, some part of the Jura, I suppose, to our S.E. Some way off, and on our West and N. the great high shaly banks of the Rhone, which turned up every now and then, a great broad flood rattling down towards the sea; the plain between with curious ledges of stone here and there, all in fruit-trees and vineyards, mulberries, till near Avignon we began to come on the olives. Avignon we had but a slight passing view of, and Aries we missed altogether because of the weather. A little before we came to Marseilles the country was very strange, a sort of desert of stone ledges, quite uncultivated, and before that an enormous plain also desert and all of shingle, backed by great mountains. When we turned the corner from Marseilles, we came into the regular Riviera country; very handsome much of it; but without as much character as the true French landscape. Now I won't say more of all that, as I shall hope to be seeing you so soon again, my darling. I thought I had better see your mother settled here, so I shall stay Saturday as well as to-day, and start for home on Sunday, which ought to bring me to you some time before bed-time on Monday: but if I don't come then, you must not be anxious, my

[1] **Morris was sounded at this time as to whether he would accept the laureateship and refused.**

own, as trains might run awkwardly and I shall then come somewhat later.

I forgot to say that I went to the Cluny at Paris and saw that beautiful tapestry there, so fine! [i.e. 'La Dame a la Licorne', presumably]. . . .

Kelmscott

To J. L. Joynes 27 December 1892

Thank you very much for your greetings; I have communized your letter, and we are all very sorry that you should have so many events going on in you. Here there are none: Shaw[x] is happy because (as he sleeps with his window wide open) his water-jug is frozen deeper than any one else's.

This is the first time that I have been here in mid-winter and I think I rather enjoy the frost as a change; though not so much as I should have done 40 years ago.

We all send greetings; and I for my part hope, in spite of Shaw, that you will soon get on to a big beef steak.

It is a lovely winter morning here, and I hope you are having the benefit of it.

To A. J. Wyatt[2] 26 February 1893

I have rhymed up the lines of Beowulf which you sent me. I should be very much obliged if you could send me some more *as soon as possible* as I want to get the book out quickly. I think we might well go to press in two months time: at any rate if you will supply me with matter I will undertake to be through in 2 months.

Of course it would be very desirable for us to meet; I should like you to criticize my rendering, and also to explain certain matters: e.g. the passage in which you have accepted some emendation of the text—about the son & father-in-law. Also if we read over the original I shall soon I think begin to appreciate the language. Could you tell me what day would suit you *next week?* At the same time may I hope for some more of your translation before that, as I am very eager to be at it, finding it the most delightful work? And may I add again that your translation is exactly what I want.

[1] George Bernard Shaw, described by May Morris at this time as: 'a ceirain gaunt pale-faced auburn-bearded young Irishman, who had original ideas on music, Shelley and everything under the sun and expressed them with a relentless wit.' *{William Morns Artist Writer Socialist),*

[2] From May Morris, *loc. cit. u* 494-5.

Kelmscott House
Tuesday 6 June evening
[1893]

To Philip Webb[1]

My dear Fellow

I duly went to Oxford & came back: the upshot was this:

Scheme A (ours) 9
„ B (Case's) 11
„ C (Jacksons') 165
„ D————————60 (I think)

C: being thus carried was put as a substantive resolution and was *defeated by* a large majority: I thought I was bound to give my non placet & so did Burchal who sat next me. This means that none of the above schemes were adopted but that the whole matter was referred to a 'delegacy' i.e. committee to reconsider. Jackson seemed down in the mouth about it, but I am afraid little good will come of it; for either (which I suppose is most probable) the delegacy will finally adopt J's scheme; or they will get another architect who will be as bad or worse. I should mention that when I began speaking about the statues Case called me to order as being out of the question: the Vice-Chancellor however allowed me to go on, so I got my word in, the point of which was that the preservation of the statues is far more important than the question of the arrangement of the pinnacles, which as a matter of fact is all that the dons are troubling their heads about. Jackson assures me that the tower is all right: it seems that an engineer was called in to advise him on this point, and agreed that so it was.

J. took me up on the spire & I had a good look at the images, & fought Jackson at every point. The fact is he would *now* willingly keep the images, if he could do so without visibly banding & tying them, but this he funks. This was my chief point; as I refused to be led into a discussion as to whether they could be tied up to look *neat*, but stuck to it that even if they had to be covered with a cage of bars, it should be done rather than removing them. You see the worst of it is that the dons don't care one damn about them; I think that if *they* pressed J. at all he would do something: but they rather bully him about things that don't matter, and do *not* press him on important points.

[1] **This letter refers to the fight put up by the SPAB and Morris against Graham Jackson's drastic work on the spire of Great St Mary's Oxford. Note by Sir Sydney Cockerell.**

Thank you for your letter, which *was* of use enabling me better to understand the drift of Case's long speech. I confess I don't think much of him: he seemed to me to be one of those knowing noodles of which Oxford always produces many. I would write more but am dropping with sleep. So will talk about it when we meet. You can show this to Lethaby. Yours affectionately

W.M.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 18 September 1893

I have written the letter to Miinchen, and hope it will bear fruit. *News from Nowhere,* yes I did authorize it to someone recommended by the party; Bebel I think. As to *John Ball,* I do not think I have, and you are welcome to it, and I should be glad if you would do so [i.e. translate it]. Good luck!

To A. J. J. Wyatt[1] 8 October 1893

Could you let me have back the sheet of Beowulf my printers sent you (of course with your corrections).

I have roughed out about 1450 lines, & have cleared up and fair copied within about a hundred lines of that. If it would be no inconvenience for you to meet me here in about 3 weeks, we might then I think go through the work and get a fair lot of copy ready for the printer. There are two or three passages which have bothered me, which will need some personal talk between us, I think.

I am writing steadily at the book but it is (of course) difficult to me. I much enjoy doing it.

(9th) Your instalment has just come many thanks.

To the Editor, The Daily Chronicle 10 November 1893

THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE STRUGGLE

Sir

May I be allowed to say a word in supplement to your paragraph about my opinions on the future of the fine arts? You rather imply that I am a pessimist on this matter. This is not the case; but I am anxious that there should be no illusions as to the future of art. I do not believe in the possibility of keeping art vigorously alive by the action, however energetic, of a few groups of specially gifted men

[1] From May Morris, *ibid.* i. 495.

and their small circle of admirers amidst a general public incapable of understanding and enjoying their work. I hold firmly to the opinion that all worthy schools of art must be in the future, as they have been in the past, the outcome of the aspirations of the people towards the beauty and true pleasure of life. And further, now that democracy is building up a new order, which is slowly emerging from the confusion of the commercial period, these aspirations of the people towards beauty can only be born from a condition of practical equality of economical condition amongst the whole population. Lastly, I am so confident that this equality will be gained, that I am prepared to accept as a consequence of the process of that gain, the seeming disappearance of what art is now left us; because I am sure that that will be but a temporary loss, to be followed by a genuine new birth of art, which will be the spontaneous expression of the pleasure of life innate in the whole people.

This, I say, is the art which I look forward to, not as a vague dream, but as a practical certainty, founded on the general well-being of the people. It is true that the blossom of it I shall not see; therefore I may be excused if, in common with other artists, I try to express myself through the art of to-day, which seems to us to be only a survival of the organic art of the past, in which the people shared, whatever the other drawbacks of their condition might have been. For the feeling for art in us artists is genuine, though we have to work in the midst of the ignorance of those whose whole life ought to be spent in the production of works of art (the makers of wares to wit), and of the fatuous pretence of those who, making no utilities, are driven to 'make-believe

Yet if we shall not (those of us who are as old I am) see the New Art, the expression of the general pleasure of life, we are even now seeing the seed of it beginning to germinate. For if genuine art be impossible without the help of the useful classes, how can these turn their attention to it if they are living amidst sordid cares which press upon them day in, day out? The first step, therefore, towards the new birth of art must be a definite rise in the condition of the workers; their livelihood must (to say the least of it) be less niggardly and less precarious, and their hours of labour shorter; and this improvement must be a general one, and confirmed against the chances of the market by legislation. But again this change for the better can only be realised by the efforts of the workers themselves. 'By us, and not for us', must be their motto. That they are finding this out for them-

selves and acting on it makes this year a memorable one indeed, small as is the actual gain which they are claiming. So, Sir, I not only 'admit' but joyfully insist on the fact 'that the miners are laying the foundation of something better.' The struggle against the terrible power of the profit-grinder is now practically proclaimed by them a matter of principle, and no longer a mere chance-hap business dispute, and though the importance of this is acknowledged here and there, I think it is even yet underrated. For my part I look upon the swift progress towards equality as now certain; what these staunch miners have been doing in the face of such tremendous odds, other workmen can and will do; and when life is easier and fuller of pleasure, people will have time to look round them and find out what they desire in the matter of art, and will also have power to compass their desires. No one can tell now what form that art will take; but as it is certain that it will not depend on the whim of a few persons, but on the will of all, so it may be hoped that it will at last not lag behind that of past ages, but will outgo the art of the past in the degree that life will be more pleasurable from the absence of bygone violence and tyranny, *in spite* and not *because* of which our forefathers produced the wonders of popular art, some few of which time has left us. I am, Sir, yours obediently

William Morris

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
16 February 1894

To Algernon Charles Swinburne [1]

Although I had heard that you were going to do the friendly act (and the great honour to me) of dedicating your new vol:[2] to me I was both surprised and delighted by your poem in the Athenaeum of last week. Its extreme beauty is nothing but what one expects from you indeed. And as I knew your friendly feeling to me I ought not to be surprised at the expression of your kindness: but as a matter of fact it did take my breath away. A thousand thanks, my dear fellow, for both the art and the affection in it.

