

James Leatham's eyewitness account of William Morris's 1888 visit to Aberdeen

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James Leatham (1865–1945) was a pioneer socialist, who towards the end of his life printed, published, edited and largely wrote a monthly magazine, *The Gateway*, from the little Aberdeenshire town of Turriff where he was the Provost (leader of the local council). In 1940 (issue no. 323), Leatham began to serialise his memoirs. Around eight to ten pages of each subsequent issue would then be devoted to the memoirs, but they remained incomplete when Leatham died aged 79 in 1945. The very last issue (no. 361), dated 'January–August 1945' is prefaced as follows:

After months spent in a hospital bed, latterly under protest, I am glad to issue a number of the Gateway once more. I am anxious, for one thing, to finish my memoirs, now nearing the last long stage. The book is already partly sold in advance. I thank those who have written at this time, as well as those who, in cases seeing the newspaper notices as to my disablement, refrained from writing. It has become a distasteful effort to write, and I set type direct, as others typewrite.¹

Leatham was a lifelong devotee of Morris and his writings. His eldest daughter was called May Morris Leatham. He wrote, printed and published one of the very earliest studies of Morris (*William Morris: Master of Many Crafts*, 1908),² and *The Gateway* is scattered with references to Morris, including quotations from a seemingly lost correspondence. Some of Leatham's papers were donated by another daughter (Mabel M. Leatham Aiken of Charleswood, Winnipeg) to the University of Aberdeen; they contain several letters from May Morris to Leatham, but none from Morris himself.

The memoirs are Leatham's political testament as well as his autobiography, and readers are offered, in passing, Leatham's views on the 1939–45 war and the German nation ('slaves to authority'), on the virtues of municipal enterprise and public housing (with Turriff as an exemplar), on the commercial press (from

a man who had edited Scotland's first socialist newspaper), on Burns (from a man who had published a wide range of literary studies, including seventeen on Shakespeare's plays), and on public fashion (a beard is 'nature's adornment' – Leatham sported a full beard). One whole section of the memoirs (in issue no. 333) is devoted to Morris. Some of Leatham's material is culled from other Morris studies and some is reproduced from his own book on Morris. And some of the asides, such as the need to bury telephone lines and the virtues of hydro-electricity, have the air of an old man's hobbyhorses.

However, there is much that is original in the memoir to interest Morris scholars. In particular, there is an account of Morris's only visit to Aberdeen, his lukewarm audience, and the friendly conversation amongst socialist comrades which followed the political meeting – in particular, Morris's clear-sighted response to Leatham, who had fallen victim to the Victorian fad (*à la* Spencer) for equating social and evolutionary change. Since circulation of *The Gateway* was small, and copies are difficult to come by (with only Aberdeen University and the British Library holding a complete run), the relevant section of Leatham's memoirs, with annotations, is reproduced below.

James Leatham (Figure 1) was born in 1865, the youngest of five children of a Yorkshire soldier who died of cholera in India. His mother, a handloom weaver, took the children to live with her father, also a handloom weaver and an old Chartist, in Aberdeen. Leatham was apprenticed to a local printer, but had shown an interest in political questions from an early age: he remembered hearing his grandfather and fellow weavers discussing the Paris Commune when he was only five. In 1887, he helped J.L. Mahon set up a branch of the Scottish Land and Labour League (affiliated to the Social-Democratic Federation) in Aberdeen.

By the time of Morris's visit to Aberdeen in 1888, which he helped organise, Leatham was already contributing articles to the London magazine, *Progress*. He had a great love and knowledge of literature and was an acute judge (witness his choice of the adjective 'chiming' to describe Morris's *Defence of Guenevere* in the extract below). When Mahon left the SDF with Morris to form the Socialist League, Leatham remained in the SDF, serving in due course on its national executive council. Aside from Morris, he met all the great figures and speakers of the labour movement, such as Henry George and George Bernard Shaw, and he was a close friend of that other Morris-worshipper, John Bruce Glasier.

