



William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter 🍁 October 1990

MORRIS SOCIETY MEETING IN NEW YORK

We will pay tribute to our former (and beloved) "East Coast Secretary," Joseph R. Dunlap, with a special meeting at the Grolier Club, New York on Friday evening, 9 November. Joe's title does not begin to describe him--he was the founder of what was then the "North American" branch of the Society; he has published extensively on Morris and the book arts; he has been the friend, helper, and inspirer of many of our members and others interested in Morris, his works, and his ideas.

THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY
in association with
THE AMERICAN PRINTING HISTORY ASSOCIATION
and
THE TYPOPHILES
invites you to join in honoring our fellow member

JOSEPH RIGGS DUNLAP

6 p.m., Friday, 9 November 1990
at The Grolier Club
47, East 60th Street, New York City

NICOLAS BARKER

will speak on
"William Morris and Henry Buxton Forman: Editing and Forgery"
reception to follow

Nicolas Barker, Head of Conservation at the British Library, is also editor of *The Book Collector*. He is the author of numerous works of bibliographic importance, including "A Sequel to an Enquiry into Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets," in which he and John Collins considered the forgeries perpetrated by Thomas J. Wise and Buxton Forman, Morris's friend, editor, and first bibliographer.

Invitations were sent to all current members of the William Morris Society in the United States and to many members of our co-sponsors, the American Printing History Association and The Typophiles, organizations in which Joe has also played an active role. If you did not receive one and want to attend, please R.S.V.P. as soon as possible to Mark Samuels Lasner (address and phone at end of this *Newsletter*). The meeting is open to anyone who wants to come --not just invitees.

DANTE'S INFERNO IN WASHINGTON

The Society's second fall event will be a videotape showing of Ken Russell's film about the Pre-Raphaelites, "Dante's Inferno." If you have never seen it--it appears rarely on television and is never revived in theaters--you are in for a treat. Oliver Reed stars as Dante Gabriel Rossetti in this rather sensational, but by no means unentertaining treatment, which includes as its central scene (repeated twice) the exhumation of Elizabeth Siddal's grave.

Ken Russell's film, DANTE'S INFERNO, sponsored by the William Morris Society. Washington, DC, Friday, 30 November 1990, 7.30 p.m.

Location: uncertain, see below.

The tentative date is Friday, 30 November at 7.30 p.m. The place depends on how many people: either a member's house or at Catholic University. There will be appropriate libations and comestibles. If you are interested, again please contact Mark Samuels Lasner. You will then be telephoned with further details and sent a map.

ACTIVITIES AT THE MLA CONVENTION

For this year's Modern Language Association Convention, to be held in Chicago, the Society has organized the following meetings:

Friday, 28 December

Session 84: Morris Society business meeting, 8.30-9.45 AM, Columbus Hall B, Hyatt Regency

Session 165: "Morris and the Fin De Siècle," 12 noon-1.15 PM, Columbus Hall C and D, Hyatt Regency .

Chair: Linda Zatin (Morehouse College). Speakers: Christopher Benfey (Mount Holyoke College),

"Morris and Stephen Crane: Poetry and the Arts and Crafts Movement"; B. J. Robinson (U. of Miami),

"The Dreamers' World': William Morris and Oscar Wilde's Utopian Social Visions"; Margaret D. Stetz (Georgetown U.) "Morris and Fin de Siècle Comedy."

Session 260: Cash bar, 5.15-6.45 PM, Columbus Hall H, Hyatt Regency

Saturday, 29 December

Session 531: "Morris and Architecture," 7.15-8.30 PM, Columbus Hall C and D, Hyatt Regency . Chair:

Jeffrey Skoblow (Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville). Speakers: Gary L. Aho (U. of

Massachusetts), "Morris and Chicago"; B. Chakravorty, "Morris, Architecture, and Poetry"; Charlotte

Oberg (U. of Richmond), "In the Footsteps of Morris and Newman: Ralph Adams Cram and Neo-Medieval Architecture."