I am so glad that you like my printing: I almost thought you would as I have known you for long to have had an eye for an *old* book.

[1] **Ashley Library 1218.**
[2] ***Astrophel,* which contained verses addressed to Morris headed 'Dedication 1893'.**

Before long I shall have the pleasure of sending you a Keats from the K. Press.

To the Editor', The Daily Chronicle 27 February 1894

PROPOSED ADDITION TO WESTMINSTER ABBEY

I have read with much interest the proposal of Mr Yates Thompson about the revival of Mr Pearson's scheme for the new mortuary chapel at Westminster Abbey, and am very pleased to see the note of warning which you have raised, and with which I entirely agree. The whole ground round the Abbey is full of archaeological value, and from this point of view it is most dangerous to tamper with it. But there are other reasons for looking on this scheme with apprehension. Mr Pearson's scheme as adopted by Mr Yates Thompson, decidedly means an *addition* to the ancient building, I mean a new part added to it. This seems to me objectionable to the last degree. The ancient building at Westminster is in a special degree the work of *the people* of the country in past times, and it is particularly interesting to note that a work of art which has no individual architect's name connected with it, and is obviously a work of co-operative art, should be of such unrivalled beauty.[1] To add a piece of modern antique, the outcome of an architect's office, to what is left of the genuine expression of the minds and hands of our forefathers, would surely be an act of blind rashness which would show that those who perpetrated it had no reasonable conception of either art or history.

Kelmscott Press

To T. J. Wise 23 July 1894

I shall be very pleased to see you here; but my movements are uncertain at present: I will write to warn you when my movements are more settled. I will with pleasure finish the MS & sign it: but it will take me a little time as there is a good bit of it. As to reprinting in any form my callow productions, I beg your forgiveness for saying no in the flattest way. I want them forgotten as completely as it seems likely they will be if they are let alone. I will explain to you my views on this point when I have the pleasure of seeing you.

Many thanks for sending me the 4 copies of my propagandist letters, which are quite in accordance with my present views.[2]

[1] **The name of Henry Yevele (c. 1320-1400), the designer of the nave, is at least connected with *iu* This myth of anonymity is gradually giving place to modern research. See John Harvey, *Gothic England: A Survey of National Culture* (1947).**

[2] **Four Letters on Socialism, addressed to the Rev. George Bainton in 1888. See pp; 282-291.**

Kelmscott House
Monday evening
[30 July 1894]

To Sydney Carlyle Cockerell[1]

My dear Cockerell

I have to be at the court to-morrow before 10 in order to be the first witness examined;[2] so I shall probably miss you, and I shall probably not be back here till next Monday morning: so I leave these instructions.

Open all letters and send on those that *need* immediate answer or which might please me.

Let me know how the sales are going on Thursday.[3] Kindly take the Huntingfield to Quaritch in a day or two. I have told him that I am not going to buy it.[4]

I got three hours off the dangling this morning and called on Quaritch and told him about the Chaucer and that I was going to publish it myself: he was not surprised, but on my asking him how much he had sold produced a list of 43 sold to private persons, remarking, as was true, that the trade would probably transfer their orders to us. Finally he ordered 50 at 25 per cent discount, which I agreed to. Please write and acknowledge his order.

The number of the Chaucer is to be 325 paper, and 13 (or 14?) vellum. The price £20, done up in boards like *The Golden Legend?* Having gone over the number of lines with Ellis,[6] I I find it will not make more than 600 pages, which will go into one volume.

When I come back I shall bring the corrected hymn book sheets.[7] I want Bowden [8] to have everything ready to begin the Chaucer on *Monday:* I shall be disappointed if he cannot do this.

If Bowden wants anything settled you must settle it, please, on your own responsibility. Send me on James [9] if he writes.

This is all I can think of.

Yours ever
W.M.

[1] **Printed by Viola Meynel' in *Friends of a Lifetime* 66-7.**
[2] **At the trial of a Socialist called Cantwell.**
[3] **On Thursday, 2 Aug. Mr Cockerell bought a thirteenth-century MS of Gregory's *Decretals* for Morris at Sotheby's.**
[4] **The Huntingfield Psalter, a fine twelfth-century MS which Morris subsequently bought. Now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.**
[5] **The number of copies was subsequently raised to 425.**
[6] **F. S. Ellis edited the Kelmscott Chaucer.**
[7] ***Psalmi Penitentiates,* Kelmscott Press, 1894.**
[8] **W. H. Bowden, foreman of the Kelmscott Press. The printing of the Chaucer was begun on Wednesday, 8 August 1894.**
[9] **Dr M. R. James, then Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.**

Kelmscott Manor
Lechlade
To Bernard Quaritch 16 August 1894

On thinking over your offer of the Chaucer to the trade, I find it places me in an awkward position as you are practically underselling me by it, and the booksellers have already largely ordered the book of me at 15 per cent discount. Since as I understand now, your circular has already been sent out, I am driven to offer the Chaucer to the trade at 20 per cent discount, and shall do so immediately.

Under these circumstances, I must decline to supply you with any more copies, beyond the 63 already booked, at a higher discount than 15 per cent until all my trade customers have been supplied by me. If these terms do not suit you I am prepared to accept your cancelling of the orders already given to me by you.

I must add that this decision is final and that I cannot enter into any further controversy on the subject.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 22 August 1894

... I travelled from Oxford with Lord Dillon, who can't help being a lord, and is otherwise a good antiquary & an agreeable man; so we talked all the way. I did a bit more to my border yesterday & shall finish to-morrow; to-day I have been at work over finishing the title to the Book of Wisdom & Lies, & have done it. They are printing the Chaucer very well. Item it is all sold except 3 vellum copies & people are quarrelling over the privilege of buying it.

I have not had time to look at any of the MSS yet. Walker dined with me last night & I went to bed very sleepy at 10.45.

It was a dull day yesterday but much warmer in the afternoon 60 at 7 p.m. To-day is bright & warm, glass just now (say 3) up to 68. . . . Best love to dear Mother & dear you from your loving father

W.M.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Philip Webb [1] 27 August '94

My dear Fellow

A traveller once entered a western hotel in America & went up to the clerk in his box (as the custom is in that country) and ordered chicken for his dinner: the clerk, without any trouble in his

[1] **From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist* i. 672-3.**

face, put his hand into his desk, and drew out a derringer, wherewith he covered the new-comer and said in a calm historic voice: Stranger, you will not have chicken; you will have hash.

This story you seem to have forgotten. So I will apply it and say that you will have the Kelmscott books as they come out. In short you will have hash because it would upset me very much if you did not have a share in my 'larx.'

As to the Olaf Saga I had forgotten what you had had; chiefly I think because I did not prize the big-paper copies much. They were done in the days of ignorance, before the Kelmscott Press was, though hard on the time when it began.

You see as to all these matters I do the books mainly for you and one or two others; the public does not really care about them a damn —which is stale. But I tell you I *want* you to have them & finally you *ska,',',*.[1]

Yours affectionately
William Morris

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Char,'es Rowley *4* October [1894?]

I am sorry that I have drawn such a storm on your head, and am afraid that I shall not make matters better by answering the wise-acres of the Guardian; however I will try if I can do something to-day or tomorrow; and if I can I will send it you and if you approve it you can post it to them: only I don't know that it is much use attacking such hide-bound Bourgeois.

As to you, my friend, your position will be anomalous until you are a stirring member of a Branch in Manchester or the neighbourhood. In sober earnest couldn't you find me a knot of men to talk to down there who would listen to reasonable speech on the subject. I could make a shift to stay a couple of days and probably send somebody else to take up the discourse afterwards. Wishing you a good thick skin meantime (mine is not very thin by now).

P.S. I did not see till this minute that they had put you out of the Council: I scarcely know whether to say I hope, or I hope *not* because of my heresy. Anyhow 'tis a damned shame: shake the dust off your feet and join *us.*

[1] A printed copy of this letter was inserted in all Philip Webb's presentation copies of the Kelmscott Press books before he gave them to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1903.

