

Lady Anne Blunt's meeting with William Morris

In his article on 'Morris and the Blunts' in the *Journal* of Winter 1981, Geoffrey Seyer drew attention to the existence in the British Library of Lady Anne Blunt's manuscript diaries. He referred to 'an amusing record of a visit to Kelmscott House in 1891'. It is that 'record' which is here transcribed. It is dated Thursday June 18; the year 1891 has been subsequently inserted. The passage is of interest for its evidence firstly of Morris's current reputation as a Socialist, and secondly of his capacity for agreeable conversation with a new acquaintance—a capacity which is sometimes played down in accounts of Morris which stress his brusqueness of manner. (Blunt had known Morris since July 1884):

Meanwhile I returned to the Swan luncheon and went afterwards to call on Mrs Morris at Hammersmith. It is a long way and I had a bad cab that knew not the way—and at length turned down a street to the riverside where posts stopped any sort of carriage from getting to it—at the corner too was a public house, but not a soul to be seen. However a man appeared just as I, and the cabman, I suppose, were considering what to do. 'Where's Kelmscott House?' 'Kelmscott 'Ouse? is 'ee the socialist?' 'Yes', I said, and then we werè told to go away and along somewhere and down the third turn to the left to somewhere else, and then back again to the left. After successfully performing this operation there, sure enough, was Kelmscott House, and still to the left. Fortunately Mrs Morris was at home and I was shown up to the drawing-room which occupies the whole length of the front of the house. I was enjoying the room, for certainly the whole arrangement was charming as well as comfortable, when the whole family walked in. First Mrs and then Miss Jenny and Mr Morris who remained talking about all sorts of things so agreeably [sic] that I felt Wilfrid had not exaggerated when he described the excellence of his conversation. They had just come in from the printing works, and if it had not been my first visit but one (and that long ago) I shd. have asked to be shown those works which are close by. Then we discussed of course books and from then got very naturally to the future of the world, and etcetera. . . I staid so long that I had barely time to drive round to 67 Addison Road and leave a card. . . .

[British Library, Department of Manuscripts, Wentworth Bequest, Mss 966/70, Add. 53984, 1st June–31 July 1981. I am grateful to the Library for permission to quote.]

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