Everyone who can get up early enough is urged to attend the business meeting on Friday morning. The agenda includes the election of the Board of Governors and discussion of plans for future meetings and publications. Persons not otherwise participating in the MLA Convention are officially allowed to attend a single session by obtaining a special pass from the registration desk; in practice anyone who looks like they know where they're going is rarely stopped, convention badge or not. So we encourage any member who wishes to "crash" our meetings to do so.

NEW MORRIS SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

The "Directory of Members," compiled over the summer, has now (after some confusion regarding Postal Service rules) been mailed. If you have not received your copy, or if you have moved, please let us know.

Helen Timo's edition of *The Widow's House by the Great Water*, Morris's previously unpublished prose romance, has gone to press. There will be 200 copies printed and these can be ordered now at a cost of \$8.50 each, checks to our treasurer, Hartley Spatt, Department of Humanities, Maritime College, The Bronx, NY 10465. Some copies will be sent to Kelmescott House for British distribution, the probable price £5.50 (roughly the sterling equivalent, incorporating a small charge for postage).

WILMINGTON VISIT

On Saturday, 23 June, some dozen members of the Society met at the Delaware Art Museum. Mary Holahan, assistant to the museum's Curator, Rowland Elzea, spoke about the history of the extensive Pre-Raphaelite collection formed between 1885 and 1915 by the Wilmington industrialist Samuel Bancroft, the nucleus of the Delaware Art Museum's holdings today. Bancroft was almost the sole American collector of the Pre-Raphaelites; his career had, not surprisingly, many parallels with those of British patrons of the group, and he developed his interest first through his cousin, Alfred Derbyshire, a friend of Rossetti's, and then through personal contact with Fanny Cornforth and Charles Fairfax Murray. After Ms. Holahan's talk there was ample time to look at the paintings, drawings, and decorative objects by Rossetti, Millais, Hunt, Arthur Hughes, Sandys, Burne-Jones, and Marie Stillman

(among others) which are now shown to advantage against backgrounds of Morris wallpaper. The museum's annual craft fair, held on the grounds, was an additional attraction, one which might have cheered Morris.

MORRIS SHOW AT UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

From 6 to 28 September 1990 the University of Maryland Library (College Park) held a "William Morris Exhibition" to mark the publication of "The Kelmscott Press *Golden Legend: A Documentary History*," the leaf book recently issued by the Library in association with the Yellow Barn Press. The show, put together by our member Blanche Ebeling-Koning, the Library's curator of rare books and manuscripts, was selected from the Walsdorf collection and from recent additions. (In all the Morris materials at Maryland now number more than 700 items.) Various sections focused on "The Poet," "The Designer," "The Scholar/Translator," "Prose Romances," "The Art of Printing: The Kelmscott Press," and "Politics, Socialism, and Other Matters," the aim being to give a comprehensive picture of Morris's multifaceted activities. This was a difficult thing to do in a limited space; that the exhibition succeeded was due to Ms. Ebeling-Koning's careful choice of the items and to the depth of the Walsdorf collection itself. Among the books displayed were *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, four editions of *A Dream of John Ball*, several of Morris's lectures (rare pamphlets these), and *The Odyssey of Homer* (1887) with two leaves of the original manuscript tipped in. The centerpiece was, along with the leaf book, a copy of the complete three-volume Kelmscott edition of *The Golden Legend*, purchased at the Christie's New York sale of the Doheny library.