In 1891, Leatham took over a small Aberdeen printing business of his own, and was still only thirty when he brought out the first issue of *The Workers' Herald*, Scotland's first – albeit short-lived – Socialist newspaper. He later worked on Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* in Manchester, where he was a co-founder of the SDF branch. He moved to work for a commercial printer in Manchester but was blacklisted for his union activity, and in 1897 returned to north east Scotland as a



Figure 1 – James Leatham in 1943, reproduced with permission from the Special Libraries and Archive Section of Aberdeen University Library.

compositor, writer, manager, and later briefly owner of the weekly *Peterhead Sentinel*, where *William Morris, Master of Many Crafts* first appeared in serial form.

In 1905 Leatham became a freelance jobbing printer and journalist, and publisher, establishing the Clerkhill Press. He remained active in socialist politics, speaking at meetings, helping to found a Peterhead branch of the ILP and playing a part in a bitter trawlermen's strike. In 1908, he was appointed editor-manager of a group of weekly ILP newspapers in Yorkshire, including *The Worker* (in Huddersfield). Resigning on a point of principle, he set up as a printer at Cottingham near Hull, and it was from there that the first issue of *The Gateway* emerged in 1912.

In 1916, he moved for the last time, to the small Aberdeenshire town of Turriff, where he set up the Deveron Press. In 1918 he joined the Labour Party and became founder-president of the Turriff branch in 1922, only to resign from the party in disgust in 1924, over the performance of Ramsay Macdonald's Labour Government. Henceforth he devoted himself to local government: he was first elected to the Turriff town council in 1923, and was Provost from 1933 until his death in 1945. He was also chair of the local Public Assistance Board and, when war broke out, was chair of the billeting committee, housing four hundred evacuees. He was particularly and justifiably proud of his council's record in building council houses, and was awarded an MBE for his services to local government in 1942. Many more details can be found in the only biography of Leatham, Bob Duncan's *James Leatham, 1865–1945. Portrait of a Socialist Pioneer*.³

The remainder of this article consists of annotated extracts from 'Sixty Years of World-Mending. Recollections and the more or less pertinent reflections. XI. – William Morris' published in *The Gateway*.⁴ I am grateful to the Special Libraries and Archives staff of the University of Aberdeen for their assistance and permission to reproduce this extract. I also wish to thank Tom Deveson for his scholarly copy-editing, and the Editor, and an anonymous referee, for their speedy and helpful response to the original submission.

LEATHAM'S INTRODUCTION

Provincial cities seemed to have more visits from notables in the old days than now. Lectures and speeches now given on the radio were then delivered on local platforms to a local audience, supplemented by such additional publicity as the press cared to give. Among distinguished speakers in Aberdeen in my time I recall Gladstone, Huxley, Kropokine [*sic*], 'Labby' and Sir George Trevelyan (who came together), Henry Ward Beecher, Churchill, Lloyd George, Professor Patrick Geddes, and Sir Charles and Lady Dilke (separately). But the biggest of them all, for the number and quality of the things he knew and could do, and a

certain aura of mental and moral integrity and power which he carried so lightly and offhandedly, was William Morris, who came to Aberdeen in the month of March, 1888.⁵

Morris found Scotland 'raw-boned', and among his many friends there were no Scotsmen whom he took to his generous heart as he did with Englishmen. His voluminous and always racy printed correspondence has no Scots names in it, as if we took no active interest in the arts, crafts, and literature in which was absorbed. He knew our literature and proverbial philosophy better than most Scotsmen do; but I recall how chagrined I was when he said he regarded 'Holy Willie's Prayer' as Burns's best poem. He liked Scott and admired *Sartor Resartus*, but nevertheless condemned the 'gloom' of Carlyle as if that were his chief characteristic. He admitted to a possible 'pock-pudding prejudice', but he had as a rule only too good a reason for the specific flicks of disparagement in which he occasionally indulged at the expense of Scotland and individual Scots. He preferred Iceland – though he loathed its geysers – because the people were not commercialised, loved literature, were kind and hospitable, and country and people were unspoiled. It may be some solatium to Scots that he wished to see London thinned out to extinction, and referred to its businessmen as 'smoke-dried swindlers'.

