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William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter January 1991

"DANTE'S INFERNO"

Due to the late appearance of the October Newsletter, our Washington, DC showing of the Ken Russell film "Dante's Inferno" had to be postponed to this Spring. The new date is Saturday, 23 March, at 7.30 p. m.; the location, the home of our member Sandra Lee, 2217 Cathedral Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008. (This is less than a block from the Woodley Park-Zoo metro stop.) All members are invited.

"Dante's Inferno" is rarely seen on television and never revived in theaters, so this is an unusual opportunity to see an imaginative (if exaggerated) version of Rossetti's life, with Oliver Reed in the starring role. As announced before, the video will be accompanied by refreshments (one of Sandra Lee's special desserts is promised) and the chance to meet others interested in Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites.

Ken Russell's film

DANTE'S INFERNO

Sponsored by the William Morris Society

Saturday evening, 23 March 1991

7.30 p. m.

2216 Cathedral Avenue NW

Washington, DC

R. S. V. P. Mark Samuels Lasner

CELEBRATING THE KELMSCOTT PRESS

May 1991 will be the hundredth anniversary of the issue of *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, the first Kelmscott Press book. The Morris Society's second event this Spring will celebrate this centenary--and the publication of William S. Peterson's long-awaited *History of the Kelmscott Press*, due out from Oxford University Press. This meeting will also take place in the Washington, DC area, and further details will appear in the April Newsletter.

A FETE FOR JOE DUNLAP

On 9 November the Society honored our former secretary, Joseph Dunlap, with a lecture and reception at the Grolier Club in New York. More than 120 people attended this happy and memorable occasion, a remarkable turn-out which gives an indication of the number of Joe's friends and of the esteem in which he is held. Our co-sponsors were two groups with which Joe has long been associated, the American Printing History Association and the Typophiles.

The evening opened with a few welcoming remarks from Mark Samuels Lasner. Our members Theo Rehak and Carole Silver followed with short tributes to Joe, who responded with reminiscences of his first visit to Kelmscott House and of the founding of the American branch of the William Morris Society in the mid-1950s. As a token of appreciation Joe was presented with a set of proofs (printed on Kelmscott Press paper) of E. H. New's illustrations to Mackail's "Life of William Morris": these were accompanied by a special presentation leaf, printed for the occasion by Theo Rehak.

Mark Samuels Lasner then introduced Nicolas Barker, editor of *The Book Collector* and deputy keeper of the British Library, who spoke on "William Morris and Harry Buxton Forman: Editing and Forgery." In his talk, illustrated with slides, Barker told the story of the forgeries of Victorian writers perpetrated by Thomas J. Wise and his associate Henry Buxton Forman, Morris's first bibliographer. In pointing out

the different methods--and possible motives--of the two men, Barker looked into Buxton Forman's claim, made in his *The Books of William Morris* (1897), to have been one of Morris's friends. He also described some of the Morris forgeries, including "Sir Galahad" and various phony Socialist tracts, which were condemned soon after Morris's death by his executors Emery Walker and Sydney Cockerell, but not fully exposed until nearly forty years later by John Carter and Graham Pollard in their classic "An Enquiry into Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets."

MORRIS AT THE MLA: CHICAGO, 1990--AND PLANS FOR SAN FRANCISCO

The Society's two sessions at the Chicago MLA convention, "Morris and the Fin de Siècle" and "Morris and Architecture," were well attended, despite competition from other panels dealing with the Victorian period. Abstracts of the papers will appear in the April Newsletter.

As always, the MLA scheduled our annual "business meeting" at an unholy hour early on Friday morning. The turn-out was small, but those who came had a lively discussion of future plans--we welcome suggestions (and criticism) from other members. Mark Samuels Lasner (chair and Newsletter writer), Florence Boos (vice-president), and Charlotte Oberg agreed to continue serving on our "Board of Governors," and we have asked Hartley Spatt to stay on as Secretary-Treasurer. We also have three new board members: Pamela Bracken Wiens (also a vice-president), Frank Sharp, and--our first representative of Chicago--Mark Burger. In all a diverse group, including professors of English, a book collector, a lawyer, and an architect.

For the 1991 MLA convention we have chosen two topics. "Morris and Utopia" will mark the centenary of the first English book edition of *News from Nowhere* and papers should have some connection with that most seminal of Morris's works. For the other panel (status a bit uncertain given the MLA's indecision regarding allied organizations but still planned anyway) is "Morris and 'Abroad,'" dealing with Morris and other countries and cultures, especially the "Pacific rim" encompassing Asia and the west coast of North and South America. Submissions for both topics --a short abstract or précis is best--should be sent to Charlotte Oberg, Department of English, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA 23173. The deadline is 30 March.