The opening, on 6 September, brought together Morrisians and friends of the Maryland library. Donald Farren, director of Special Collections, presided over a program in which all the participants in "The Kelmscott Press *Golden Legend: A Documentary History*" were allowed to say a few words about the project: Jack Walsdorf, the collector whose generosity made the leaves available; William S. Peterson, the book's editor and introducer; Neil Shaver, the printer; John De Pol, the illustrator; and Blanche Ebeling-Koning, the exhibition's organizer. "The Kelmscott Press 'Golden Legend,'" it was announced, was officially "sold out"--but may be had (if any are left) from a number of booksellers, including Oak Knoll Books in New Castle, DE, and Joshua Heller Rare Books, in Washington, DC. A catalogue of the Morris show, written by Blanche Ebeling-Koning and attractively printed with Morris decorations, is, however, available from Special Collections, University of Maryland Library, College Park, MD 20742.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI AT BRYN MAWR

"Christina's World," an exhibition of books, manuscripts, autograph letters, and art works relating to Christina Rossetti, her family and their friends, is on view at the Canaday Library of Bryn Mawr College throughout the 1990-1991 academic year. It is well worth seeing, even if you have to make a special trip to do so. (The College is walking distance from a train with regular service to 30th Street Station, Philadelphia.) Most of the material comes from the collection recently presented to Bryn Mawr by Frederick and Mary Louise Maser, whose gifts of items relating to bookbinding, Conrad, Stevenson, John Wesley, and the *Book of Common Prayer* have enriched other Philadelphia-area libraries. There are copies of *Verses* (1847), the author's first book; *The Germ* (one set being W. M. Rossetti's, used in the making of the 1901 Elliot Stock facsimile, another has a MS poem inserted); one of D. G. Rossetti's sketches for the title page of *The Prince's Progress*; and nearly all of Christina Rossetti's first and later editions. The Masers managed to gather more than 50 letters--including a long and revealing series to Mrs. Adolf Heimann, wife of the family's German instructor, one of Gabriele Rossetti's colleagues at University College, London: these will all be published in a book to be brought out next Spring by the Friends of the Bryn Mawr College Library. With the Maser holdings are a number of other Pre-Raphaelite books and manuscripts, including a number of volumes with bindings designed by D. G. Rossetti, several Swinburne first editions and manuscripts (the copy of *Poems and Ballads* (1866) inscribed to Simeon Solomon a highlight), and two paintings lent by the Delaware Art Museum, D. G. Rossetti's watercolor "Mary in the House of St. John" and Holman Hunt's "Isabella and the Pot of Basil," both once in the Bryn Mawr art collection. Morris is represented by a single Kelmscott Press book; the Kelmscott flower watermark was, however, used as the motif for the exhibition's hand painted wall decoration.

"POCKET CATHEDRALS: PRE-RAPHAELITE BOOK ILLUSTRATION"

The dates are now set for "Pocket Cathedrals: Pre-Raphaelite Book Illustration" at the Yale Center for

British Art--6 March to 5 May 1991--which will overlap with the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth Century Studies conference. The show's organizer, Susan P. Casteras, the Center's Associate Curator of Paintings, says that Morris and Burne-Jones will be well represented with both early works and Kelmscott Press books; the other artists to be included are D. G. Rossetti, Sandys, Arthur Hughes, Millais, Simeon Solomon, Holman Hunt, and Elizabeth Siddal, with loans coming from various public and private collections. There will be an illustrated catalogue.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Craftsman-member Theo Rehak has devoted over 15 years to the pursuit of acquiring the skills of a master-typefounder. His new book, *Practical Type Casting*, will soon be published by the specialist bookseller Oak Knoll Books of New Castle, Delaware. The editor is Terry Belanger, Dean of the Columbia University Library School and the work encompasses all aspects of the art of typefounding, including such "service-related" skills as engraving and electro-matrix making. *Practical Type Casting* will be of interest to members with typographic interests. For further information contact: Paul Wakeman, Oak Knoll Books, 414 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720.

William S. Peterson's *History of the Kelmscott Press* (Oxford University Press) is in final production and should be out before the end of the year. Judging by the dust jacket (seen at the opening of the Morris show at the University of Maryland), this will be a handsome and richly informative work which belongs in the library of everyone interested in Morris or printing history. The January "Newsletter" will give full details of availability and price.