MORRIS'S ONLY VISIT TO ABERDEEN

Morris's reception in Aberdeen would not have impressed him in our favour. He lectured to not more than a couple of hundred people⁶ in the lesser St. Katherine's Hall. The Rev. Alexander Webster⁷, who was his host, presided, and, apologising for the absence of the intelligentsia, suggested that the Principal of the University⁸ ought to have been introducing our illustrious visitor. The Principal had not been asked but he might well have been there. A great and prolific original poet, handling classic themes with unrivalled mastery, ease, and sweetness, the translator of Homer, Virgil, and of sagas from the Norse and Icelandic, the man who refused the Laureateship on the death of Tennyson, such a man might well have attracted an impressive academic audience, even if he had not been the world's most noted reformer of the arts and crafts as well. But I know of only two university men who were in the audience that night.⁹ The one was William Semple, M.A., B.D., B.Sc, an Ayrshire man, a teacher at Gordon's College,¹⁰ and as handsome and good-natured as he was learned. The other was William Charles Spence, M.A., English Master at the Girls' High School. Semple had been with us heartily from the outset. He was one of the many converts of Patrick Geddes,¹¹ who had turned him away from dead theology and made his B.D. useless. Semple was a splendid teacher and sports leader, but his open association with the

new politics and his 'way of teaching history', with, as credibly alleged, a hostile rector¹² eavesdropping outside the classroom door, led to his leaving Aberdeen.

When the centenary of Morris was celebrated in 1934, Mr Stanley Baldwin, then Prime Minister, referred to Morris as 'a glorious human being.' Their families had been acquainted. Ruskin in his day had said, 'Morris is beaten gold.' And yet another description of him was, 'Six giants rolled into one.' I have written a book about some of his achievements in literature and the arts and crafts in general.¹³ Here I deal with the man as he appeared in actual social contact.

A CANARD

As already indicated, the band did not turn out for him in Aberdeen. Indeed the frigidity of his reception seems to have been found so impressive in some quarters that a story was started of his having been found in the Shiprow¹⁴ looking for the hall close on the hour when the meeting was due to begin.

The truth is that I met him at the station when his train came in in the middle of the day, and took him in the tramcar to Leslie Terrace, where Webster then lived. I had my work to attend to – being then only a foreman, and not the boss, who could be spared for days on end – but I left him in the hands of the hospitable Websters. In the evening I called again in good time for him and Webster and took them by tramcar most of the way to the meeting-place. If the motive of the canard was to suggest that the meeting was imperfectly advertised, it was not entirely unworthy. Some excuse seemed called for.

THE OUTWARD MAN

I do not know if Morris was afraid of being mistaken for a bagman, but anyhow he carried his considerable dunnage in a couple of capacious brown canvas satchels slung over his broad shoulders. He wore a grey checked Inverness cape at this time. When next I met him this had been discarded for a substantial blue overcoat. He himself mentions in one of the letters in the McKail [*sic*] biography, that, with reference to the grey cape, a London youngster had shouted 'Yah, Shakespeare!' A black soft hat surmounted his abundant grey hair, and his white beard spread down over his turndown collar, with no tie. Though the weather was typical March, he carried no umbrella, but a stout stick. When I held my umbrella over him for a moment he said, 'You look after Number One; never mind Number II!' (Two I's of course). His jacket suit was of blue serge. Of middling height, he was broad and powerful.