It looks like 1991 will be, if things work out, an active year for the Society. There are meetings planned for Washington, DC (see above), and we have tentative ideas for events in New York and Chicago. There will also be an "outside the MLA" event in San Francisco in late December. In the area of publications we have agreed to produce an edition of Morris's play *The Tables Turned; or Nupkins Awakened* (see below) and have authorized Florence Boos to negotiate with the University of Missouri Press regarding another volume of essays, probably on the subject of "Morris and Women."

A VISIT TO RAGDALE

On Saturday afternoon, 29 December, a number of us attending the MLA meeting made an extracurricular excursion to Ragdale, an 1897 house in the Chicago suburb of Lake Forest. This was a real treat. Built as his family's country house by architect Howard Van Doren Shaw, Ragdale remains a totally intact masterpiece of the Arts and Crafts movement in America. Its design is so strongly influenced by traditional Cotswold styles and by the then-current trends in English architecture that one could call Shaw the Voysey of Chicago. Ragdale does indeed have a distinctly English feeling, most prevalent in the dining room, with its unusual fireplace and high wainscoting painted "Ragdale blue," a particular shade of turquoise blue associated with the Arts and Crafts. The room was originally decorated with Morris wallpaper, which will be used again when the current floral patterned paper needs to be replaced; Morris paper is found in other rooms and in a downstairs hallway. Like Voysey, Gimson, and Morris himself, Shaw designed in the "minor arts": some of the furniture is his work, and he even drew a series of family bookplates. The house is, in its total effect, comfortable and unpretentious, something akin to the work associated with the second generation of Arts and Crafts centered in Oxfordshire villages such as Chipping Campden. Our host and guide was Shaw's granddaughter, poet and educator (and Society member) Alice Hayes. After taking us through the house, letting us soak up its wonderful atmosphere, she provided tea and cookies in the living room/library which looks just as it did 80 years ago. That the house has been preserved is due to Mrs. Hayes's determination. In 1976 she started the Ragdale Foundation, which provides artists, writers, and composers with a place to work undisturbed for periods of up to two months. In doing this, the house's traditional role as a center for the creative arts is being continued--the Shaw family has included

architects, painters, a playwright, and a sculptor among its ranks. The Foundation is funded by donations from individuals and by occasional grants; the house and grounds, including what is thought to be one of the last areas of true prairie near Chicago, now belong to the town of Lake Forest. If you want to know more about the Foundation's programs--not at all limited to Illinois residents (or wish to send a contribution) the address is: Ragdale Foundation, 1260 North Green Bay Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045 (Tel. [708] 234-1063). Additional information about the house can be found in "Ragdale: A History and Guide," which Alice Hayes and Susan Moon wrote last year. This book is available from the Foundation for \$10.00.

MORRIS SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS NEW AND FORTHCOMING

Helen Timo's edition of Morris's previously unpublished prose romance, *The Widow's House by the Great Water*, is now available. Orders from the United States and Canada (price \$8.50) go to our Secretary-Treasurer, Hartley Spatt, Department of Humanities, Maritime College, The Bronx, NY 10465. Members in England may purchase the book from Kelmscott House for the slightly higher figure of £5.50, which reflects the cost of postage and an uncertain exchange rate.

We also have for sale copies of Charlotte Oberg's book, *A Pagan Prophet: William Morris*, published in 1978 by the University Press of Virginia. These are priced at an advantageous \$10.00 each. Again orders (this time for both sides of the Atlantic) go to Hartley Spatt. An important study, *A Pagan Prophet* argues that Morris's work as an artist, decorator, printer, and poet constitutes a philosophically unified whole which grew from his conviction that art is intrinsically related to life. Oberg tests the validity of this thesis with every facet of Morris's work, including each of the literary genres in which he wrote. This broad perspective reflects both firsthand manuscript study in England and study of recent works in cultural anthropology and theories of myth.

Our next publication will be a facsimile of the first edition of Morris's 1887 play, *The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened*. The text has until now only been available in the rare original pamphlet or in Vol. 2 of "William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist," the 1936 follow-up to the *Collected Works*. Pamela Bracken Wiens will provide an introduction and notes.