"Design of William Morris's 'The Earthly Paradise'" by Florence Boos has been published by Mellen. An examination of the poem as the first mature poetic expression of Morris's view that a poet is also a historian who bears the immense responsibility of creation and narration, the book will serve in a sense as a critical commentary on the first volume of Boos's edition of Morris's poetry.

MORRIS IN "VICTORIAN HOMES"

It was the perfect setting to come across the magazine *Victorian Homes* for the first time--the parlor table in the Normandy Inn, a restored 1880s hostelry in the idyllic and unspoiled turn-of-the-century resort town of Spring Lake, New Jersey. (Yes this is a "plug"--but then the Normandy Inn's owners were so nice, the breakfasts so substantial and good, and their redecorating plans include Morris wallpapers.) The magazine, published five times a year by the Renovator's Supply, Inc., Millers Falls, MA 01349 (\$15.00 per year) is a cross between "Historic Preservation" and "The Old House Journal." As its title suggests, the emphasis is on architecture and the decorative arts, with some attention paid to the mores and manners of 19th century American life. There are notices of new books on things Victorian and advertisements for products redolent of the past or needed to equip old houses. The Winter 1990 issue (from a year ago) included an article by Deborah Barcan on "William Morris and his Wallpapers" illustrated with color pictures of Red House, Jane Morris and 11 Morris designs. Of particular interest were sections describing where Morris papers can be seen in this country; one place is a little off the beaten track--Chateau-sur-Mer, in Newport, RI. Elsewhere in the issue there was mention of Sanderson's New York office (Arthur Sanderson and Sons, 979 Third Avenue, NYC 10022) and of Morris-inspired wallpapers made by Bradbury and Bradbury, also a brief review of Alicia Faxon's recent book on Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement will, according to the editor (who has kindly offered to print something about the Society), continue to be subjects of interest to the magazine, with forthcoming articles on Morris's textiles and Stickley furniture.

BURROWS AND CO.

One of the advertisers in *Victorian Homes* is J. B. Burrows & Co., "historical design merchants," of Jamaica Plain, MA. The firm, founded several years ago by John Burrows, specializes in producing and importing textiles, carpets, and wallpapers for use in restorations of 18th and 19th century buildings. Its wares include Nottingham lace and a number of wallpapers of the Federal, neo-Classical, and Victorian periods. There are several British Arts and Crafts wallpapers: 'Persis' (a Morris-like design of eucalyptus leaves) and 'Summerstreet Damask,' both from the 1880s, and "Heaton," named after its designer, Aldam Heaton, a decorator and friend of Rossetti. Also available is a textile, "Seashell and Ribbon," reproducing an 1880s design by Candace Wheeler, one of the American follower of Morris: the original is in Mark Twain's house in Hartford, CT.

Beginning this year, Burrows will offer carpets designed by Morris and made by Woodward Grosvenor, the same firm which wove them for Morris and Company in the early years of the century. Two patterns, "Poppy" and "Acanthus" come in the coarser Axminster type; with "Tulip and Lily" (also made as a stair runner) manufactured in the more detailed--and more expensive--Wilton carpet.

John Burrows is greatly interested in the Arts and Crafts movement, and it is fair to say that his firm is in some ways imitative of Morris's own. Its brochure, handsomely printed by Meriden-Stinehour in an edition of 2,000 copies, is purposefully reminiscent of Morris's pamphlet distributed at the Boston "Foreign Fair" exposition of 1883-1884. Indeed, placed prominently before a rather technical discussion of carpet production is Morris's statement--"Wilton carpets must be classed as the best kind of machine-made carpets"--taken from this very source. Burrows has also contributed an article, "The Morris Interior," to the September-October issue of "The Old House Journal." For literature: J. R. Burrows and Co., P. O. Box 1739, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 (Tel. [617] 524-1785). The carpets are marketed throughout Britain by representatives of Woodward Grosvenor Co. Ltd.; there will soon be a London distributor for the Burrows wallpapers and textiles, which can be ordered in the meantime from Jamaica Plain.