Kelmscott Press
Upper Mall
Hammersmith

To Bernard Quaritch 10 November 1894

Thank you for your letter. The matter of the extra hundred is still under consideration. But whatever terms I agree on with you you must undertake for your part not to supply the trade on more advantageous terms than I do, supposing I decide to print the extra number.

I enclose the cheque as I promised last night, for £324.13.4. I am working very hard at the 3rd vol: of Heimskringla: there are more than 150 pp. at the printers, and I have sent 6 sheets back for revise.

To A. J. Wyatt[1] 10 November 1894

As to the glossary; I think our views as to what is wanted *in this case* differ; or rather we have not quite understood one another. ,' thought that all we wanted was a few very unusual words taken from M.E. such as brim or worth, and perhaps one or two sentences, though I think these would mostly explain themselves by the context except the few words aforesaid, almost all in the glossary I should not hesitate to use in an original poem of my own, you see: and ,'don't think it would need a glossary.

With these remarks I return you your paper to reconsider. I am anxious for your notes on the obscure passages.

Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall
Hammersmith, W

To Jesse Berridge [2] 17 November 1894

The writing sent me I find rather good for a first attempt except the black letter which is as bad as possible: the other is however not neat enough and is not quite right in design: there are too many 'flicks' in it *[drawing of lower case h here]* the size of the page is much too big & its shape ugly; it should be folded at least once: the position of the matter on the page is wrong: the writer should look at some old books printed or written before the 16th century. If the book is meant to be bound the leaves should not be single but should be gathered up in sheets one within the other, four sheets makes a good gathering.

[1] **From May Morris, *ibid.* i. 495-6.**
[2] **A young student of calligraphy, now Canon Berridge of Colchester.**

Finally as to models; the writer should study some fine book written about [1200 *crossed through]* 1120 or even earlier in which he will find the forms of the letters very good & the whole writing legible. The Brit: Mus: is rich in such books.

I don't advise the writer to go on with his work until he has improved himself with such study; but I should think that he has an instinct for calligraphy & will succeed if he takes enough trouble. By the way he must use quills; and if he writes black letter aslant must cut the nib a little aslant *[illustration of cut quill here].*

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 11 March 1895

My dear Scheu

Thanks for letter, I will not give you a worse character than I give to myself.

As to your visit I think it will have to be early *next* week, as I am all filled up this. I will write again in a day or two. Re the *Vorwarts* it would be of no use my going over as I have no evidence to give. The minute books of the S.L. have been destroyed: and I believe that Reuss was not formally expelled for being a spy but on some other count. I seem to remember that I happened not to be present when the vote was taken. I should be therefore of less than no use to the comrades if I went.

Yours affectionately
William Morris

To the Editor•, The Daily Chronicle 23 April 1895

Sir,—I venture to ask you to allow me a few words on the subject of the present treatment of Epping Forest. I was born and bred in its neighbourhood (Walthamstow and Woodford), and when I was a boy and young man knew it yard by yard from Wanstead to the Theydons, and from Hale End to the Fairlop Oak. In those days it had no worse foes than the gravel stealer and the rolling fence maker and was always interesting and often beautiful. From what I can hear it is years since the greater part of it has been destroyed, and I fear, Sir, that in spite of your late optimistic note on the subject, what is left of it now runs the danger of further ruin.

The special character of it was derived from the fact that by far the greater part was a wood of hornbeams, a tree not common save

in Essex and Herts. It was certainly the biggest hornbeam wood in these islands, and I suppose in the world. The said hornbeams were all pollards, being shrouded every four or six years, and were interspersed in many places by holly thickets; and the result was a very curious and characteristic wood, such as can be seen nowhere else. And I submit that no treatment of it can be tolerable which does not maintain this hornbeam wood intact.

But the hornbeam, though an interesting tree to an artist and reasonable person, is no favourite with the landscape gardener, and I very much fear that the intention of the authorities is to clear the forest of its native trees, and to plant vile weeds like deodars and outlandish conifers instead.

We are told that a committee of 'experts' has been formed to sit in judgement on Epping Forest: but, Sir, I decline to be gagged by the word 'expert', and I call on the public generally to take the same position. An 'expert' may be a very dangerous person, because he is likely to narrow his views to the particular business (usually a commercial one) which he represents. In this case, for instance, we do not want to be under the thumb of either a wood bailiff, whose business is to grow timber for the market, or of a botanist whose business is to collect specimens for a botanical garden: or of a landscape gardener whose business is to vulgarize a garden or landscape to the utmost extent that his patron's purse will allow of. What we want is reasonable men of real artistic taste to take into consideration what the essential needs of the case are, and to advise accordingly.

Now it seems to me that the authorities who have Epping Forest in hand may have two intentions as to it. First, they may intend to landscape garden it, or turn it into golf grounds (and I very much fear that even the latter nuisance may be in their minds); or second, they may really think it necessary (as you suggest) to thin the hornbeams, so as to give them a better chance of growing. The first alternative we Londoners should protest against to the utmost for, if it be carried out then Epping Forest is turned into a mere piece of vulgarity, is destroyed in fact.

As to the second, to put our minds at rest, we ought to be assured that the cleared spaces would be planted again, and that almost wholly with hornbeam. And, further, the greatest possible care should be taken that not a single tree should be felled, unless it were necessary for the growth of its fellows. Because, mind you, with comparatively small trees, the really beautiful effect of them can only

be got by their standing as close together as the exigencies of growth will allow. We want a thicket, not a park, from Epping Forest.

In short, a great and practically irreparable mistake will be made, if under the shelter of the opinion of the experts, from mere carelessness and thoughtlessness, we let the matter slip out of the hands of the thoughtful part of the public: the essential character of one of the greatest ornaments of London will disappear, and no one will have even a sample left to show what the great north-eastern forest was like.

To the Editor, The Daily Chronicle 9 May 1895

Sir,—Yesterday I carried out my intention of visiting Epping Forest. I went to Loughton first, and saw the work that had been done about Clay Road, thence to Monk Wood, thence to Theydon Woods, and thence to the part about the Chingford Hotel, passing by Fair Mead Bottom, and lastly to Bury Wood and the wood on the other side of the road thereby.

I can verify closely your representative's account of the doings on the Clay Road, which is an ugly scar originally made by the lord of the manor when he contemplated handing over to the builder a part of what he thought was his property. The fellings here seemed to me all pure damage to the forest, and in fact were quite unaccountable to me, and would surely be so to any unprejudiced person. I cannot see what could be pleaded for them either on the side of utility or taste.

About Monk Wood there had been much, and I should say excessive, felling of trees apparently quite sound. This is a very beautiful spot, and I was informed that the trees there had not been polled for a period long before the acquisition of the forest for the public: and nothing could be more interesting and romantic than the effect of the long poles of the hornbeams rising from the trunks and seen against the mass of the wood behind. This wood should be guarded most jealously as a treasure of beauty so near to 'the Wen.' In the Theydon Woods, which are mainly of beech, a great deal of felling has gone on, to my mind quite unnecessary, and therefore harmful. On the road between the Ware Arms and the King's Oak Hotel there has been much felling, obviously destructive.

In Bury Wood (by Sewardstone Green) we saw the trunks of a

great number of oak trees (not pollards), all of them sound; and a great number were yet standing in the wood marked for felling, which, however, we heard had been saved by a majority of the committee of experts. I can only say that it would have been a very great misfortune if they had been lost: in almost every case where the stumps of the felled trees showed there seemed to have been no reason for their destruction. The wood on the other side of the road to Bury Wood, called on the map Woodman's Glade, has not suffered from felling, and stands as an object lesson to show how unnecessary such felling is. It is one of the thickest parts of the forest, and looks in all respects like such were forty years ago, the growth of the heads of the hornbeams being but slow: but there is no difficulty in getting through it in all directions, and it has a peculiar charm of its own not to be found in any other forest; in short it is thoroughly *characteristic*. I should mention that the whole of these woods are composed of pollard hornbeams and 'spear'—i.e. unpolled—oaks.

I am compelled to say, from what I saw in a long day's inspection, that, though no doubt acting with the best intentions, the management of the forest is going on the wrong track: it is making war on the natural aspect of the forest, which the Act of Parliament that conferred it on the nation expressly stipulated was to be retained. The tendency of all these fellings is on the one hand to turn our London forest into a park, which would be more or less like other parks, and on the other hand to grow sizeable trees, as if for the timber market. I must beg to be allowed a short quotation here from an excellent little guide-book to the forest by Mr Edward North Buxton, verderer of the forest (Stanford 1885). He says, P. 38:—'In the drier parts of the forest beeches to a great extent take the place of oaks. These "spear" trees will make fine timber for future generations, provided they receive timely attention by being *relieved of the competing growth of the unpicturesque hornbeam pollards*. Throughout the wood, between Chingford and High Beech, *this has been recently done* to the great advantage of the finer trees. . . .'