His get-up was in keeping with his strong, decided, yet essentially benevolent

character. He was interesting to note because he had a theory or reason for everything he ate, wore, used, and did or refused to do. He piled jam on his bread when in his own house, said 'I like pig' when other people would have used the less pagan words bacon or ham, and at the table he drank tea from an enormous cup which suggested a different use. Among other unrecorded tastes of his was a preference for Latakia tobacco, and for blankets rather than sheets in bed.

There have been attempts to classify his appearance - such as that of farmer or owner-shipmaster; but they are all wide of the mark. He was not to be classified. Visiting a famous old church in the south of Scotland along with Scots acquaintances, his comments on the building so impressed the old beadle,¹⁵ accustomed though he was to distinguished visitors, that at a suitable opportunity he asked a straggler from the company 'Whae's *that*?' his startled tone reflecting his excitement.

A REALLY PIOUS WISH

Morris's one Aberdeen lecture was delivered from manuscript. He sometimes did that, although he was ready and hearty in extempore speech too. His concluding sentence declared that he spoke for a movement which sought to make 'the earth one garden and all men our friends'. That was fifty-three years ago, and of both aims it may be said, more than ever at the moment, that their realisation, like the Kingdom of Heaven, 'cometh not with observation.'

In one of those enjoyable symposia which followed such meetings, with supper and the putting up of burnt offerings - though Webster himself did not smoke - Morris that night was very 'matey,' especially when one considers the circumstances. It was the first time he had met us, we were Scotsmen, not supposed to be interested in arts and crafts, but very likely, as he would suppose, devoted to the adoration of the Machine God which since then has more and more mastered us, so that two men in an aeroplane can send a whole cityful scampering like terrified rats to their holes down below. Not every man will lend his pipe to another; but I had unaccountably come out that night without mine, and Morris must needs go off and return with three or four to choose from. Fortunately - seeing the place was Aberdeen - I had my tobacco-pouch!

A CATHEDRAL AND A COLLEGE, BOTH RIGHT

I did not see as much of him then as I wished. Next day he went with Webster and 'old William Lindsay, the publisher,' to see King's College and Oldmachar Cathedral,¹⁶ the latter one of the great churches of the middle ages, and still a

grand old pile with its twin spires, clerestory, stained windows, and ancient sculpture, despite all the vandalism of those who mistook destruction for religion. The chapel at King's would have delighted him with its hand-carved seats, the work of long-dead craftsmen who would have had what he placed above everything else, pleasure and pride in work which was in itself worth doing.

On mediaeval craftsmanship he could be intensely interesting, and he had special knowledge of the monastic life and churches of the middle ages. He had been 'intended' for the Church, and while at Oxford he and Burne Jones had together visited old churches and taken rubbings of mural tablets and carvings. As the eldest son of a well-to-do man he had at college an allowance of £900 a-year, from which he was able to finance the *Oxford and Cambridge University Magazine*, as later in life he subsidised *The Commonwealth*, the Society for the Preservation of Historical Buildings [*sic*], and other enterprises which appealed to him.

There is, of course, any amount of work in which it is impossible to take a craftsman's pleasure. Dennis the hangman might enjoy 'turning them off,' but only a sadist could have pleasure in the taking of life, human, animal, or fish, yet the litter of civilisation is borne on the shoulders of men who slay in shambles, grub in cesspools, labour in the darkness and danger in the mine, and shiver aloft on telephone and telegraph poles, without much element of craftsmanship about the work. The wires should be put underground, we might all become vegetarians, and electricity generated from falling water might provide power, light, and heat, supplemented by peat and wood, so that the last miner might come up from the last shift for the last time. That would not end the drudgery which machinery relieves or abolishes, as in road-making, where the machine breaks the stone, mixes it with tar, and spreads the mixture from tipping wagons in a flowing tide. If the old, deep, hand-made Roman road lasts longer, the answer is that it was made by serfs who did not have the craftsman's pleasure in the work or much pleasure of any kind. The mediaeval stonemason put 'the mason's mark' on the stones he dressed, and if the stone carried a decorative design he might well have an artist's pride and pleasure in it. But most of the stones in a building were plain and many were beyond close inspection. Workmen have pride and satisfaction in any big piece of good work as a whole in which they have had a part. 'Ours' may be a better word than 'mine,' as Morris himself expressly recognised. And yet artistry is an individual thing. No committee could have written the play of 'Hamlet.'