NOTES ON EXHIBITIONS

"Pocket Cathedrals: Pre-Raphaelite Book Illustration" is at the Mellon Center for British Art at Yale from 6 March to 5 May 1991. This is, if not the first, certainly the largest show devoted to the illustrations produced by the original Pre-Raphaelite group--Rossetti, Millais, Hunt, Deverell, Ford Madox Brown--and their successors Sandys, Solomon, Arthur Hughes, and others. Morris and Burne-Jones will be represented by surviving versions of the woodcuts produced for one of the "Earthly Paradise" tales, "The Story of Cupid and Psyche," and by Kelmscott Press books, along with drawings and bookbindings. There will be an illustrated catalogue with essays by the exhibition's organizer, Susan Casteras, and by the graduate students who assisted her.

Still at Bryn Mawr, until the end of the Spring semester, is "Christina's World," derived principally from the Christina Rossetti collection recently given to the college's library by Frederick and Mary Louise Maser. There is no catalogue per se, only a leaflet keepsake, but the text of the nearly 50 Rossetti letters on display will be incorporated into a book to be published later this year by the Friends of the Bryn Mawr Library.

We have advance word of a Morris exhibition, to be held by the Katonah Museum in Katonah, NY, in February 1992. This may travel to other sites and will concentrate on Morris as a designer in the decorative arts. More information will appear in a later Newsletter.

Though there is no formal gallery for British art, the Art Institute of Chicago has on display a number of interesting works of our "period," mostly notably the watercolor replica of Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix"--hung in a room with a nondescript painting by G. G. Watts, a Gustave Moreau, and a Puvis de Chavannes. Downstairs, in the decorative arts section, there is an arresting painted Arts and Crafts piano, designed by M. H. Baillie Scott in 1897 and attributed to the Guild of Handicraft, also a textile panel thought to be designed by C. F. A. Voysey, along with pottery and glassware designed by Christopher Dresser in the 1880s. Nothing by Morris, sadly, but not a bad showing for a museum known primarily for its Impressionist pictures.

PRE-RAPHAELITES IN CONTEXT

Though this notice will appear after it takes place, we want to record an interesting event at the Huntington Library, San Marino, VA. This is a one-day symposium on 'Pre-Raphaelites in Context,' to be held on 2 February 1991 in conjunction with an exhibition, 'Pre-Raphaelite Drawings and Watercolors from the Huntington.' Four talks are scheduled, together with a tour of the show and a dinner. The speakers and their papers are: Susan P. Casteras (Mellon Center for British Art), "Against the Norm: Pre-Raphaelite Challenges to Victorian Canons of Beauty"; Lindsay Smith (University of Sussex), "'The Seed of the Flower': Photography and Pre-Raphaelitism"; Malcom Warner (San Diego Museum of Art), "The Pre-Raphaelites and the National Gallery"; and Jerome McGann (University of Virginia), "Thing to Mind: The Materialist Aesthetic of William Morris." According to the symposium announcement, all four papers will be published--probably a year from now, in February 1992--in a special issue of the "Huntington Library Quarterly."

JOURNAL OF PRE-RAPHAELITE AND AESTHETIC STUDIES

We have received word that the *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Studies*, is to be revived after a two-year hiatus. The new editor is Julie Codell, an art historian, and the periodical will now be published at Arizona State University. The *Journal*, successor to the *Pre-Raphaelite Review* founded twelve years ago by Francis Golffing, was formerly edited by W. E. Fredeman and Ira Nadel at the University of British Columbia. Professor Codell is seeking articles on both the art and literature of the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates, and the Aesthetic movement which followed. Her address (and that of the *Journal*) is: Department of Art History, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287.

VICTORIAN POETRY SPECIAL ISSUE

Speaking of scholarly journals, Florence Boos is the editor of a forthcoming (1996) special number of "Victorian Poetry" devoted entirely to William Morris. This issue, which is planned along the lines of the one devoted to Rossetti, will cover aspects of Morris's work as artist, political figure, writer, printer, and designer--not just "poetry." Potential contributors should write to Florence Boos, Department of English, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

VICTORIANS INSTITUTE

The Victorians Institute has issued a call for papers for their 1991 meeting, to be held 4-5 October at High Point College, High Point, NC. This year's topic, "Utopian Visions: The Politics of Arts and Crafts in the 19th Century," is almost by definition of interest to Morrisians. Ten-page papers are welcomed on any aspect of the social and political implications of arts and crafts broadly understood: this theme includes the Arts and Crafts movement as well as Pre-Raphaelitism, medievalism and the social criticism of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Morris, among others. Papers dealing with American 19th century topics and papers critical of aestheticism are also welcome. Papers should be volunteered by 1 July 1991. Address proposed papers, sessions, and other inquiries to: Lee Baker, Department of English, High Point College, High Point, NC 27261. (Tel. [919] 841-9297).