The italics are mine, and I ask, Sir, if we want any further evidence than this of one of the verderers as to the tendency of the fellings. Mr Buxton declares in so many words that he wants to change the special character of the forest: to take away this strange, unexampled, and most romantic wood, and leave us nothing but a commonplace instead. I entirely deny his right to do so in the teeth of the Act of

Parliament. I assert, as I did in my former letter, that the hornbeams are the most important trees in the forest, since they give it its special character. At the same time, I would not encourage the hornbeams at the expense of the beeches, any more than I would the beeches at the expense of the hornbeams. I would leave them all to nature, which is not so niggard after all, even on Epping Forest gravel, as e.g. one can see in places where forest fires have denuded spaces, and where in a short time birches spring up self-sown.

The Committee of the Common Council has now had Epping Forest in hand for seventeen years, and has, I am told, in that time felled 100,000 trees. I think the public may now fairly ask for a rest on behalf of the woods, which, if the present system of felling goes on, will be ruined as a national forest: and it is good and useful to make this claim at once, when, in spite of all disfigurements, the northern part of the forest, from Sewardstone Green to beyond Epping, is still left to us, not to be surpassed in interest by any other wood near a great capital.

To the Editor, The Times 1 June 1895

THE ROYAL TOMBS IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

For some time past there have been rumours afloat that it was intended to 'restore' the Royal tombs in Westminster Abbey. These seem traceable to the fact that the President of the Society of Antiquaries had had his attention called to the alleged bad condition of the monuments. The result of this has been that Mr Micklethwaite, whose knowledge both of the past and the present of the Abbey probably surpasses that of any other person now living, was commissioned to report on the state of the Royal monuments to the executive committee of the Society of Antiquaries. His report disposes of the alarmist view that there is any serious deterioration going on in these monuments. They have indeed suffered from the effects of violence that took place during the civil and ecclesiastical strife of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and they are worn by time and London filth; but the Dean and Chapter cannot justly be blamed for any neglect of them, as they have done what they could to keep them in a condition at once sound and genuine.

It is possible, however, that the rumour above mentioned may lead to a cry for their 'restoration', in the technical sense of the word.

I ask permission, therefore, to address a word or two, through your columns, to those who are not contented to see these invaluable records of several centuries of our history, these beautiful examples of a past art, left in a sound and genuine condition.

I fear there are those who wish to change the present appearance of these monuments, who believe that it is possible to bring them back to their original splendour. They would, no doubt, replace the vanished mosaic in the twisted columns of the Confessor's shrine, replace the partly perished marble by brand-new slabs; do the same by the Purbeck marble of Queen Eleanor's tomb, and polish the new work till it shone like glass (for such things have been done elsewhere); make new lions for Edward Ill's feet to rest on; regild Richard II, and re-chase the crowned and chained hart and the sunburst which makes such a beautiful pattern on his robe, and (why not when once started on such a road?) cover the wooden core of Henry V with new metal, and make a new head for him at a guess. It is a matter of course that all the architectural details of canopies and subsidiary figures would be done again, in imitation or guesswork of what yet remains. All this could be done by means of the expenditure of money, and it will be done if the 'restorers' have their way; for they will not stop short of it. And what would be the result of it? We should have a set of models more or less ingeniously got together, partly by servile and inartistic imitation, partly by guesswork from the originals. Such models might, indeed, be made for exhibition in some popular show, some Old Westminster yet to be produced, and might amuse a good many people for a time, and they would be innocent enough if the originals were left in their integrity. But that is not the possible proposition; the 'restorers' would try their experiments on the very historical records and works of art themselves; which means, in plain words, that before 'restoring' them they would have to destroy them. The record of our remembered history embodied in them would be gone; almost more serious still, the unremembered history, wrought into them by the hands of the craftsmen of bygone times, would be gone also. And to what purpose? To foist a patch of bright, new work, a futile academical study at best, amidst the loveliness of the most beautiful building in Europe.

I cannot and do not believe that the Dean and Chapter would consent to the perpetration of such a monstrosity, but I feel that it is well to be in time in such matters and to protest before any considerable

number of persons should get themselves committed to a scheme, the carrying out of which would be nothing short of a national disaster.

To Lady Burne-Jones [?][1] 19 July 1895

The check of the Chaucer flattens life for me somewhat, but I am going hard into the matter, and have found out the real expert in the matter of inks and oils, and in about a fortnight hope to know the worst of it.[2]

On Wednesday I went a journey into Suffolk for the S.P.A.B., a pretty journey all through my native Essex. The upland pastures were all burnt up, and were cocoa-nut matting; but the corn did not look bad: they were cutting oats in many places, which should not be ready till the end of August. Blythborough was what we went to see; once a good town in the Middle Ages, now a poor remnant of a village with the ruins of a small religious house and a huge 15 th century church built of flint after that country manner: a very beautiful church, full of interest, with fine wood-work galore, a lovely painted roof, and some stained glass; the restorations not much noticeable from the inside: floor of various bricks, a few seats in the nave, all ancient, similar ones in the chancel, and the rest open space. We were cumbered of course with the parson, since we came to advise him, but I much enjoyed myself and sat about while Turner did his measurings &c. The place is close to Southwold on the little tidal river Bly at the end of the marshland valley, where they were busy with their second hay crop. Little spits of sandy low upland covered with heather and bracken run down to the marsh, and make a strange landscape of it; a mournful place, but full of character. I was there some twenty-five years ago; and found I remembered it perfectly.

By the way, there was a review of the Wood *[The Wood Beyond the World,* ordinary edition] in last week's Spectator, which was kind and polite, but amused me very much by assuming that it was a Socialist allegory of Capital and Labour! It was written with such an air of cock-certainty that I thought people might think that I had

[1] From Mackail, ii. 315-6.

[2] I.e. The Kelmscott Press Chaucer. 'At the end of May the discovery was made that a number of the printed sheets had become discoloured, owing to some failure in the exact preparation of the ink. Fortunately it proved that the yellow stain was uigitive, and could be removed by careful bleaching in sunlight without affecting the colour of the ink. But it was not till late in the autumn that he could fully satisfy himself that the stain had been permanently removed, and might not reappear.' Mackail, ii. 315.

told the reviewer myself; so I wrote a note to explain that he was wrong.

Kelmscott Manor
Near Lechlade

To the Thames Conservancy[1] 19 July 1895

I am informed that the Thames Conservancy is about rebuilding the Lock-Keeper's Cottage at Eaton Weir by Kelmscott. I venture respectfully therefore to lay before them some considerations about the materials of their contemplated building on the grounds that I am a great lover & close observer of the Thames & its landscape, and that the beautiful old house which I hold at Kelmscott is within eye-shot of Eaton Weir.

The point which I specially wish to bring before the Conservancy is that one of the most characteristic and beautiful features of the landscape in this neighbourhood is the prevalence of old houses built of the stone of the district and roofed with *stone*—slates or slabs: and I have noticed that any intrusion of other materials materially injures the landscape. This would be especially the case if a building of red brick covered with ordinary slate took the place of the present cottage at Eaton Weir, as it cannot fail to be a very prominent object in the landscape. I therefore earnestly beg the Conservancy to consider the suggestion that it should be built of stone and roofed with stone slates; the present building would certainly furnish a good part of the material at least for the roofing. If however it be too late to ensure the walls being built of stone, I urge that at least the roofing material should be of *stone* slates rather than of ordinary slates, or tiles, as this would minimize the disfigurement considerably. I hope I may be excused for troubling the Conservancy on this matter, since I do so in the belief that the visitors to the Upper Thames who care for its beauties will sympathize with me in my request.

Asking you to be so obliging as to lay this letter before the Board at your earliest convenience. . . .

To the Editor, The Spectator 20 July 1895

THE WOOD BEYOND THE WORLD

I make it a rule not to answer any criticism of my literary work, feeling that the writers have formed their opinions on ground suffi-

[1] This letter achieved its object. 'At his urgent instances, too, the Conservators consented to give instructions that the men who cut the weeds on the river should spare the flowering plants on the banks as much as possible.' Mackail, ii. 318.

cient to themselves, and that they have a full right to express those opinions. But I think I might break this rule in the case of your very kind and generous notice of my *Wood Beyond the World* (for which I beg to thank you heartily), and, for the benefit of your readers, correct what is a matter of fact, and not of opinion.

I had not the least intention of thrusting an allegory into *The Wood Beyond the World;* it is meant for a tale pure and simple, with nothing didactic about it. If I have to write or speak on social problems, I always try to be as direct as I possibly can be. On the other hand, I should consider it bad art in anyone writing an allegory not to make it clear from the first that this was his intention, and not to take care throughout that the allegory and the story should interpenetrate, as does the great master of allegory, Bunyan. Asking your pardon for taking up your valuable space by writing these few words about myself.