OVER-ENGINEED

Life is, or should be, more than even great creative labour. There are over-engined people who must always be using their hands. Thus on a slow, long voyage up the Thames on a boat called *The Ark*, Morris must needs do the cooking, though there were a number of women on board. He fancied himself a cook, and once said no woman ever invented a new dish or failed to spoil an old one. It's a mercy we're all spared. A man of intense energy, he wore himself out at sixty-two. With Shakespeare, Burns, and Dickens it was the same. To look a gifted horse in the mouth is not to reject it.

The value attached by Morris to 'useful work *versus* useless toil' is inherent in any planned community, which would take bagmen off the road, close unnecessary shops, abolish competitive advertising and overlapping services. It would cut out war by ending the craze for foreign markets and so-called *lebensraum*. It would make 'the earth our garden' in a sense and on a scale not dreamt of in commercial economics, with only one-fifth of the earth under any kind of cultivation and the tillers of it everywhere the worst-treated class of the community.

ENJOYMENT IN SERVICE

A favoured child of fortune, Morris at Oxford had played cricket and rowed for his college (Merton).¹⁷ On taking his M.A. he entered the architect's office of G.E. Street for a time; but he did not need to draw plans for a living, and at twenty-four he had published for him the lovely, chiming 'Defence of Guenevere' and other poems which already had all the characteristics of his later work – as in 'Jason,' 'Sigurd,' and 'The Earthly Paradise,' an output in verse alone far exceeding that of any contemporary poet. The prose tales, some of which have been translated into several European languages, were, in the author's allowance, trifles thrown off day by day as a change from the work of Morris & Co. at the Merton Abbey home of the crafts.

There his people carried on the weaving of carpets and tapestry, the designing and making of stained glass windows, the making of house furniture in native oak and walnut, as against mahogany or veneer with tortured ogee mouldings; wall-papers in natural patterns and colours, such as the much-copied acanthus leaf, the manufacture of fabrics which were what they pretended to be. His dyes were extracted from natural substances such as twigs and leaves, producing colours that were pleasing even as they slowly faded, unlike the ghastly hues of drysaltery in decay. He had looms to weave a carpet 25 feet wide and weighing over a ton. The Kelmscott Press was housed in a roomy cottage near Morris's home in Hammersmith. In our homes he aimed to make the wall beautiful, the floor beautiful,

the house beautiful, and, last of all, the book beautiful. The changes he initiated have not only been largely followed, but in some directions overdone. It is easier to catch the manner than the spirit; to copy genius and simplicity, but to achieve simplicity only, as in modern so-called 'functional' building, all glass, iron, and straight lines.

H.M. Hyndman tells how Morris and he, in Oxford one day, had occasion to visit the Bodleian Library. As they were leaving, the librarian, recognising Morris, said they had just received a consignment of mediaeval books; would he kindly give his expert advice about the placing of them? Morris at first demurred, but at last consenting, he wrote out slips to accompany the various books, with such details as: Written at the monastery (*sic*) of so-and-so in approximately year such-and-such. This done with only occasional hesitation. The particulars were at once accepted, and Hyndman believed they were as near accuracy as human knowledge at this time of day could attain.

Morris had, indeed, an extraordinary knowledge of old books and of all things mediaeval. He would pay £1000 for an ancient painted book, even, on one occasion, £200 for a couple of leaves that were missing from a book he had in view. He made purchases on the Continent, sending an agent to Munich to buy a psalter (at £1200) when the owner refused send it on approval.