IN SEARCH OF KATE GARDINER HASTINGS

Mrs. Deborah A. Cunerd is preparing a monograph on Kate Gardiner Hastings (1837-1925), a now-forgotten Victorian artist. The sister of the manager of the Grosvenor Gallery (where Burne-Jones and Whistler exhibited), Hastings studied at the Slade School. Her art displayed the influence of Poynter, Leighton, and Edwin Long; from 1871 to 1910 her works were shown regularly at the Grosvenor and New Galleries, the Walker Art Gallery, and the Royal Academy. If you know where any of Hastings's works are (signed with a monogram of interlocking initials 'KGH') in either private or public collections do get in touch with Mrs. Cunerd, C/O Vane Gloor, 5129 N. E. 77th Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32690 U. S. A. **[NOTE: Ms. Cunerd is no longer soliciting information on Mrs. Hastings]**

OTHER MATTERS

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the Morris-and-Ruskin-inspired American Arts and Crafts movement. High prices have been paid for examples of the wares of Gustave Stickley, Elbert Hubbard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and other designers and craftspeople; a spate of books--most of them unauthoritative concerning the precise influence of the British movement upon the American--have appeared. Now, in a sort of late 20th century historicism in which "good design" and profit have a part, come reproductions of the original turn-of-the-century furniture produced by Stickley. (I can't come up with the precise term for what can be called an "American Stickley-produced adaptation of a Morris adaptation of a rural/traditional British armchair.") The "Stickley Mission Oak" furniture, made by the successors to the original firm, is offered in a catalogue entitled "Come Home to Tradition" from Maryland-based Mastercraft Interiors. Among the designs (some "adapted to today's needs") are a "Spindle Morris Chair" which appears to be quite an accurate reproduction of the ca. 1900 version. Morris, who really had nothing to do with the design, might have been shocked by the price--\$1388.00--on sale! Some of the other pieces make the chair seem inexpensive, a sideboard for \$7150.00 and a side chair for \$775.00. As for potential purchasers, they must be the descendants of the "swinish rich" Morris and Co. was sometimes accused of catering to. (Editor's offhand comment: "I'm glad I found that original Stickley Craftsman table and chairs 15 years ago in a junk store run by a religious cult in Cambridge, MA--won't mention the price but it was less than half the cost of a life membership in the Morris Society")

The 1990 issue of "Victorians Institute Journal" contained an unusual article for a scholarly annual generally devoted to literary studies: C. M. Stuart, Jr.'s "Art in Architecture: Stained Glass of the Morris Firm--1861 to the End of the Century--an Architectural Evaluation."

And, in the area of Morris-as-advertising, the Facts On File company of New York, publishers of reference books aimed at the academic library market, used an initial letter and one of the illustrations in the Kelmscott "Chaucer" on the covers of a recent brochure. There was no mention of Morris in the "copy" and no credit line: the closest appropriate book offered was "Dickens's England" by Tony Lynch, a gazetteer of both real and imaginary places associated with the author.

WILLIAM MORRIS AND GEORGE MACDONALD: FANTASY AND RETREAT: BY PAMELA BRACKEN WIENS

For those who find their fascination with Morris tied to, or perhaps limited by, his works of "fantasy literature," the connections between Morris and a contemporary fantasy writer, the Scottish George MacDonald, may prove interesting. In fact in more than purely literary ways, Morris and MacDonald shared "common ground."

In his "Afterword" to a 1975 edition of Morris's early prose romances, *Golden Wings and Other Stories* (published by Newcastle as part of its "Forgotten Fantasy Library"), Richard Mathews identifies William Morris as "one of the first writers of adult fantasy literature." Mathews's claim can be verified in terms of strict chronology, for the stories in this edition were early works of Morris, pre-1858, published as short sketches (or short stories at most) in the collaboration of his Oxford days, *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. It is difficult to confirm, however, whether or not Morris was self-consciously attempting to initiate the genre of "adult fantasy."