Kelmscott House
Hammersmith
To the Editor, The Athenaeum 13 August 1895

CASTS *v.* TAPESTRIES

In your 'Fine-Art Gossip' last Saturday there is a note on the management of the South Kensington Museum, which I should be sorry to think had really received your approval. I mention for the benefit of those who may not have noticed it, that it is an attack on the shifting of the tapestries into the great hall, and of the plaster casts of classical sculpture into the gallery contiguous.

To go into the matter in some detail, and take the disingenuous hints in this note point by point, I begin by saying that I was not aware that the hall was built for the exhibition of plaster casts of sculpture; but if it were, I must say I consider that it was ill adapted for such a purpose; that when they filled the hall it was by no means easy to see them as they should be seen, whereas the Museum has without doubt no place where the tapestries could be so well seen; and also I quite deny that the plaster casts are ill placed in the gallery where they now are. Next, though the collection of tapestries may be 'relatively' small, yet it quite fills the hall, and heretofore the management of the Museum had not been able to find any place for the tapestries where they could be seen.

Next as to the relative claims for space in the Museum between

these two sets of exhibits. I can easily understand that if it were a question of original works of classical sculpture, there would be a strong feeling—general, though perhaps not universal—that everything else should give place to it. But it must be remembered that on the one hand the 'sculpture' mentioned in your note is *not* original, but only mechanically reproduced. I do not say that it is not useful for study (though surely sometimes misleading), but it can be reproduced to almost any extent, so that every large school of art throughout the country can have abundant specimens of it, if that be desirable. On the other hand, the tapestries, whatever their artistic merit may be, are original and are not reproducible, and it is very rarely indeed that any fine specimens come into the market; to sacrifice them, therefore, to the claims for space of the mere reproductions of works of art would be a criminal blunder, if such an arrangement were to be considered permanent; and I know very well that many 'educated lovers of art' heartily thank the present Director for removing the disgrace which even the temporary neglect of the tapestries cast on the South Kensington Museum.

I deprecate making this subject a field for the battle of styles; but I must say a word or two as to what the 'relatively small' collection of tapestries at South Kensington really is. This is necessary in my reply to your writer, as he clearly has not seen it, or he would scarcely venture to assign it to the 'age of Louis XIV and the preceding age', meaning, I suppose, from c. 1580 to c. 1680. It is an extremely judicious and happy selection of the best period of tapestry-weaving (for it is *not* needlework),[1] say from 1490 to 1530, with a fringe of a few pieces which, though later, are remarkable for design and execution characteristic of the material in which they are worked. In short, it is composed almost entirely of mediaeval or 'Gothic' pieces, which have very little sign of the approach of the French Renaissance (and that only a few of them) and none at all of the Louis XIV style, for which, personally, I have as strong a distaste as the writer of the note can have.

The collection therefore gives us a thoroughly fine example of the most important wall decoration of the later Middle Ages, and contains some of the very best designs, made for whatever purpose, by the artists of the period, and coloured with a beauty and success that mediaeval artists only were capable of. To neglect such a school of decorative art would have been an unpardonable mistake on the part

[1] The writer had referred to the tapestries as pictures in needlework'.

of the South Kensington authorities, and I cannot conceive of objection being made to the acquirement of it, and the effective exhibition of it when acquired, except by those who would really, if they could, have nothing shown to the public save examples, or reproductions of examples, of classical art. Against such narrow pedantry I protest with all my heart.[1]

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall
Hammersmith, W
19 August 1895

To Emery Walker

My dear Walker

I got your letter too late, as it was sent to K. and I came here on Friday.

There was no lecturer last night, so I filled the gap with a little talk about the Socialist party: small audience. Carruthers was there & came in afterwards with Bullock, but as I hadn't got your letter I did not talk to him about the petition. I think Crane's name and mine along with yours as secretary will do well enough; for C is not known at all as a public character. By the way when does Parliament go away? It ought to be sent in before then ought it not?

Cockerell duly brought the XII century book to Kelmscott on Tuesday; it is Rhenish about 1120 I think, and to my mind not at all interesting. R. wants to show it [to] another customer, Lord Crawford, I suspect: but I showed it to Lord Balcarres yesterday & I think he estimated it pretty much as we all do. R. wants £850 for it; an absurd price: but now he writes asking me to make an offer: but I won't, for I don't want to have it.

I showed it and the little one to Webb on Saturday: he went with me about both the books, was charmed with the little one.

Shaw's article not yet turned up: I suppose they didn't send it on from K.[2]

I am going down to K. to-day, and shall come up on Friday afternoon and stay a day or two: so if you are in town I shall be pleased

[1] In the course of an editorial comment on this letter, the art-gossiper remarked: 'We trust Mr Morris does not wish us to prefer the art of tapestries of any period to that of sculptures representing the choicest remains of antiquity. Nor are wc disposed to admit that for purposes of study these casts are at all less valuable than the originals would be. Mr Morris's plea for the tapestries as "originals" would apply to the cartoons or other drawings from which they were wrought, but it is scarcely appropriate in reference to tapestr.es which are hardly more "originals" than the casts . . . We should, however, have written that the tapestries are of the age of Louis XIV and the preceding ages, not "preceding age".'

[2] Bernard Shaw's article, or rather essay, on Max Nordau's *Degeneration,* which he demolished. It was republished as *The Sanity of Art.*

to see you to dinner on Friday 7,30, Saturday 7.30, or Sunday 1.30, any or all of them.

The Hanover ink was tried on Friday and worked well: I shall use no other now.[1]

Capital weather for bleaching. Yours affectionately
William Morris

To Lady Burne-Jones[2] Kelmscott
August 1895

I was thinking just now, how I have wasted the many times when I have been 'hurt' and (especially of late years) have made no sign, but swallowed down my sorrow and anger, and nothing done! Whereas if I had but gone to bed and stayed there for a month or two and declined taking any part in life, as indeed on such occasions I have felt very much disinclined to do, I can't help thinking that it might have been very effective. Perhaps you remember that this game was tried by some of my Icelandic heroes, and seemingly with great success. But I admit that it wants to be done well.

It was a most lovely afternoon when I came down here, and I was prepared to enjoy the journey from Oxford to Lechlade very much: and so I did; but woe's me! when we passed by the once lovely little garth near Black Bourton, I saw all my worst fears realized; for there was the little barn we saw being mended, the wall cut down and finished with a zinked iron roof. It quite sickened me when I saw it. That's the way all things are going now. In twenty years everything will be gone in this countryside, which twenty years ago was so rich in beautiful building: and we can do nothing to help it or mend it. The world had better say, 'Let us be through with it and see what will come after it!' In the meantime I can do nothing but a little bit of Anti-Scrape—*sweet to eye while seen.* Now that I am grown old and see that nothing is to be done, I half wish that I had not been born with a sense of romance and beauty in this accursed age. . . .

Kelmscott House
Hammersmith
To the Editor', The Athenaeum 26 August 1895

CASTS *v.* TAPESTRIES

I do not agree with you in thinking the great hall at South Kensington Museum a good place for the exhibition of casts. Seen as

[1] The Hanover ink was recommended by Emery Walker for the Kelmscott Press.
[2] From Mackail, ii. 318-9.

they were without any background save other casts, they gave a confused effect which was most repellent. I think them much better placed now than they were in the great hall.

If you refer to my first letter, you will see that there is no question of my preferring any tapestries to any casts. I assure you I am quite as able to discriminate between the fine Gothic tapestries and the inferior work of the early Renaissance, which is of little value, or that of Louis XIV which is worthless, as I am between the Greek sculpture of the Periclean or pre-Periclean epoch and the academic late Roman sculpture.

As to the parallel between the reproduction of the tapestries from the cartoons and the reproduction of the casts from the original sculpture, it does not hold; for I cannot doubt that the Gothic tapestries are the artistic completion of designs that were in themselves incomplete. As to the Sistine tapestries, the reason that I should assign for their being of little account beside the cartoons is that, whatever the merits of the latter may be as *pictures,* they are quite unsuitable for tapestries, as all Renaissance designs are. No doubt, if we could acquire any Gothic cartoons for tapestry, we should esteem them as great treasures; but they can hardly be said to exist, the only one I know of being the piece now exhibited in the South Kensington tapestry room, which is clearly drawn to scale.

As to the relative value of casts and originals, I must leave you to your own opinion, but mine is that the casts are but a makeshift, though I admit they are in some cases necessary; but at any rate they are a necessity of which every large school of art can avail itself.

Your correction of *ages* for 'age' lands me in a doubt as to *which* of the preceding ages you mean. The thirteenth century, the fourteenth, or the early stone age? As to the disingenuousness I complained of, it is threefold: first, the implication that the casts are original sculptures; second, that the tapestries belong to an effete and degraded style (Louis XIV to wit); and, third, that it was an easy and simple matter for the South Kensington authorities to find a good and suitable place for the exhibition of their collection of magnificent Gothic tapestries.[1]

William Morris

[1] In a final editorial note, art-gossiper distinguished himself by referring to the tapestries as 'more or less crude and imperfect', and re-asserting that they were of less value than the plaster casts.