THE MORRIS INTERIOR

As noted in the October Newsletter, John Burrows (of Burrows & Co., importers of Morris-designed carpets), was writing an article on Morris and decoration. This has now appeared, with the title "The Morris Interior" in the September-October 1990 issue of *Old House Journal*. Burrows sees Morris as "a reformist modernist" who re-introduced natural dyes and colors, as opposed to the strong, chemically derived hues of the mid-Victorian period. He also provides examples of Morris's own comments on decorating, quoting from the 1881 lecture, "Some Hints on Pattern Design." Since the purpose of the *Old House Journal* is to give practical advice, the article includes a survey of current manufacturers and importers in Morris-related items: we have taken the liberty of reprinting this list (with some additions) as an appendix to this Newsletter.

Burrows's article, by the way, points out two houses we did not know about which use Morris designs in their interior decoration. The first of these is Government House in Baltimore, MD, a Victorian property owned and used by the State of Maryland. Of the other Burrows writes:

Among the finest Morris interiors in America is the recently documented Villa Louis (built 1870) at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. In 1885 owner H. Louis Dousman and his wife undertook a major redecoration of his parents' home. Numerous Morris papers and fabrics, along with other Aesthetic movement designs, were furnished in a striking color scheme of red, blue, and gold. In the main parlor the "Acanthus" pattern was printed on milder red and on velveteen for the upholstery fabric and portieres, the windows were hung with blue drapery, the walls were a golden yellow "Venetian" design by Morris, and the carpet was a deeper gold. The hallway had Morris "Diaper" wallpaper in milder red.

Villa Louis is now under restoration and eventually will be open to the public.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Thomas Hardy reports that his trip to England last fall "fortunately coincided with the Summer garden party at Kelmscott House, September 22, and we had long ago bought tickets for that event. I always get a little excited when making the pilgrimage along Hammersmith terrace on the way to the house, past the Dove pub and Cobden-Sanderson's place. On entering the house, we were delighted to find that the entry in the guest book just above our own, was for Sandy and Helen Berger, whom we proceeded to seek out in the garden. It's funny that until this trip, I hadn't realized that the rear wall of the garden backs up to the horrendous Hammersmith flyover dual carriageway. In fact, the house can just be seen from this road. Poor Morris would be appalled at the developments in Hammersmith."

Mark Samuels Lasner has contributed a two-part article, "Some Uncollected Authors LVI: William Allingham," to the Summer and Autumn 1990 issues of *The Book Collector*. This bibliographical study of Morris's friend, the Anglo-Irish poet best known for "The Fairies" and for his book *The Music Master* (1855, illustrated by Rossetti, Hughes, and Millais), will be published this year by David J. Holmes of Philadelphia in a revised and corrected version.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Our member Frank Sharp is attempting to find manuscript material (or other references) relating to contact between or influence of Millais and Holman Hunt on Morris and Burne-Jones. If anyone has information on the locations of such sources please contact him: 254 West 98th Street, Apartment 2-D, New York, NY 10025.

Arthur Sanderson and Sons, Ltd. are planning a new set of Morris wallpapers in authentic early colorings. As part of their background research, they would like to hear about any existing or documented American houses which use, or did use, Morris and Co. papers. In addition, Lesley Hoskins, the archivist at Sandersons, is writing a history of Morris wallpapers and would like information on how Morris wares were marketed in the United States. Write to: Lesley Hoskins, Archivist, Arthur Sanderson and Sons, Ltd., 100 Acres, Oxford Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1HY, England.

PRE-RAPHAELITE SOCIETY

Americans are invited to join the Pre-Raphaelite Society, which was formally launched in October 1988 by the then Minister for the Arts, Richard Luce. Although the organization is based in Birmingham, England (birthplace of Edward Burne-Jones), its current members come from every part of the UK and from the United States, Japan, Australia, and Europe. The Society is dedicated to promoting interest in the Pre-Raphaelites, understood in the widest possible sense of the term. There are three Newsletters a year and the Society has a program of lectures and visits to places of Pre-Raphaelite interest. Recent activities have included: a five day trip to Scotland to see, inter alia, Penkill Castle; "Turning Stunners into Tin," a lecture by Simon Taylor, head of the paintings department at the Victoria and Albert Museum; and visits to the William Morris Gallery and to the Forbes collection, both in London. The cost of membership is \$10.00 for individuals and \$15.00 for families. If you are interested, contact: Judith Bulbeck, Joint Hon. Secretary, The Pre-Raphaelite Society, C/O The Directorate, Birmingham Polytechnic, Perry Barr, Birmingham B42 2SU, England.