This was only one aspect of his multifarious lore. A friend who met him often says he could 'go on for hours' about birds, and it would be vivid talk without posing or self-consciousness. He never 'performed' in talk, but was a good listener if you had anything more or less worth while to say. I can speak of this from experience. I did not share his belief in the possibility of sudden social change, and told him that I thought harm was done by the raising of expectations of social revolution. Society allows the law of growth as with other organisms much less complex and full of contradictions and centres of resistance to change than the modern State, by which I mean the whole people. At our first meeting, I had pointed out that the tadpole changed suddenly into a frog, the tail wriggling, perhaps in protest, but the head and body were the directive organs, and they had no objection to the process. Presently there was no tail left to wriggle: it was all absorbed into the frog, which had no tail. But that was one small individual creature, whereas society was a congeries of warring classes, some of whom objected strenuously to any metamorphosis, while the great mass of the body was not alert.

Morris answered that analogy was a dangerous thing, that we must not run animal biology too hard, that human beings were conscious agents, and that it was our mission to convert the head and body, which consisted of all the workers with hand and brain. Let the tail of useless people wriggle and resist. They will be absorbed right enough. It is our job to see to that, and it is necessary for us, in the first place, to believe that it can and should be done.

That, in effect, is what he said, and he said it breezily, with a sharpness of feel-

ing which is perhaps not reflected in my summary; for he added disarmingly, 'I say that, not because I'm an older man than you, but because I think its right.' He must have thought he had sounded dogmatic. I passed the matter off by saying I did not make love to gradualness. The change could not be too quick for me.

But Morris seemed to have been dissatisfied with his visit. In an article in the party organ, *The Commonweal*, he complained that he found his audience 'heavy to lift,' and suggested that we were 'held down by local Radicalism.' He was, anyhow, to come round declaredly to our view of policy later in the day.

The last time I met Morris was in Manchester,¹⁸ which he visited repeatedly during my time there. He was by this time (1895) supposed to be in failing health, though he was but 61, and he died the following year; but he was speaking out of doors, by his own choice, though it was a cold March morning, and the pitch, by Trafford Bridge, crossing the Ship Canal, was then open and exposed. The meeting was under the auspices of the Social-Democratic Federation, from which he and many of his friends had seceded ten years before. The Branch had invited him to come and speak on my suggestion; but not satisfied with two free addresses – he spoke again in the Free Trade Hall in the afternoon – they pressed him to become the Socialist candidate for South Salford! At the Sunday-morning meeting he handsomely admitted that Hyndman had been right in standing by a policy and program of specific political proposals, and 'we are now hand-in-glove,' he said.

We may meet him again in these pages.¹⁹ He is my greatest human topic.

NOTES

1. *The Gateway*, no. 361, January–August 1945, p. 1.
2. James Leatham, *William Morris: Master of Many Crafts*. Peterhead: Clerkhill Press, Third Edn, 1908, 150 pp. Republished by Thoemmes Press, Bristol, 1994.
3. R. Duncan, *James Leatham, 1865–1945, Portrait of a Socialist Pioneer*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen People's Press, 1978, 87 pp.
4. Published May 1941.
5. LeMire gives the date as 28 March 1888 and the subject as 'Monopoly'. Eugene Le Mire, *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969, p. 271. 'Labby' refers to Henry Labouchere, the radical Liberal politician and journalist.
6. Leatham may be making a comparison with the twelve hundred people he mentions were in the audience to hear the author George MacDonald; James Leatham, 'Sixty Years of World-Mending V', *The Gateway* no. 327, September 1940, pp 10–19.