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
To Andreas Scheu 26 September 1895

I am going into the country to-day, and shall not be back before Saturday week. Will that be too late for our friend Dr Karpeles? If not kindly drop me a line to Manor House, Kelmscott, Lechlade.

Thank you, I am pretty well considering my age: I have been enjoying myself chiefly in working and in walking: for I have been finding it necessary to take exercise. I shall be in town soon for the winter and shall hope to see something of you.

To the Editor, The Daily Chronicle 4 October 1895

THE RESTORATION OF ROUEN CATHEDRAL

I am glad to see that the *Daily Chronicle* understands so well the danger of the threatened restoration of Rouen Cathedral. It would be impossible to over-estimate the interest of this most beautiful monument of art, which, taking it altogether, is second to none in the two great architectural countries, France and England. And though visitors to the ancient Norman capital are most often captivated by the extraordinary elegance of St Ouen, and in consequence somewhat neglect the cathedral, the latter has both more interest and more special beauty than the former. As to work to be done, of course it is possible that structural repairs are necessary; nay, on some scale or other they are sure to be, for in these huge buildings unceasing watchfulness and unintermittent small repairs are the price which must be paid in order to avoid the two irreparable disasters of ruin and restoration. I fear, however, with you, that this structural repair, which when done would scarcely be visible, is not what is contemplated, but that when the restoration is completed we shall find a great deal, perhaps the greater part of the detail redone into a mere modern imitation of the ancient work. This has been done for some years now in the case of the Palais de Justice in Rouen, which is in consequence no longer a beautiful late Gothic building, as I first saw it in 1853, but a lifeless modern 'study in Gothic' prepared in an architect's office, and carried out slavishly by the workman reduced to a mere machine.

In these days when history is studied so keenly through genuine original documents, and has thereby gained a vitality which makes it such a contrast to the dull and not too veracious accounts of kings

and nobles, that used to do duty for history, it seems pitiable indeed that the most important documents of all, the ancient buildings of the Middle Ages, the work of the associated labour and thought of the *people* the result of a chain of tradition unbroken from the earliest stages of art, should be falsified by an uneasy desire to do something, a vulgar craving for formal completeness, which is almost essentially impossible in a building that has grown from decade to decade and century to century.

Again, the special beauty of mediaeval buildings which after a long period of neglect and ignorance, has forced itself on the attention of our time, should surely by now be recognized by all intelligent persons as the outcome of the conditions of the society of that epoch, a thing impossible of reproduction under the modern system of capitalist and wage-earner; the attempt at reproduction being much on a level with a fifth form boy's Latin verses set against a passage of the *jEneid.* For the whole surface of a mediaeval building shows intelligent, free, and therefore pleasurable work on the part of the actual workman, while that of a modern building has nothing in it more than toil done against the grain under threat of starvation. The 'restoration' therefore, in the generally understood sense of the word, must mean serious and lasting injury to Rouen Cathedral, and may mean the destruction of all interest and beauty in it, as we may see at home in such examples as Worcester and Lichfield.

As to Peterborough, I do not wish to prejudge the case, and can only hope that nothing will be done there but ensuring the stability of the west front. But I am sure that the public ought to be heedfully on the watch, and that not a penny ought to be subscribed, until the report of what is intended to be done is frankly laid before it in all detail.

To the Editor', The Daily Chronicle 26 November 1895

Sir,—Allow me to add my thanks also to you for your straightforward attack on the cant which assumes that a public body having the administration of charities has but one mandate, to wit, the increase of its money at the expense of every other consideration.

As to the Trinity Almshouses,[1] looking at the beauty and charm

[1] In the Mile End Road. Built in 1695 after designs by Wren for destitute seamen and their widows over sixty years of age, who received the house rent-free, coals and medical attendance, a suit of clothes, a silk hat and a gift of money.

of the buildings and their *immediate* surroundings, and the reproach they throw on us for the squalor of the outside world of East London; and looking also at the pleasure and decency of life which they confer on the present inmates, I can think of nothing which *{mutatis mutandis)* fits the case better than the lines of Omar Khayyam:

> I often wonder what the vintners buy
> One half so precious as the goods they sell.[1]

We must recognize to the full my friend Mr Ashbee's single-hearted and indefatigable efforts on behalf of the London citizens: and none, I am sure, are more anxious to do so than our Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; but lest anyone should think that we have been neglecting our duties, I may venture to tell you that we have been doing our best to help him.

I enclose my subscription towards the sum of £150, which, as it seems, the Trinity Brethren are too poor to find, and am, Sir, Yours obediently,

William Morris

To Lady Burne-Jones [2]

Rottingdean
27 November 1895

To-day has been quite mild, and I started out at ten and went to a mountain with some barns on the top, and a chalk pit near (where you took me one hot evening in September, you remember), and I walked on thence a good way, and should have gone further, but prudence rather than weariness turned me back. They were ploughing a field in the bottom with no less than ten teams of great big horses: they were knocking off for their bever just as I came on them, and seemed very jolly, and my heart went out to them, both men and horses.

I brought my University book down with me,[3] but deserted it yesterday afternoon for Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice', which I have just finished. I am getting better here, but was better on Sunday for the matter of that. The doctor called on Monday, and told me it was good for me not to be victimized by bores, and that I had better not be: this seems to me such very good advice, that I pass it

[1] **The choice of these lines is somewhat unfortunate, perhaps, as all the other seamen's almshouses in the district had been demolished by that time to make way for breweries.**

[2] **From Mackail, ii. 320-1.**

[3] **Rashdall's *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages'***

on to you; but I am just struck with fear that you may begin the practice of it on me. Anyhow I will be cautious enough of it not to make this letter longer.

To the Editor, The Daily Chronicle 13 December 1895

Sir

The blame for the waste of money in the interior of Peterborough Cathedral on things which must to everybody seem non-essentials (and which to me seem mischievous modernizations) does not rest specially on the restoration committee, and I did not in my former letter mean to imply that it did. The committee shares the blame with the general public. Yet it seems to me that as the body made responsible for carrying out necessary repairs, and which in consequence was and is bound to know more than others of the needs of the Cathedral, it was their business rather to lead the public than be led by it, and to point out emphatically what those needs were. The only effective way of doing this would have been to have refused money except for definite necessary repairs; if this had been done, the public would soon have learnt its lesson. No committee for seeing through the repairs due to a monument of art and history can justify its existence if it allows itself to be made the tool of the feeble wishes of ignorance and folly. I speak strongly on this point, because so much mischief has been caused in many places by rich men shaking bags of money at 'restoration[5] committees, and their not being able to resist the temptation of doing something splendid at the expense of losing almost all the interest of the building in their charge. I rejoice to hear that the scaffolding to the west front is in progress; and must hope that the responsibility of advising the Dean and Chapter on this will not be thrown on any one man, but that a consensus of opinion of those most skilled in construction will be obtained. I am, Sir, your obedient servant

William Morris

To the Editor, The Times 14 December 1895

Sir

Many of your readers are aware that for some time a scheme has been on foot for rebuilding the north-western tower of Chichester Cathedral, which fell down about the year 1634, leaving only the

lower portion standing, and that it is now proposed to carry out this work as a memorial to the late Bishop. The promoters of this scheme, in appealing to the public for funds, state that 'unless this tower is rebuilt shortly the whole north-east corner of the Cathedral will come crashing to the ground, so bad is the state into which that part of the building has got owing to the lack of the support which the tower was intended to supply.'

This is an assertion eminently calculated to frighten those who remember the fall of the central spire in 1861 into contributing money to avoid a similar mishap; but the very potency of the appeal ought to render those who make it doubly cautious not to endorse a doubtful statement.

Now, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings unhesitatingly affirms (and its opinion is confirmed by architects of practical experience in upholding large structural masses) that any support which would be afforded to the columns, arches and superincumbent weight of the nave and south aisle by a new tower, would be obtainable by strengthening the foundations and adding abutments, and this without destroying historical evidence, and, moreover, without incurring that risk of disturbing the balance of the old walls which would be involved in pulling down the remains of the tower and excavating to the necessary depth for the foundation of a weighty new building: a risk which it is hardly possible to overrate, it being scarcely too much to say that a wound inflicted in any part of such a building as one of our old cathedrals is felt throughout its whole body, and may have a most prejudicial effect in disturbing its equilibrium.