A MISCELLANY

Morris keeps turning up in the *Washington Post*--in unusual ways. The 30 December 1990 issue of the

newspaper's "Book World" included, as its "Book Bag" question (winners receive a bag emblazoned with the Post's logo) the following:

In 1891, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, George Gissing's *New Grub Street*, and Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray* were published. That same year, another Englishman--poet, artist, social reformer, designer--published this utopian story, a page from which is pictured here. Fill in the title and author.

The illustration (let's not be too obvious about it) depicted the front of a manor house, and the lettering below--minus the book's title and the author's name--is in a familiar typeface. A nitpicking point: all the works mentioned, except *New Grub Street*, were in fact published prior to 1891--in periodicals, and the true first edition of "News from Nowhere" was issued in 1890 by the Boston firm of Roberts Brothers.

And, in the 8 December "Weekend" section of the *Post* the following appeared: "A Glass Act. Want to bug an artist? William Morris and Ginny Ruffner will be installing their latest creation in glass at the Renwick [Gallery, part of the Smithsonian Institution--editor's note] this weekend, and visitors are invited to drop by and kibitz. Morris and Ruffner will perform their artistic labors in public. Teachers at Pilchick Glass Center in Stanwood, Wash., they round out a cast of seven artists commissioned by the Renwick to demonstrate that glassworking has grown from a craft to a full-blown fine art in recent years. The range and size of the installation is astonishing; you'll never think of glass in quite the same way again." One wonders what "our" William Morris might think of his namesake and fellow craftsman's work--and vice versa.

"A Pre-Raphaelite Air," an article in the January 1991 issue of *Architectural Digest*, depicts the London house of Isabel Goldsmith, rumored to be one of the major purchasers of Pre-Raphaelites at recent auctions. The interior, designed by the late Geoffrey Bennison, is an appropriate (if a little too "High Victorian" for my taste) setting for what appears to be a remarkable collection of furniture and art works. In one room there is G. F. Watts's "Hope," and at least two drawings by Burne-Jones: another second-generation Pre-Raphaelite painting, "The Garden Flame" by Henry Ryland, is set on an artist's easel. On the walls of other rooms are Sidney Metyard's "The Lady of Shalott" and Ferdinand Khnopff's Symbolist "The Silver Tiara," not to mention a series of painted insets inspired by Burne-Jones. Ms. Goldsmith (rather a "stunner" she) is seen in a corner of her library; careful--and perhaps wishful--examination of the books next to her reveals what appear to be Kelmscott Press volumes, including a *Chaucer*.

Burne-Jones's "Merlin and Vivien" is reproduced on the dust jacket of A. S. Byatt's best-selling novel, *Possession*, where the artist's work will undoubtedly be seen by many who had heretofore never heard of him. It's a highly appropriate choice since the story deals with two 19th century English poets,--a pair whose love affair is based in part on the supposed menage a trois of Christina Rossetti, William Bell Scott, and Alice Boyd--and the competing modern-day scholars who research them. *Possession* is so steeped in the Victorians--witness Byatt's brilliant invented poems, letters, and diary entries--that it is a "must read" for anyone interested in the period.

A SHOPPING GUIDE TO MORRIS IN THE UNITED STATES

Additions welcomed, and will be included in future Newsletters

Bradbury & Bradbury Wallpapers

P. O. Box 155

Benicia, CA 94510

(707) 746-1900

[wallpapers, some adapted from or inspired by Morris designs]

J. R. Burrows & Co.

P. O. Box 1739, Jamaica Plain

Boston, MA 02130

(617) 451-1795

[William Morris Axminster carpets, and Wilton and Brussels carpets designed by Morris]

Design in Tile

P. O. Box 4983

Foster City, CA 94404

(415) 571-7122

[reproductions of William De Morgan tiles: brochure available for \$3.00]

Paul Hanson Designs

81 Arlington Street

Boston, MA 02116

(617) 426-1500

[Morris designs on hand-painted lamps: Note: this is the address of Paine Furniture, where the person to contact is Bob Thomas]

Liberty and Co.

Stores in New York, Boston, Washington, San Francisco, and other cities

[cotton prints with Morris or Morris-derived designs; men's ties in Morris patterns can occasionally be found]

Arthur Sanderson and Sons

979 Third Avenue

New York, NY 10022

(212) 319-7220

[Morris wallpapers and fabrics, some--very expensive--printed from the original blocks, others adapted in pattern size or color: available through architects and "interior decorators"]

Scalamandré

950 Third Avenue

New York, NY 10022

(212) 980-3888

[wallpapers, fabrics, and woven textiles from Morris designs: like Sandersons available through architects and "decorators"]

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