7. The Rev. Webster, a Unitarian minister, was another local pioneer socialist who, in the previous year, had taken part with Leatham in a successful local free speech campaign when J.L. Mahon (organiser of the Scottish Land and Labour League and a co-signatory of the manifesto of the Socialist League) was arrested for obstruction when he tried to hold an open-air public meeting in Aberdeen on the Scottish Sabbath. James Leatham, 'Sixty Years of World-Mending VII & VIII', *The Gateway* nos 329 & 330, November 1940 & January 1941, pp. 10–20 & 10–19. Webster also wrote his memoirs (Alexander Webster, *Memories of Ministry*. Aberdeen: A. Martin, 1913, 267 pp.), but these are concerned with church events and Morris goes unmentioned.
8. The office of Principal in the Scottish universities is equivalent to that of Vice-Chancellor in English institutions.
9. The university was not a Tory stronghold: many of the students were 'lads o' pairts' who had won their places at the competitive bursary examinations and many of the professoriate had similarly humble origins. Nevertheless, the University – like the city – tended at that time to a liberal rather than a socialist radicalism, although a William Ogilvie, Professor of Humanity, had published a book advocating land nationalisation back in 1782!
10. Robert Gordon's College, an independent school in Aberdeen dating from 1750.
11. Professor of Botany at the University of Dundee, follower of Huxley, and widely regarded as a founder of the disciplines of town planning, and ecology.
12. Headteacher.
13. See note 2.
14. A city centre street.
15. The church officer, subordinate to the minister. The church in question *might* be the Rosslyn Chapel, a Templar church, only a short journey from Edinburgh, a city which Morris visited repeatedly, both in order to speak, and to conduct the Firm's business.
16. Kings College (founded 1495) is one of two colleges (the other is Marischal College) merged in 1860 to form the University of Aberdeen; Kings Chapel is the only surviving part of the original fabric. St Machar's Cathedral is located close by Kings. Leatham is allowing affection to colour his judgement: although the cathedral roof is impressive, St Machar's is not 'one of the great churches of the middle ages'. Leatham was to be buried in the cathedral churchyard. His tombstone reads: 'James Leatham 1865–1945: Man of Letters; Pioneer of Social Reform'.
17. Leatham was mistaken: Morris attended Exeter College.
18. The same event is described at greater length in Leatham's book on Morris (see note 2) in a passage which has been cited by other authors, well-captur-

ing the deep affection which Morris inspired in Leatham and other contemporaries. 'He was speaking from a lorry pitched on piece of waste land close to the Ship Canal, his whole environment probably as distasteful to him as possible. It was a wild March morning, and he would not have been asked to speak out of doors, but he expressed a desire to do so; and so there he was, talking quietly but strenuously, drawing a laugh every now and then by some piece of waggish wisdom from the undulating crowd, of working men mostly, who stood in the hollow and the slopes before him. There would be quite two thousand of them. He wore the well-known blue overcoat, but had laid aside his hat, and his grizzled hair blew in wisps and tumbles about his face. As he stood there squarely upright, his sturdy figure clothed in blue, even to the shirt with the turndown collar, and swaying slightly from side to side as he hammered out his points, he looked a man and a gentleman every inch of him'. (pp. 125–126)

19. Aside from a broadside against the author of an American book on Morris, there is only one further substantive reference to Morris in Leatham's (unfinished) serialised autobiography. In extract XVIII, from James Leatham, 'Sixty Years of World-Mending', *The Gateway* 330, July 1942, p. 15, where Leatham recalls his time writing for Robert Blatchford's *Clarion* in Manchester, he digresses about his concerns over the sectarian character of the socialist movement.

He had written to Morris, apparently in lugubrious terms, expressing his concern that the *Clarion* and its followers might become another socialist sect, and he quotes in full Morris's reply:

Kelmscott House, Upper Mall,
Hammersmith, April 21, 1893.

Dear Leatham, – Thank you for your friendly and interesting letter. I hope you will soon pull yourself up again. We hear in London much more rose-coloured views of Lancashire Socialism, which, however, I do not at all believe, especially after your account of things there ... I saw Blatchford last night, and rather liked the looks of him. You see, you must let a man work on the lines he really likes. No man ever does good work except that he likes it: evasion is all you can get out of him by compulsion. However, since I am moralising, I had better leave off with best wishes to you.

Yours very truly, WILLIAM MORRIS.