We must not, however, rush to the conclusion that it is such support as a north-west tower would afford which is required to secure the safety of the west bay of the nave roof. The loosening of the vaulting and other dislocation of the fabric may arise from other causes, such as the depression of the foundations of the support; and the first step should be to make diligent search for all such possible causes. The preservation of our cathedrals is too important a matter to rest entirely on the judgement of any individual architect unassisted by the experience of other minds. In spite of the large sums which have for years past been spent on 'restoration', the country is in anxious suspense as to the stability of Chichester Cathedral, as well as such other precious fabrics as those of Peterborough and Salisbury. Should not the architect who may be chosen to direct import-

ant repairs be assisted by such an expert as an experienced engineer, who, as well as the architect, should be responsible to the committee or other body authorizing the works?

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant
William Morris

To Philip Webb

Kelmscott
27 April [1896]

My dear Fellow

I said I would write to you and tell you how I was getting on, so here goes. ... I don't seem to mend a bit, am weak and belly-achy. Let that pass. Otherwise all is well. I have been enjoying the garden much: as one walks about & about there is no eyesore: all is beautiful. You are right about the grass; it is well-grown and as green as green. Also the apple-blossom (contrary to what someone else told me) is very fine, I don't think we at K. ever had so much. We are rather between the flowers, but the tulips are coming on thick, and the wall-flowers are splendid. Also Hobbs has been thatching his sheds all about; this is a great gain to me, who am always shaking in my shoes before the advent of zinced and iron sheets. I got out on the road yesterday with Walker, & got nearly as far as the Want-ways, & then had to turn back: I was somewhat tired, but enjoyed it much. We should be glad of rain, but I don't expect it yet, though to-day the wind is S.W. and though there is a good deal of it, it cannot blow the sky quite clear. The rooks are very musical, but I have heard the blackbirds stronger. I only hear the cuckoo about 7 A M.

I am doing what work I can, and have got on pretty well with a new border. Literary work rather hangs fire: but then Walker was here for 2 evenings. About that Bestiary[x] there is some hitch, so that I have not been able to see the book itself, only one page photo: which looks about as fine as such things were ever done; but I doubt its English-ship.

Now I will be done for the present, and am sorry that I am got to be such a grumbler.

Your affectionate
Wilham Morris

[1] I went to Stuttgart at this time with a blank cheque and bought a fine English Bestiary MS. of the 12th century on W.M.'s behalf for £900. It is now in the Pierpont Morgan Collection in New York. Note by Sir Sydney Cockerell.

Kelmscott Manor
Lechlade

To Lady Burne-Jones [1] 27 April 1896

I cannot say that I think I am better since I saw you a week ago; and I hope I am no worse; only you see down in this deep quiet, away from the excitements of business and callers, and doctors, one is rather apt to brood, and I fear that I have made myself very disagreeable at times.

However, I am going on with my work, both drawing and writing, though but little of the latter, as Walker was with me Saturday and Sunday, to my great comfort, Ellis comes on Saturday, and will stay till I go back. Here everything is as beautiful as it can be: up to now the season is a fine one, the grass well grown and well coloured; the apple-blossom plentifuller than we have ever had it here. The weather with lots of sun, though I should have preferred that alternated with a few warm showers instead of the veil of cold cloud which has no promise of rain in it (like Hud's dry cloud that hung over the city of Sheddad, the son of Ad the Greater) and withering wind with it.

However I have enjoyed the garden very much, and should never be bored by walking about and about in it. And though you think I don't like music, I assure you that the rooks and blackbirds have been a great consolation to me. We are still between the flowers, for nothing stirs this beastly weather. The thing that was the pleasingest surprise was the raspberry-canes, which Giles has trellised up neatly, so that they look like a mediaeval garden: they are thriving splendidly.

Moreover Hobbs has been re-thatching a lot of his sheds and barns which sorely needed it, and used to keep me in a fever of terror of galvanized iron: so that this time at least there is some improvement in the village.

Kelmscott

To Philip Webb 4 May [1896]

My dear fellow

It was very kind of you to write to me and to want to know how I am. Well, I am not getting on; I say that in all calmness: I am afraid I am rather weaker than stronger, and am bothered with belly-ache and pains in the limbs: but my cough, which got much worse when I came down here, is now much better, and troubles me but

[1] From Mackail, ii. 324-5.

little. Also I sleep well, which is a great comfort. I am sure my stomach wants looking to. I am coming back on Tuesday, and shall see Broadbent[x] as soon as I can. Now let that flea stick on the wall.

Ellis is here till Tuesday, when he goes back to Torquay: he amuses me considerably and is very friendly and considerate. Cockerell comes here to-morrow: he brings with him the said book. I had a letter from him yesterday in which he spoke of it in measured terms; but we take it that was to prevent disappointment, as he would hardly have bought it then and there if he had not thought it worth the sacrifice of £900. There, the murder is out. But you see it will certainly fetch something when my sale comes off.

The weather is very bitter here. . . . Well now come and see me soon at Hammersmith if you can. Your affectionate

William Morris

To Philip Webb

Norfolk Hotel
Folkestone
14 June 1896

. . . Every morning we drive down to the Harbour (it is too far for me to walk there) and then I toddle about, and sit down, lean over the chains, and rather enjoy it, especially if there are any craft about. The Harbour is the only decent place in the town, that and the view of the downs thence. It is very rough, not at all polite, all mixed up with the railway, which comes right up the pierhead. We are going a bit of a drive after tea to Caesar's Camp, which is a fine point of the hills behind: all of which would be very beautiful still if it were not for the almost incredible squalor & hideousness of the miles of squattering new buildings. But tis an old story! . . .

To Philip Webb[2]

Folkestone
1 July 1896

. . . We took Walker to Lympne Court on Sunday, going through Hythe; we were overtaken with the most lovely shower in Hythe street, and clomb the uplands in the middle of it. The Court is a most exceedingly lovely house knocked about as a farm-house but quite unrestored. I should say it were complete; porch hall & tower at end, the latter now shut up: on the further side, throwing out an-

[1] Sir William Broadbent (1835-1907), later Physician in Ordinary to Edward VT1 when Prince of Wales, and author of *The Pulse* (1890), *The Heart* (1897) and other medical works.
[2] From May Morris, *William Morris Artist Writer Socialist*, i. 673.

other tower opposite the porch it comes butt up to the pitch of the hill, which is steep enough, I suppose it to be about 1430. It is within a few feet of the W of the church once a noble EE. & Norman ruined by fakement various. The whole ch. yard lies all along the brow of the steep hill. It is a strange and very beautiful place. We didn't get inside, being afraid of Sundayfied farmers; (the dog made friends). It is quite a small house. . . .

Kelmscott House
Upper Mall
Hammersmith
13 July 1896

To Algernon Charles Swinburne[1]

I am just sending you the Chaucer with Ned's signature and mine in it: I will not say that I *hope* you will enjoy it, for I am quite sure you will. All good wishes with it!

Thank you very much for sending me your new book: I cannot say I have read it, for my illness does so take all energy out of me that despite myself to anything serious, and essentially good, I must wait till better days. The doctors and my friends with one consent bid me hope said better times from my month-long Norway journey that I depart on in a week: nay to make the thing stranger I am threatened with a sight of Spitz-bergen (say 1600 N of Iceland) so I am going with what amount of hope I can muster, which varies, to say sooth, from a good deal to very little.

To A. J. Wyatt 13 July 1896

Thank you very much for your letter & list.[2] The list however I must stow away till better times, as I am so ill & weak that it is impossible for me to do any work. Moreover next week I am going a sea-voyage, which I am bidden to hope will do me good: if it does and I am able to turn to my work a little, I will certainly get on to the E.E. poems, though I have first to do a vol: for the Saga Library.

Sorry to hear of your accident, hope you will get quite well again.

[1] **Ashley Library 1218.**
[2] **This refers to a selection of mediaeval lyrical poetry, which, though one of the earlier projects of the Kelmscott Press, had been put off from time to time on account of various circumstances.**

To Philip Webb 18 August 1896

My dear Fellow. I am back. Please come and see me. I saw Throndhjem—big church, terribly restored, but well worth seeing; in fact, as beautiful as can be. It quite touched my hard heart.

Yours affectionately
W.M.

P.S. Somewhat better, but hated the voyage; so glad to be home.

Kelmscott House
To Jane Alice Morris 20 August 1896

Dearest own child

I am so distressed that I cannot get down to Kelmscott on Saturday; but I am not well, & the doctors will not let me; please my own dear forgive me, for I long to see you with all my heart. I hope to get down early next week, darling. I send you my very best love & am Your loving father
W.M.

APPENDIX I

MORRIS, MARSHALL, FAULKNER & CO., FINE ART WORKMEN IN PAINTING, CARVING, FURNITURE, AND THE METALS

FORD MADOX BROWN	ARTHUR HUGHES	D. G. ROSSETTI
EDWARD BURNE-JONES	P. P. MARSHALL	PHILIP WEBB
C. J. FAULKNER	WILLIAM MORRIS	

The growth of Decorative Art in this country, owing to the efforts of English Architects, has now reached a point at which it seems desirable that Artists of reputation should devote their time to it. Although no doubt particular instances of success may be cited, still it must be generally felt that attempts of this kind hitherto have been crude and fragmentary. Up to this time, the want of that artistic supervision, which can alone bring about harmony between the various parts of a successful work, has been increased by the necessarily excessive outlay, consequent on taking one individual artist from his pictorial labours.