The label of "first writer of adult fantasy literature" has often been claimed for Morris's contemporary, George MacDonald. This ur-claim is directly made by Richard Reis in his work on *MacDonald* (1972). Reis considers claims like those of Mathews "misinformation," attributing to another fantasy literature editor, Lin Carter of the Adult Fantasy Series by Ballantine Books, a similar "mistake." Carter argues that "William Morris' *The Wood Beyond the World* (1895) is the first English prose fantasy for adults." Reis explains Carter's mistake in terms of access. "There is reason to believe," Reis writes, "that Carter came to Morris first and learned about *MacDonald* only later. Primacy, in so far as it is important, clearly belongs to MacDonald's *Phantasies* (1858)" (in Reis's section on "Full-length Adult Fantasies": 86-103).

In popular, current editions of fantasy by Ballantine and Newcastle, Morris seems to have supplanted MacDonald in terms of "first rights," and it is perhaps only tangentially interesting that Morris supplanted MacDonald in a much less literary but certainly more literal way. In Mackhail's seminal biography of William Morris, there appears a rather oblique reference to Morris's 1877 purchase of a larger home in the Hammersmith area of London, one that would allow Janey and "the girls" to be closer to Morris and his work in London. This house was purchased from "the MacDonalds," Mackhail writes. In fact, this home was purchased from George MacDonald, the writer of fantasy literature. The house had been inhabited by the large MacDonald clan for some eight years and was significantly called "the Retreat" (Triggs 133), a name to which Morris took an immediate--and philosophical--aversion (as his letters to Janey from the period reveal, See Kelvin). He quickly renamed MacDonald's "Retreat" after his own country estate, Kelmscott House.

This supplanting may have caused no ripples in the literary world, but Morris's new neighbors did "rustle a few feathers." MacDonald's biographer claims that one spinsterly neighbor recorded, perhaps not without some malice and regret, that "the days of Christian Socialism came to an end at Hammersmith to be succeeded for a time in the same house by the more strenuous days of Marxian Socialism". (Triggs 133).

MacDonald's commitment to Christian Socialism, and Christianity in general, make him--not unlike his twentieth-century protégé, C. S. Lewis--ideologically opposed to Morris, but not necessarily unlinked to him in sensibility and interest. These two rather abstruse, but intriguing links warrant further research and consideration.

There have been few significant comparisons made between Morris's and MacDonald's works of fantasy, with the exception of a dissertation on the radical forms of their prose romances by Michael Todd Mendelson (1981). Gary Aho's comprehensive reference guide to Morris (1982) does not include MacDonald as a contemporary of Morris, nor does his bibliography include any references to MacDonald. Neither of the most recent Latham bibliographies in "The Journal of the William Morris Society" include references to Morris and MacDonald specifically, although they do cite a few references to Morris and fantasy literature, or to Morris and C. S. Lewis. References to MacDonald and Morris may be found in: Norman Kelvin, ed., "The Collected Letters of William Morris". vol. 1, 456-458, 458n, 460, 469 (letters to Jane Morris, 12 March and 2 April 1878); in Greville MacDonald, *George MacDonald and His Wife* (London: George Allen, 1924): 388; in Michael Todd Mendelson, *The Modernization of Prose Romance: The Radical Form of William Morris and George MacDonald* (Unpublished

Dissertation, Washington State University, 1981 [D2DJ82-06141]); in Richard Reis, *George MacDonald* (New York: Twayne, 1972); and in Kathy Triggs, *Stars and Stillness* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1986). A postscript: a recent issue of the British magazine, *History Today* (June 1990), contains a brief article on "The William Morris Society and Kelmscott House," including a reference (62-63) to MacDonald's earlier ownership.

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Updated 2 July, 2011