The Artists whose names appear above hope by association to do away with this difficulty. Having among their number men of varied qualifications, they will be able to undertake any species of decoration, mural or otherwise, from pictures, properly so-called, down to the consideration of the smallest work susceptible of art beauty. It is anticipated that by such co-operation, the largest amount of what is essentially the artist's work, along with his constant supervision, will be secured at the smallest possible expense, while the work done must necessarily be of a much more complete order, than if any single artist were incidentally employed in the usual manner.

These Artists having for many years been deeply attached to the study of the Decorative Arts of all times and countries, have felt more than most people the want of some one place, where they could either obtain or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character. They have therefore now established themselves as a firm, for the production, by themselves and under their supervision, of—

I. Mural Decoration, either in Pictures or in Pattern Work, or merely in the arrangement of Colours, as applied to dwelling-houses, churches, or public buildings.

II. Carving generally, as applied to Architecture.

III. Stained Glass, especially with reference to its harmony with Mural Decoration.

IV. Metal Work in all its branches, including Jewellery.

V. Furniture, either depending for its beauty on its own design, on the application of materials hitherto overlooked, or on its conjunction with Figure and Pattern Painting. Under this head is included Embroidery of

all kinds, Stamped Leather, and ornamental work in other such materials, besides every article necessary for domestic use.

It is only requisite to state further, that work of all the above classes will be estimated for, and executed in a businesslike manner; and it is believed that good decoration, involving rather the luxury of taste than the luxury of costliness, will be found to be much less expensive than is generally supposed.[1]

[1] 'In this interesting document it is not difficult to trace the slashing hand and imperious accent of Rossetti, now as always contemptuous of all difficulties and not over-scrupulous in accuracy of statement.' Mackail, i, 152.

APPENDIX II

UNJUST WAR[1]

To the Working-men of England

Friends and fellow-citizens,

There is danger of war; bestir yourselves to face that danger: if you go to sleep, saying we do not understand it, and the danger is far off, you may wake and find the evil fallen upon you, for even now it is at the door. Take heed in time and consider it well, for a hard matter it will be for most of us to bear war-taxes, war-prices, war-losses of wealth and work and friends and kindred: We shall pay heavily, and you, friends of the working-classes, will pay the heaviest.

And what shall we buy at this heavy price? Will it be glory, and wealth and peace for those that come after us? Alas! no; for these are the gains *ofajust* war; but if we wage the *unjust* war that fools and cowards are bidding us wage to-day, our loss of wealth will buy us fresh losses of wealth, our loss of work will buy us loss of hope, our loss of friends and kindred will buy us enemies from father to son.

An unjust war, I say: for do not be deceived! if we go to war with Russia now, it will not be to punish her for evil deeds done, or to hinder her from evil deeds hereafter, but to put down just insurrection against the thieves and murderers of Turkey; to stir up a faint pleasure in the hearts of the do-nothing fools that cry out without meaning for a 'spirited foreign policy'; to guard our well-beloved rule in India from the coward fear of an invasion that may happen a hundred years hence—or never; to exhibit our army and navy once more before the wondering eyes of Europe; to give a little hope to our holders of Turkish bonds:—Working-men of England, which of these things do you think worth starving for, worth dying for? Do all of them rolled into one make that body of *English Interests* we have heard of lately?

And who are they who flaunt in our faces the banner inscribed on one side *English Interests,* and on the other *Russian Misdeeds?* Who are they that are leading us into war? Let us look at these saviours of England's honour, these champions of Poland, these scourges of Russia's iniquities! Do you know them? —Greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and navy (poor fellows!) worn-out mockers of the Clubs, desperate purveyors of exciting war-news for the comfortable breakfast tables of those who have nothing to lose by war, and lastly, in the place of honour, the Tory Rump, that we fools, weary of peace, reason and justice, chose at the last election to 'represent' us: and over 11 their captain, the ancient place-hunter, who, having at last climbed into an

[1] **Morris issued this Manifesto on n May 1877. It should be remembered that he was still nominally a Liberal. Walthamstow Public Library (Mrs J. W. MackaiPs Gift).**

Earl's chair, grins down thence into the anxious face of England [Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield], while his empty heart and shifty head is compassing the stroke that will bring on our destruction perhaps, our confusion certainly:—O shame and double shame, if we march under such a leadership as this in an unjust war against a people who are *not* our enemies, against Europe, against freedom, against nature, against the hope of the world.

Working-men of England, one word of warning yet: I doubt if you know the bitterness of hatred against freedom and progress that lies at the hearts of a certain part of the richer classes in this country: their newspapers veil it in a kind of decent language; but do but hear them talking among themselves, as I have often, and I know not whether scorn or anger would prevail in you at their folly and insolence:—these men cannot speak of your order, of its aims, of its leaders without a sneer or an insult: these men, if they had the power (may England perish rather) would thwart your just aspirations, would silence you, would deliver you bound hand and foot for ever to irresponsible capital—and these men, I say it deliberately, are the heart and soul of the party that is driving us to an unjust war:—can the Russian people be your enemies or mine like these men are, who are the enemies of all justice? They can harm us but little now, but if war comes, *unjust war*, with all its confusion and anger, who shall say what their power may be, what step backward we may make? Fellow-citizens, look to it, and if you have any wrongs to be redressed, if you cherish your most worthy hope of raising your whole order peacefully and solidly, if you thirst for leisure and knowledge, if you long to lessen those inequalities which have been our stumbling-block since the beginning of the world, then cast aside sloth and cry out against an UNJUST WAR, and urge us of the Middle Classes to do no less, so that we may all protest solemnly and perseveringly against our being dragged (and who knows for why?) into an UNJUST WAR, in which, if we are victorious, we shall win shame, loss and rebuke; and if we are overpowered—what then?

Working-men of England I do not believe that in the face of your strenuous opposition, the opposition of those men whom war most concerns, any English Government will be so mad as to trap England and Europe into an UNJUST WAR.

A LOVER OF JUSTICE

APPENDIX III

MORRIS BEFORE MR SAUNDERS

Under the headings: The Socialists and the Free Speech Question,'Extraordinary Scenes in Court,'Arrest of Mr W. Morris,'the *Daily News* of 22 Sept. **1885** gave an account of the proceedings. Briefly, the police had tried to break up a perfectly orderly meeting in Burdett Road, Limehouse, which had been called to protest against earlier police interference with meetings and to assert **the** Englishman's right of free speech and free assembly. The police had attacked the meeting, made many arrests and then charged the arrested with resisting arrest. When Dr Aveling gave evidence in favour of the arrested he was told by Saunders, the magistrate, that he was violating the law by attending and speaking at such a meeting at all, because such a meeting was 'an obstruction'. One of the arrested, complained the police, 'went so far as to carry a banner.' The report continues:

> Nearly two hours afterwards, Mr William Morris the author the *The Earthly Paradise,* who had been arrested for alleged disorderly conduct in court, was placed at the bar, and Constable Brind, K 463, stated that after passing the sentence against the prisoners charged with resisting the police, there was a hissing in court. He with other constables was endeavouring to restore quiet when the prisoner, who had called out 'Shame', hissed, became very violent, and struck him on the chest and broke the strap of his helmet, but the damage was not much.
>
> Mr Morris—I give a direct negative to that. I certainly did not hit him.
>
> Mr Saunders—Have you any witnesses? You must rebut the evidence, or I must act upon it.
>
> Mr Morris—I do not know whether there is any one here who saw it. I was here listening to the case, in which I have an interest, because I am a member of the Socialist League, to which several of the prisoners belong, and I quite confess that when I heard the sentences passed on the prisoners my feelings got the better of me, and I did call out 'Shame', but not so loud as I am now speaking. As to hissing, that was a mistake. Then this policeman came and distinctly hustled me. When you are pushed you naturally push again, but that is not resisting the police. I turned round and remonstrated with the policeman, but I distinctly assert that I never raised my hands. He was very rough, and I am quite prepared to bring a charge of assault against him.
>
> Mr Saunders—What are you?
>
> Mr Morris—I am an artist, and a literary man, pretty well-known I think throughout Europe.

Mr Saunders—I suppose you did not intend to do this?
Prisoner—I never struck him at all.
Mr Saunders—Well, I will let you go.
Prisoner—But I have not done anything.
Mr Saunders—Well, you can stay if you like.
Prisoner—I don't want to stay.

He was liberated, and on getting into the street was loudly cheered by the crowd who had gathered there.

The *Pall Mall Gazette,* 21 Sept. 1885 carried an article in protest against the police action: 'Free Speech' at the East End,'The Battle of Burdett Road.

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